A Grounded Theory Study of Adults' Experiences of Transformative Learning as part of Personal Development

Georgina (Dena) Michelli

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Educational Studies – School of Arts
University of Surrey

June 2004

© Georgina (Dena) Michelli 2004
BLANK IN ORIGINAL
ABSTRACT

This study was conceived in response to a desire to uncover the transformative process of healing from primal wounding.

Twelve volunteers who self-assessed that they had experienced personal transformation after overcoming childhood trauma gave retrospective accounts of their healing process in order to shed light on its nature. The volunteers were all trained counsellors or psychotherapists and were members of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). It was assumed that this community would be skilled in self-reflection.

A grounded theory approach was taken so that the basic socio-psychological process (BSPP) involved in healing from primal wounding could be identified and theory could be raised from the data. Data collection was through semi-structured interviews which were recorded and transcribed. Discussion during the interviews was minimal in order to ensure that the data was clean and that the researcher’s experience or interpretations were not projected onto the meaning of the accounts. The BSPP identified was that of ‘becoming’; an emerging process leading to a ‘fully-functioning’ being.

The main findings from the research indicate that there is indeed a process that is common to those seeking health after having experienced a primal wound in childhood. Although a significant proportion of this process relies on the cognitive, sense-making channel and is mirrored in Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning, much of it is drawn through other channels such as the intuitive, visceral, somatic, psychic, conative and creative. The process comprises seven phases after the initial trigger is felt. Although they are represented sequentially they are not encountered so, as there is much to-ing and fro-ing between the phases. The phases comprise (0) Trigger, (1) Coping Strategies revealed, (2) Disintegrating, (3) Finding voice and being validated, (4) Meaning-making, (5) Controlling, (6) Integrating and (6) Distancing.

A substantive theory emerged from the research that focused on women overcoming primal wounding through a healing process that embraced transformative learning. Further research would be necessary to convert this into a formal theory, specifically amongst men, whilst extending the primal wounding definition.
BLANK IN ORIGINAL
# ABSTRACT

# OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

# CHAPTER ONE

A Grounded Theory Study of Adults' Experiences of Transformative Learning as part of Personal Development

- Introduction
- Background and Context
- Development of the Research Question
- Personal Motivation
- Approach to the study
- A note on approach, style and language
- Summary

# CHAPTER TWO

The Research Approach and Design

- Introduction
- The constructivist paradigm

Grounded Theory

- Grounded theory in practice
- Data collection – qualitative interviewing
- Capturing the data
- The place of the literature review
- Feminist approaches
- Interviewing women
- Limitations of the study
- Summary

# CHAPTER THREE

Applying the research methodology and early stage analysis

- Introduction
- Identifying and finding potential contributors to the study
- Preparation for the study – the interview
- Ethical considerations of the research study
- Ethical protocol used for this study
- Research Design
- Data Collection in the purposive sample

Analysing Procedures

- Coding and memoing
- Conceptualising and categorising
FIGURES
Figure (i) - The Concept Indicator Model (Glaser, 1978: 62) .............................................. 46
Figure (ii) - The Research process .................................................................................... 47
Figure (iii) - The Research Design. ................................................................................... 72
Figure (iv) - An excerpt from Heather's interview showing the open coding and theoretical
memos. ........................................................................................................................... 78
Figure (vi) – The categories that emerged from the analysis of the purposive sample – A
model of transformative personal development ............................................................... 122
Figure (v) - Concept indicator model indicating the emergence of the category: 'Being
validated'........................................................................................................................ 94
Figure (vii) - The revised version of the model of the healing process showing the third
dimension ................................................................................................................ 127
Figure (viii) - The Conical Spiral illustrating the transformative personal development process
derived from the interviews with the purposive and theoretical samples. .................... 129
Figure (xiii) - Models of transformation compared to the one that emerged from this study
which is shown in the first column. .............................................................................. 133
Figure (ix) - The revised model showing 'seeking help and validation' and 'clarifying' under
the new category headings of 'finding voice and being heard and meaning-making' and
showing the core category, or BSPP, driving through the process. .............................. 159
Figure (x) A graphical representation of how Transformative learning is related to personal
development. Comprised from Mezirow (1994). .......................................................... 161
Figure (xi) - Mapping elements of the substantive theory and highlighting the basic social
psychological process (BSPP): Transformative learning as a way of becoming. .......... 163
Figure (xii) - The effects on the client of the degree of openness to exploration and the level
of trust created by the counsellor/therapist ................................................................. 167
Figure (xiii) - Models of transformation compared to the one that emerged from this study
which is shown in the first column. .............................................................................. 175
Figure (xiv) - The healing journey showing the directional component as felt by those that
tavel along the path ...................................................................................................... 176
Figure (xv) - Phases and features of the transition cycle (adapted from Adams et al by
Williams) ..................................................................................................................... 191

TABLES
Table (i) Comparison between positivist and post-positivist paradigms. Reproduced from
Lincoln and Guba (1985: 37) ......................................................................................... 32

APPENDICES.............................................................................................................. 245
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heartfelt thanks are extended to Paul Tosey and Josie Gregory, my two supervisors, who have provided challenge, encouragement and support throughout. I am grateful for their equanimity in the teeth of my panic and their validation and friendship when it was needed most.

A deep thank you to my husband, John, who has tolerated long periods of absence whilst I became intimate with my computer and who rescued me when the technology bit back and lost vast tracks of my work. His unique gift to me was clear untrammelled space in which to work, utter faith in my ability and timely glasses of cold, dry, white wine and kettle chips. My love and devotion to him can only be enhanced as a result of his faith in me.

Thanks too must be extended to my close family who for years, lost a play-mate to academic study and who patiently supported me in spite of their puzzlement at my ambitions. My mother Nonie and my sisters Pippin and Cherry were unswerving in their belief, tireless in their support and provided endless loving sustenance. Thanks to my father who watched on with interest and was willing to ask questions and explore intelligently and also to my children, Ben and Verity, who suffered the slings and arrows of a mother 'becoming'. I must also include my grandchildren, Zoë-Hope and Michael, who are currently reaping the benefits of an integrated and joyous being. These people have made my life seem purposeful and have given me so much. My family is now extending and I welcome the arrival of my daughter-in-law, Rosie. She is such a breath of fresh air and perfect for my son. I am truly grateful for, and appreciative of each member of my family.

I cannot ignore my close friends, some of whom watched me through my own process of healing and continue to encourage me to reach further heights personally, professionally and spiritually. Sharon, known to me as 'Bottle', has been in my life since I was eleven and has not only witnessed much of my dysfunctional behaviour but has also encouraged and assisted me in my healing; a balm of wisdom indeed. Geraldine, a more recent acquisition has engaged enthusiastically, intelligently and provocatively when discussing the finer points of my research interests and has extended this to new realms that are equally stacked with richness and excitement. The circle goes on: Gay Haskins who has been unconditionally supportive and a good friend, Michelle Gleeson who is treading the same territory and does so with dignity, grace and generosity, Carol O'Connor, an intelligent sounding board who, thankfully, laughs and my earnestness and intensity and Jay Keshava who is a glowing example of a woman in pursuit of her own truth. I would also like to include my professional
colleagues who together created a stretching, developmental and conducive context from which to work. These include: Hannah, Julie, Sarah and Martin.

Not least, I would like to thank the twelve women who contributed so generously their time and thoughts to turn my aspirations and intentions into reality. Their courage and determination is both inspiring and humbling and I will remain indebted to them always. It is to them that I dedicate this piece of work.

My initial motivation was to create a deeper understanding of the healing process for those that had experienced primal wounding and contribute it to the information-bank held by those accompanying women in their 'becoming'. Being a member of a family that has experienced primal wounding down the generations, I wanted to illuminate a process that would assist travellers and guides on the healing journey in the hope that one day, its necessity would disappear. The small being that impassioned me was my grand-daughter, Zoë-Hope, who entered this world at the outset of my studies. She is a glorious being with a magnificent soul and I pray the angels guard her for all they are worth, so that she may live, for all she is worth.
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This Grounded Theory Study of Adults' Experiences of Transformative Learning as part of Personal Development drew from the experiences of twelve practising counsellors and psychotherapists who volunteered to reflect upon their process of healing from primal wounding. The research community believed that they had been through, or are currently going through, a transformative process and put themselves forward for the study. In all cases, the research group are now facilitating or participating in the transformative process of others, as well as presiding over their own continuing learning journeys.

The findings suggest that the transformative process mirrors but significantly adds to the notion of transformative learning associated with the work of Jack Mezirow (1978, 1990, 1991, 2000) amongst others and which exhibits the phases illustrated in the figure below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Unrecognised Coping Strategies</th>
<th>Disenchantment</th>
<th>Emotional Disconnection</th>
<th>Reflecting on the future</th>
<th>Challenging assumptions</th>
<th>Activating new meanings and strategies</th>
<th>Internalising the same meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>Physical illness</td>
<td>Descent into chaos</td>
<td>Seeking help</td>
<td>Making connections</td>
<td>Managing past experiences</td>
<td>Feeling suicidal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Dissociation</td>
<td>Daughter at the same age</td>
<td>Falling into a black hole</td>
<td>Being witnessed</td>
<td>Seeing the patterns and linkages</td>
<td>Understanding the past</td>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Compartmentalising</td>
<td>Living on two levels</td>
<td>Being fragmented</td>
<td>Being heard</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Re-sequencing the memories</td>
<td>Feeling guilt, shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Living on two levels</td>
<td>Displacement activities</td>
<td>Coping with rejection</td>
<td>Being believed or validated</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Making choices</td>
<td>Feeling internalised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5</td>
<td>Living on two levels</td>
<td>Re-abuse</td>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>Building a trusting relationship</td>
<td>Talking to others</td>
<td>Confronting abuser(s)</td>
<td>Feeling 'inside' has joined the 'outside'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6</td>
<td>Living on two levels</td>
<td>Re-abuse</td>
<td>Recovery</td>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>Feeling healthy</td>
<td>Feeling powerful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 7</td>
<td>Living on two levels</td>
<td>Re-abuse</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>Feeling healed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primal wounding is described by Firman and Gila (1997) as 'A violation we all suffer in various ways. In this violation we are treated not as individual, unique human beings, but as objects. Our supportive milieu – whether early caregivers, peers, institutions or society at large – does not see us as we truly are and instead forces us to become the objects of its own purposes.' (1997: 1) This primal wound, they assert, is a wound of 'non-being'.
The trigger for the process is often resonant with a childhood memory highlighting the dissonance between the 'real self' (the self without defensive behavioural conditioning or dysfunction; the integrated or 'whole' self) and the 'manifesting self' (the self people 'see'; the persona; the 'public personality'. (Boyd and Myers, 1988: 272 - taking the language of analytical psychology.) Thereafter, the process is broadly one of stages of disintegration; the unravelling of current coping mechanisms and meaning perspectives; a period of critical review and reflection leading to powerful choices and an integrative stage where new meaning is created. This is followed by a phase I have termed 'distancing' which describes the point of 'dis-identifying or 'de-investing' in the past or breaking the connection to certain stimuli or triggers whether they are received cognitively or through the body and affects.

The all pervasive, fundamental process that emerged from this research was that of 'becoming,' a process that carried the individual from a state of 'non-being' to 'being'. It should be stressed, however, that this was not found to be a linear movement with a beginning and an end, rather an ongoing, reciprocating process that was patterned by various stimuli and contexts. Nor was it a process dominated by cognitive function, rather other sense-making channels were employed such as the physical, emotional, psychic and creative.

This thesis is structured in the following way: chapter one introduces the study and puts it into a broad context; chapter two introduces the chosen research paradigm and methodology of grounded theory and explains why this was the preferred approach; chapter three explains how grounded theory was theoretically applied and practically operationalised in this study; chapter four contains the analysis of findings; chapter five outlines the thinking triggered by the analysis and begins to draw in theoretical works from the wider field to compare and contrast the findings and to locate them in their unique position; chapter six is a literature review drawing from a range of disciplines associated with the theories of transformation. Finally, chapter seven highlights the implications for the future and concludes with a reiteration and summation of the findings.
CHAPTER ONE

A Grounded Theory Study of Adults' Experiences of Transformative Learning as part of Personal Development

Introduction

This chapter attempts to set the scene for the study of adults' experiences of transformative learning as part of personal development by taking a somewhat eclectic view of personal transformation and growth. Although it is not the purpose of this chapter to conduct a literature review, various writings in different fields will be drawn upon to orientate the reader towards the purpose of this study and to lay bare the intentions, interests and aspirations of the researcher. Similarly, relevant texts will be referred to throughout the thesis until the literature review is presented and they are properly contextualised. Although the reader may experience the premature introduction of material from external sources as 'left of field', it nonetheless resolves the dilemma of whether to write in a linear fashion, mirroring exactly the evolution of the study or whether to incorporate different theorists' concepts and models ahead of time in the interests of clarity. I chose the latter path as this both honours the spirit of grounded theory, which advocates suspending the literature review until the data collection and analysis has been completed, and promotes understanding. In addition, this chapter will present the rationale for undertaking the research along with a declaration of personal motivation.

In order to introduce this study, the rather ambiguous terms 'transformative' and 'transformation' will be used. If not to be fully defined yet, an attempt at interpretation should be offered here. The term 'transformative' is often coupled with the term 'learning', an expression coined and described by Jack Mezirow & Associates (1990) as 'The process of learning through critical self-reflection', which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating and integrative understanding of one's experience.' (Mezirow and Associates, 1990: xvi) Of 'transformation', Alter and Alter use the description of 'Profound and permanent change in the way we feel about ourselves and our lives and the way we live our lives.' (Alter and Alter, 2000: xxvi) And again, of 'transformation', Mezirow and Associates (2000) refer to 'a movement through time of reformulating reified structures of meaning by reconstructing dominant narratives.' (2000:

---

2 Critical self-reflection 'involves a searching view of the unquestioningly accepted presuppositions that sustain our fears, inhibitions and patterns of interaction, such as our reaction to rejection, and their consequences in our relationships.' (Mezirow, 1991: 87)

3 A Meaning perspective is defined by Mezirow (1990) as the 'structure of assumptions that constitutes a frame of reference for interpreting the meaning of an experience.' (1990: xvi)
19) These interpretations will serve for now. Any later refinement will be explained and expanded in the text at the appropriate point.

Throughout this chapter, I will be endeavoursing to circumscribe and make distinct the area of my study. However, having introduced the notion of personal development through transformative learning, the ‘what’ of the study, I now need to introduce the people that will provide the data to enable this study to take place, the ‘who’ of the study.

The community of volunteers for this study, who were accessed through an advertisement in a professional journal, held the view that they had experienced primal wounding in their formative years and had been through a process of transformation which enabled them to overcome their childhood trauma. In the light of their early experiences and in their desire to heal themselves as adults, this group of people embarked on a transformative process; a process upon which I asked them to reflect and give a retrospective account. As professional psychotherapists and counsellors who were trained to assist clients’ psychological development and personal growth, I was confident that they would be skilled in the art of self-reflection and lucid in the articulation of their transformative healing process. Mezirow (1991) points out that 'in the absence of empirical tests, we learn what is valid in the assertions of others and gain credence for the validity of our own ideas by... relying... on as broad a consensus as possible of those who are most informed, rational and objective.' (1991: 76) It was my contention that, due to their chosen profession and allegiance to a professional body, the volunteers in this study were indeed likely to be 'informed, rational and objective' and would therefore assist in mapping the transformative healing process.

Mezirow (1991) also acknowledges that although profound life events are not required to achieve transformation, 'the study of transformations associated with major life crises had proven methodologically to be more feasible than the study of those resulting from more gradual changes.' (1991: 174) He goes on to cite a study undertaken by Musgrove (1977) that focused on those that had been marginalised by, for instance, the adult onset of blindness, the institutionalisation of those who contracted incurable physical disabilities, self-employed artists, recent entrants to religious orders as well as the experiences of self-professed adult homosexuals. This view adds weight to my decision to study those that have experienced and overcome a primal wound in order to make distinct the transformative healing process.

4 Please refer to the section entitled ‘A note on approach, style and language’ later in this chapter for clarification of terms and meanings. In this instance, I use the word 'healing' not to imply a 'cure' in the allopathic sense but the process of becoming a 'fully functioning person'. (Rogers, 1961: 187-190)
Transpersonal psychotherapists, Firman and Gila (1997) in their book *The Primal Wound*, hypothesise that everyone suffers a primal wound, 'a violation by a significant other in which we are treated as objects, not as unique human beings' (1997: 1) in their early years that results in a 'sense of anxiety or impending doom underlying all we do; or as a sense of estrangement, falseness and lack of meaning in our lives or perhaps as a fear of intimacy and commitment in relationships'. (1997: 1) They emphasise their point by adding: 'Child abuse and neglect, sexist and racist culture and bonding to wounded caregivers are just some of the very many ways we receive the primal wounding... and it cuts us off from the deeper roots of our existence.' (1997: 2)

It is well known that for most research projects, the topic chosen is of personal interest to the researcher. This is no exception and I can only declare that I have a personal investment in finding out about healing from a particular form of primal wounding for the benefit of my own transformative journey; that of healing from childhood sexual abuse. However, in spite of it being personally and profoundly significant, this research is not about me, it is about others' experiences of the transformative healing process. Not only is this research being undertaken to shed light on the process for the benefit of those who will be engaging with it in the future, but it is also hoped that, if childhood sexual abuse may be considered just one type of primal wounding, this research could yield knowledge of a generic process underlying the healing from any or all primal wounds. It is my hope therefore, that my findings will be of relevance to a wider community than the one under study. Yet, despite my personal motivations and aspirations, I must say that I enter this field with a degree of trepidation. So often, those that have experienced childhood sexual abuse are feared, patronised or pitied rather than admired for their determination, strength and courage in taking their place as valuable members of society. Perhaps they reflect an uncomfortable truth about childhood vulnerabilities and the responsibilities we all share to create a nurturing environment in which children can mature into adulthood without damage. However, it is not my intention to speculate on the social acceptability of this community nor is it to make a moral or political point, my intention in this chapter is to present the rationale for my research and the justification for selecting a research pool that shares a physically and emotionally challenging history that might (I wondered) prepare them for, and propel them towards, personal development and transformation.

Acknowledging the groundwork of Freud in arriving at his description of 'psychological premise distortions' and giving credence to Jung's contributions through the work of Boyd and Myers (1988), Mezirow's (1991) definition resonates with the retrospective reflections given by the participants in this study as they assessed the psychological roots of their
journeys. In the following passage, Mezirow links psychological premise distortions to transformative learning.

'Psychological premise distortions produce ways of feeling and acting that cause us pain because they are inconsistent with our self-concept or sense of how we want to be as adults. They are artefacts of our earlier experiences – ways we have learned to defend ourselves after childhood traumas – that have become dysfunctional in adulthood. Through premise reflection (a natural form of transformative learning) we can understand how they have come to shape the way we feel and act and their consequences.' (1991: 138)

Mezirow goes on to point out that premise reflection frequently takes place in psychotherapeutic contexts, 'but is a natural form of transformative learning that often occurs in adult life, especially during major life transitions, without the intervention of either a therapist or an educator.' (1991: 138)

The link between psychopathology and learning had previously been made by Psychiatrist, Roger Gould (1978), who structured a bridge between psychotherapy and adult learning in the hope of delivering psychotherapy services on a large scale through educational methods. Some years later, and under the influence of Jack Mezirow, he went on to create the Therapeutic Learning Programme, the goal of which is emancipatory education using the processes of transformative learning. 'From my point of view, the bridge between psychotherapy and adult learning is the structure of concepts of adult development.' (Gould, 1978 in Mezirow and Associates, 1990: 134) Tennant and Pogson (1995) also draw the two disciplines of personality development and learning and education together. In their book, *Learning and Change in the Adult Years*, they stress that 'It is important not to lose sight of the notions of adult development and lifelong learning and education. 'Learning to Be' is indeed a continuous, lifelong pursuit, one in which the self struggles to preserve continuity with past experiences and, simultaneously, to change and develop in order to make sense of the current and future experiences. This ongoing tension between continuity and change lies at the heart of what it means to develop and learn across the life span.' (1995: 10) Rogers too (1951) was a proponent of 'student-centred teaching' which used the principles set out in his 'client-centred therapy' and applied them to teaching. 'If the outcome of this approach to therapy is a person who is not only better informed in regard to himself but who is better able to guide himself intelligently in new situations, might a similar outcome be hoped for in education?' (1951: 384) Rogers cites the work of Nathaniel Cantor (1946) and presents his thinking in three succinct points. Namely: (1) The teacher will be concerned primarily with understanding and not judging the individual, (2) The teacher will keep at the centre of the teaching process the importance of the student's problems and feelings, not his own and (3) The teacher will realise that constructive effort must come from the positive or active forces within the student. (1946: 83-84 in Rogers, 1951: 358) Although beyond the scope of this
thesis, it is nonetheless worth noting that it is exactly these attitudes that are found in Steiner and Montessori educational environments. They both aim to enable the child to 'construct themselves' and seek to achieve this by being child-centred and working with the natural phases of the child's development.

In the next section, I will describe how I alighted upon the intended area of study, a circuitous and surprising route as it turned out.

**Background and Context**

When employed by London Business School (1995-1998), I conducted an evaluation project to determine the learning impact of a particular management development programme - The Accelerated Development Programme. The programme was designed for those identified by their organisations as 'high potential' and likely to make senior positions early in their careers. During the data collection process, I became aware that for some, what they had learned had had significant impact on their professional lives and had led to measurable changes in the way they approached their work. Indeed, in some cases, this impact was not just confined to their work environment but affected the way they thought about and conducted their lives outside work. Commonly, these people reported a previous imbalance or unresolved issue in their life and said that the Accelerated Development Programme had triggered a reflective process that resulted in them being able to identify what was 'wrong' and take action to put it 'right'. In spite of the fact that this process was quite often reported as being disturbing and uncomfortable, participants said that they valued the 'journey' and that they wouldn't go back to their 'old state' given the choice. Indeed, they saw it as progress. For others, the programme had merely been an interesting diversion with no obvious personal impact.

Another feature of this evaluation work was to devise an approach that would encourage participants to engage in a critical retrospective review of their behavioural change as a result of their attendance on the programme; a notoriously difficult activity because of the intangible nature and subjectivity of the outcomes. Although not perfect, participants frequently reported that the exploratory, semi-structured, interview that was adopted for this purpose was, in itself, revealing, and the mere fact of hearing themselves speak of their changes deepened their understanding and rekindled their commitment to continual personal development. The power of this self-reflexive process not only re-presented significant learning points but also added weight and focus to their future learning agenda. Working in this intangible realm on the project revealed the potency and potential of the interviewing approach as a means of identifying the different phases of the learning journey and of using a spoken rather than written review to clarify understanding and propel future learning.
As a result of these observations I became interested in what I learned was called ‘transformative learning’ and committed to exploring the phenomenon further.

However, as very often seems to happen in life, two apparently unrelated areas of interest came together unexpectedly and re-contextualised the focus of my proposed area of study.

In parallel to attending the Research Methods Programme at the University of Surrey, I was researching the female line of my family. Whilst doing this, an unavoidably strong possibility emerged that the women in at least five successive generations had been exposed to or were themselves victims of primal wounding, whether it be physical, sexual, psychological – or a combination of some or all of these. The possibility of this was so strong that I developed an interest in finding out more about it. Specifically, I became interested in what it would take to stop this pattern of abuse, not only in my family but in the wider societal context.

The extent of the ‘damaged’ community quickly became apparent on reading a few texts on the subject. Prevalence studies have determined that between one-fifth and one-third of women in community samples (randomly selected samples of women in a particular geographical areas or constituencies) have experienced sexual abuse as children. (Finkelhor, 1979, 1988; Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans & Herbison, 1993 and Wyatt, 1985 in Perrott, Morris, Martin and Romans, 1998) Oates, Tebbutt, Swanston, Lynch and O’Toole, (1998) quote figures of between 7% to 62% depending upon the response rate, the broadness of the definition and other factors such as the upper age used in the study. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) quote the Herman (1981) review which reports prevalence rates of between 20% and 35%. However, she believes that the rate is actually much higher than this due to under-reporting and a ‘conspiracy of silence.’ Schaaf and McCane (1998) demonstrate that ‘adult females who were sexually victimised as children experience a variety of long-term negative sequelae including sexual disturbances, depression, anxiety, fear and suicidal tendencies.’ (1998: 1119) Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans and Herbison (1993) support the finding and report that there is a causal relationship between women who give a history of sexual abuse in childhood and adult psychopathology. They go on to report that ‘the higher rates of psychopathology in abused cases was associated with an equally high utilisation of mental health services. (1993: 721)

Perrott, Morris, Martin and Romans (1998) conducted a study into the cognitive coping styles of women sexually abused in childhood and found there were six categories of coping that were commonly used (suppressing, reframing, working through the experience, seeking support, talking about their experience as adults and coping on their own) each with different effects on the psychiatric health of the respondent. Incidentally, they also found that
although those who adopted the coping strategy of ‘reframing’ the experience (making a conscious effort to think about and re-appraise the event (1998: 1142)) were more likely to have favourable mental health outcomes, the level of incidence of abuse of their children was higher. (1998: 1145) They go on to say that ‘dissociation and denial (already identified in the paper as a category of ‘reframing’) may impinge on care and protection parenting functions with the increased risk that the victim chooses potentially abusive partners.’ (1998: 1145) Oates, Tebbutt, Swanston, Lynch and O'Toole (1998) in their research to see if children of mothers who were sexually abused in childhood were themselves at increased risk of being abused found that there was indeed an increased risk of abuse. The traumatic experience of a mother apparently does not prepare or enable her to protect her child from the same trauma.

How then does one stop this process from continuing? I would argue that it is not only a categorisation of coping styles that is needed but also an understanding of the process of healing that moves an individual from coping to a ‘fully functioning person’ with high levels of psychological, physical and emotional health.

Much too has been written about the presenting symptoms and therapeutic interventions that enable women to come to terms with, and/or cope with, their sexual abuse. (See Sanford, 1991; Hunger, 1995; Wyatt and Powell, 1988; Jehu, 1988; Bass and Davis, 1988; Levine, 1997 and Mines, 1996) Illustrations of those who have overcome the most severe odds to reach a point of fulfilment abound. (See Vanzant, 1998 and Baures, 1994) It is undoubted that this work is inspiring and serves to draw people with feelings of hopelessness towards that of a fully functioning person. But there is a great distance between what is felt in the present and what is hoped for in the future. Inspiration is a marvellous motivator but unless we know how to embark on these journeys of healing for ourselves, or what to expect when we do so, the goal of full function may as well be a chimera; a shimmering image of someone else’s triumph. So what are the characteristics that enable people to undertake this process of healing, what are the outcomes and why do they propel some to success and condemn others to stagnancy?

5 Rogers (1961) uses the term ‘fully functioning’ to describe individuals who are using their capabilities and talents, realising their potentials and moving toward complete knowledge of themselves and their full range of experiences. The three threads of a fully functioning person are: Openness to experience – the ability to live undefensively - to listen to and experience what is going on 'within'; to be more open to feelings of fear, discouragement and pain; open to feelings of courage, tenderness and awe and to be free to live feelings subjectively. Existential living – the ability to live fully in each moment. ‘One becomes a participant in and an observer of the ongoing process of organismic experience, rather than being in control of it.’ (1961: 189) Organismic trusting – the ability to take action based upon prior experience, memory, past learning, sense impressions and data from visceral and internal states. (1961: 187-190)
For some practitioners, the answer lies in an individual’s predisposition towards spiritual or religious expression; implying that in order to overcome trauma and reach a place of full function, they believe there must be a spiritual or religious carrier that takes them through the universally understood, and seemingly unquestioned, phase of ‘forgiveness’ in order for them to find meaning beyond their experiences and perhaps even, beyond themselves. Kepner (1995) alights on the question of forgiveness and points out that ‘therapists whose own transcendent orientation stems from a Christian-based theology, wherein the practice of forgiveness is a central concern, may insist that forgiveness is an essential element of healing.’ (1995: 143) Kepner defines ‘transcendent’ as: ‘the largest possible context of meaning which includes any framework that goes beyond the individual and social contexts.’ (1995: 133) For other practitioners, who perhaps come from the Rogerian school of person-centred therapists, the ability to leave behind an abusive past is merely the developmental consequence of being human and of becoming a ‘fully functioning person’ (Rogers, 1961) or engaging in a process of individuation (Jung, 1921); self-actualisation or transcendence (Maslow, 1968) or whatever other label that implies a process of ‘becoming’.

Boyd and Myers (1988) (reported in Dirkx, 2000) formulated the view that transformative learning was grounded in the process of individuation. Individuation is defined by Jung (1921) (in Jacoby, 1990) as a ‘process by which individual beings are being formed and differentiated... having as its goal the development of the individual personality’. (1990: 94) Dirkx (2000) goes on to point out that ‘the forces and dynamics associated with individuation are largely unconscious and manifest themselves, independent from the conscious ego, within the emotional, affective, and spiritual dimensions of our lives.’ (2000: 1) Rowan (1988) speaks for Maslow in respect of the process of self-actualisation and says that ‘it is a natural process inherent in the very meaning of what it is to be a human being.’ (1988: 48) He goes on to make the distinction for Maslow between self-actualisation and transcendence pointing out that transcendence is the ‘higher’ of the two resulting in ‘mystical unity with the All’. (1988: 48)

Looking at some specific research in the spiritual arena, Reinert and Smith (1997) conducted a quantitative study amongst religiously involved lay women to see if they could forge a relationship between childhood sexual abuse and psycho-spiritual development. Using the Spiritual Experience Index (SEI-R) which deals with one’s openness to the transcendent dimension, Genia, (1991) (in Reinert and Smith (1997)) found that those who had been

---

6 Maslow (1999) defines self-actualisation as: ‘ongoing actualisation of potentials capacities and talents, as fulfilment of mission [or call, fate, destiny, or vocation], as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of, the person’s own intrinsic nature, as an unceasing trend towards unity, integration or synergy within the person.’ (1999: 31)
sexually abused in childhood showed higher SEI-R scores with a more 'accepting' attitude compared to those with a 'striving' attitude and that the sexually abused were more likely to turn to their faith and spirituality for support. However, as 92% of respondents reported that their relationship with God was 'important' or 'very important' (77% Catholic, 16% Protestant, 7% 'Other') and many of those who demonstrated spiritual openness were highly educated and therefore, arguably, more open to transformative learning and the creation of new and more inclusive meaning perspectives, this is not a surprising finding. Reinert and Smith also report that according to Genia (1991) 'adults who progress to higher psycho-spiritual stages' have found internal resources enabling them to develop a more mature spiritual commitment.' (Reinert and Smith, 1997: 236)

Ganje-Fling and McCarthy (1996) examine the impact on spiritual development of those that have been sexually abused in childhood. In their paper, they seek to define spiritual development in order to uncover its relevance to those on the healing journey and the implications for counsellors. To this end, they proffer definitions favoured by different theorists and I reproduce them here because they put an accent on the possibility of transformative healing as a spiritual process.

Edwards (1980) defined spirituality as 'a concern with the existential' and Shafranske and Gorsuch (1984) defined it as 'the courage to look within and to trust.' (1984: 233) Pate and Bondi (1992) defined spirituality as 'a view of one's place in the universe' (1992: 108) and Gilchrist (1992) defined spirituality as 'what individuals hold sacred in their lives, what is most important to them at the essence of their being. It is a context for understanding things.' (1992: 12) Chandler, Miner-Holden and Kolander (1992) define spirituality as 'the innate capacity to, and tendency to seek to, transcend one's current locus of centricity, which transcendence involves increased knowledge and love.' (1992: 169) Harris (1990) stated that spirituality involves questions about why we are here, what is required of us and where we go next. As spiritually 'awake' individuals grapple with these questions, they begin to connect aspects of themselves that were initially hidden. These include elements of mystery, love, sorrow and dreams of wholeness.’ (All the preceding definitions were reproduced from Ganje-Fling and McCarthy (1992: 253) Except the Shafranske and Gorsuch definition which was expanded from the primary source.)

Genia (1991) has undertaken an extensive review of the literature to arrive at specific criteria that comprise the 'higher psycho-spiritual stages and are characteristic of 'mature' spiritual commitment. These are: (1) transcendent relationship to something greater than oneself; (2) consistency of lifestyle with spiritual values; (3) commitment without absolute certainty; (4) appreciation of spiritual diversity; (5) absence of egocentricity and magical thinking; (6) equal emphasis on both reason and emotion; (7) mature concern for others; (8) tolerance and human growth strongly encouraged; (9) struggles to understand evil and suffering; (10) a felt sense of meaning and purpose; (11) ample room for both traditional beliefs and private interpretations. (In Genia and Cooke, 1998: 116)
Ganje-Fling and McCarthy complete this review of the definition of spirituality by presenting their favoured version for the purposes of the article: 'Spirituality is a complex, multifaceted construct that involves ultimate and personal truths that individuals hold as inviolable in their lives.' (1992: 253) In anticipation of accusations of exclusion, they clarify the point that their definition is broad enough to incorporate religious, existential and unstructured orientations as well as concepts such as God, Higher Power and spiritual source. As we have already seen, Boyd and Myers (1988) advocate that transformative learning is grounded in the process of individuation which is defined by Jung (1921) as a 'process by which individual beings are being formed and differentiated... having as its goal the development of the individual personality'. (1990: 94) This is remarkably similar to the definition preferred by Chandler, Miner-Holden and Kolander (1992): 'the innate capacity to, and tendency to seek to, transcend one's current locus of centricity.' Perhaps we can deduce from these theorists' definitions that transformative learning is a process of individuation which, in turn, is a facet of personal development or spiritual growth.

Ganje-Fling and McCarthy go on to discuss the obstacles to spiritual growth that lie in the development paths of those that have been abused in childhood and postulate that 'just as the psychological development of the individual tends to be arrested around the age of abuse, so does the person's spiritual development.' (1996: 257) However, I feel bound to point out that this is not my experience. I have found that those who have been abused to be extremely articulate in matters 'spiritual', often more so than those who have not been abused and have not ventured down this road. However, this assertion should be folded into the research for if Gilchrist (1992) is right and spirituality is 'a context for understanding things' (1992: 12) or in Mezirow's (1991) terms, a 'meaning perspective', then it is to this 'arrested' stage of development that seekers of healing must go to begin their 'spiritual' journey.

Sandford, in her book *Strong at the Broken Places* (1991) presents a distillation of twenty interviews with victims of childhood abuse. After seventeen years of working with people from this background she writes an authoritative and optimistic account of the healing journey. Her motivation is to offer a contrary view to the one that would have all those who experienced childhood abuse languish in victim-consciousness with no hope of escape. My own motivation is not so different from hers. She makes the point, through Kushner (1981) that 'Pain is the price we pay for being alive. ... When we understand that, our question will change from "Why do we have to feel pain?" to "What do we do with our pain so that it becomes meaningful and not just pointless, empty suffering?" And "How can we turn all the painful experiences of our lives into birth pangs or into growing pangs?" ... Pain makes some
people bitter and envious. It makes others sensitive and compassionate. It is the result, not the cause, of pain that makes some experiences of pain meaningful and others empty and destructive.' (1991: 175)

We have already seen that Shafranske and Gorsuch (1984) define spirituality as the 'courage to look within'. Mezirow (2000) acknowledges that 'transformative learning, especially when it involves subjective reframing, is often an intensely threatening emotional experience in which we have to become aware of both the assumptions undergirding our ideas and those supporting our emotional responses to the need to change.' (2000: 6-7) If facing one's pain is considered courageous (Kushner) and spirituality is the 'courage to look within' (Shafranske and Gorsuch) and transformative learning demands courage (Mezirow) then should it not follow that healing through transformative learning is a courageous spiritual endeavour?

Firman and Gila (1997) state that there is a growing collective realisation of primal wounding and that this is manifesting itself in several ways. Firstly, there is a strong 'recovery movement' in which people recognise the way that their lives are dominated by addictive and obsessive behaviours. Secondly, there is a deeper appreciation of the nature of childhood wounding - even in 'normal' families - and thirdly, the emerging realisation that childhood wounding has gone hand in hand with an awareness of rampant child abuse and neglect. (1997: 3-4) If, as both Perrott, Morris, Martin and Romans (1998) and Firman and Gila (1997) suggest, there is a vast community of damaged adults who were abused in childhood and a groundswell of those seeking healing and health, psychotherapeutic resources will quickly become strained and ultimately exhausted. This point is further elaborated by Genia and Cooke (1998) who highlight the fact that the baby boomers are rapidly advancing towards middle age and are the fastest growing segment of the population in America. They add that in many cases, this community will be comprised of 'spiritually-inclined, aging women' (1998: 115) and, given that women seek mental-health services in greater numbers than men and that during midlife women experience significant spiritual growth (Neugarten, 1970 in Genia and Cooke, 1998), it is reasonable to expect that additional pressure will be placed upon counselling and psychotherapeutic services. In this sense alone, a demystification of the healing process and an understanding of its naturalness will perhaps protect the professional helper from dependent relationships and the client from disillusionment and disappointment.

Iyanla Vanzant (1998) in her book *Yesterday I cried* tells her own story of childhood rape, teenage motherhood, bereavement and abandonment and how she emerged from all of this to become a lawyer, a spiritual life counsellor and an ordained minister. She says: 'As I tell my story, there are places and pieces that other people can tap into so that they may
somehow find the courage to revisit their own experiences, bring forth the tears and grow into their greatness.' (1998: 26) She goes on to say: 'My experience has been that, no matter what you call it, the result of 'cleaning up crap' is spiritual growth and development.' (1997: 31)

This orientation review suggests that there are common experiences and themes involved in the transformative learning and healing journey. Some believe that the exploratory and revelatory characteristics of the process are spiritual in nature; a notion that implies a journey to the inner world in order to connect with one’s essential self or a higher consciousness. Others believe that it must be undertaken primarily through the cognitive channel where meaning is unravelled, critically examined and reconstrued. Yet despite these seemingly polar views, it appears that the transformative process results in a new way of seeing one’s place in the world, a sense of connectedness and feelings of authenticity and joy.

Although I cannot claim that my eventual choice of research project will have any relevance to the general management programme that was the focus of my evaluation project, it nonetheless stimulated my initial interest in transformative learning and helped inform my choice of research methodology. It would seem that two very different worlds came together momentarily, one to shed light on a phenomenon that could have relevance for the other.

**Development of the Research Question**

As we have already seen, Genia and Cooke (1998) hypothesise that a large population of baby boomers are now rapidly advancing towards middle age, bringing in their wake an increased interest in spirituality. John Rowan (1993) concurs with the notion that spiritual development is gathering apace.

"I have noticed people talking about the transpersonal and about spirituality generally, in a way which was not on even five years ago. People are coming out of the closet, as it were." (1993: 108)

The prevalence studies reported in the work of Perrott, Morris, Martin and Romans (1998) and Oates, Tebbutt, Swanston, Lynch and O'Toole (1998), Reinert and Smith (1997) and the figures quoted by Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans and Herbison (1993) in their research into ‘Childhood Sexual Abuse and Mental Health in Adult Life’, coupled with the assertion by Firman and Gila (1997) that no-one is spared primal wounding, suggests that there is a large, and, according to Genia and Cooke (1998), growing community of damaged adults. This, along with the finding that higher rates of psychopathology were found in abused women (Cheasty, Clare and Collins (2002) and were associated with an equally high utilisation of mental health services (Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans and Herbison, 1993: 727) adds
weight to the need for a greater understanding of the healing process for both those seeking healing and those accompanying and guiding them as they do so.

In the Survey of CACREP - accredited programs, Martha Kitzrow (2002) argues that the majority of graduate counselling programmes do not provide training in counselling sexual abuse victims. She points out that there is a ‘risk that untrained counsellors may cause harm or re-traumatise this vulnerable population by practicing outside the boundaries of their competence.’ (2002: 108) This, added to the projected growth in demand for counselling provision, could have serious consequences for those who place their development process and trust in the hands of helpers, especially those who have a paucity of theoretical knowledge or experiential material to draw from. However, Kitzrow’s worrying findings suggest that the efficacy of the counsellor lies in their understanding of abuse rather than in their understanding of their client; a focus antithetical to the more modern counselling approaches.

It is my observation, that those seeking healing engage in a transformative process that enables them to learn new things about themselves and the way they see their lives. At the outset of the research study, I was keen to link healing and transformative learning together in order to see if transformative learning theory had anything to offer those seeking healing from childhood sexual abuse. I also intuited that this transformative learning journey was indeed a spiritual journey. However, I did not wish to impose my sense of what I was studying on the research question. Comfortingly, grounded theory allows a relatively undefined starting point from which to embark upon the research. Gregory (1994) points out that ‘Defining the area rather than pinpointing the questions is recommended in grounded theory as a way of ‘avoiding incorrect research aims’ or ‘premature closure’. (1994: 27) (I will discuss the choice of the research methodology in greater detail in the next chapter.)

Bearing Gregory’s comments in mind as I sought the articulation of my research question, I decided to emphasise the research approach that I had elected to take, that of grounded theory, the process that I wished to study, healing as transformative learning, and the overall context in which this took place, that of personal development. Baures’ (1994) and Vanzant (1998) also lit the way by telling inspirational accounts of healing and transformation and inadvertently, helped to crystallise the research question:

A Grounded Theory Study of Adults’ Experiences of Transformative Learning as part of Personal Development
Having apparently put the particular primal wound of childhood sexual abuse at the heart of the question, it should be pointed out that it is not intended that this research should focus on the topic per se. Although I don’t want to deny the experiences of the volunteers, I would prefer to focus on the more positive outcomes of their journeys and bracket their histories as one of a range of primal wounds that could be incurred in early life. For this reason, I will not be reporting in depth on the technicalities of the various psychological traditions nor will I be exploring the psychopathologies that are consequent upon childhood sexual abuse such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), False Memory Syndrome and Disassociated Identify Disorder (DID). Indeed, I did not want to encourage the contributors to the study to revisit their traumatic pasts nor did I want them to be immersed in the study for longer than was necessary by involving them in the analysis. For these reasons, I determined to focus on the route they took to arrive at their current positive disposition and decided to raise this process ‘from the ground’ through the constant comparison of data collected during the interviews. Although, as we shall see later, there were undoubtedly benefits to ‘telling the story’, such as the recognition of previously unseen patterns and revelations in meaning, it was nonetheless not the intention of this research to re-create a therapeutic, learning or meaning-making context for the volunteer group who had already claimed a transformative experience, rather it was the intention to elicit ‘uncontaminated’ data that could be analysed and interpreted at the most fundamental level. To facilitate the acquisition of ‘clean’ data and to avoid any possible distortion of data through projection (an ego defence mechanism identified by Freud that attributes (negatively perceived) qualities, motivations or behaviours upon another), I decided not to engage in discussion during the interview, presenting instead as an empathic listener and respectful sounding board, rather than an interactive and opinionated conversationalist with whom the volunteer could construe new meaning.

The transcendent nature of some people’s recovery and their ability to ‘make sense’ of their experiences is an inspiration. In this research I shall seek to find out ‘what went on’ during their journeys toward a fulfilling and rewarding life. It is for this reason that a community of volunteers who considered themselves ‘healthy’ in all regards was used for the study of transformative learning as part of personal development.

Before closing this section I must acknowledge the courage and support of those who have volunteered to help illuminate a process that can take many years of sustained effort in the face of severe disappointments and disabling setbacks; a process for which there is no ultimate destination or guarantee of health.
Personal Motivation

Reason and Marshall enumerate three different motivations for undertaking research and writing dissertations. The first is to make a contribution to the chosen field, undoubtedly true in this case. The second reason is that of co-operative experiential enquiry (Reason and Rowan, 1981) and, it is indeed a fact that I could not have undertaken this research without the co-operation of the research pool. 'From this perspective, research is for us; it is a co-operative endeavour which enables a community of people to make sense of and act effectively in their world.' (Reason and Marshall, 1987: 112) The third reason is for me, and it is apparent from the introduction that this research has deep personal significance. Nonetheless, I view my motivations as equal across the board hope that this research carries the epithet of 'good research', a term given to a piece of research that is 'for me, for us and for them.' (Reason and Marshall, 1987: 112)

There was another motivator for this research however. It was also driven by a passion for transformative learning, personal development and spiritual growth. One of my early assumptions was that volunteers would articulate their healing journey explicitly in spiritual terms. However, as a result of the interviews that I conducted, I learned to recognise that although participants talked of their journeys as profoundly transformative, it was often not 'spiritual language' that they used, an initial disappointment that gave way to letting go of my investment and being open to what emerged from the data.

Approach to the study

The research project comprised a qualitative, comparative study within the naturalistic (or constructivist) paradigm. I was interested in how the women ‘made sense’ of their healing experiences; in how they construed ‘meaning’ in this particular regard. I anticipated finding similarities between the accounts that would lead to the identification of a ‘natural process’ of healing, one that unfolded organically and contained its own wisdom, leading the aware to find the healing that they sought. The community of volunteers was accessed through placing an advertisement in the journal of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Although not a member myself, I arrived at the choice of publication by observing that many people who have experienced a significant trauma in their lives seek to assist others who are encountering the same trauma. Having made the assumption that those seeking healing from childhood sexual abuse would approach counsellors and therapists to assist them in their process, and that these professionals were likely to have shared a similar history, I identified the professional body for counselling and psychotherapy as a likely source of volunteers. As a result, all the people in the sample were well informed, articulate, counsellors who were subject to a professional code of conduct that sought to
protect them and their clients. Although I did not choose to focus exclusively on women in this study, it happened that the only respondents to the advertisement were women who had experienced wounding between the ages of five and sixteen. Being a woman who has shared the same history as those that volunteered, I was able to use my own understanding and empathy to encourage deep reflection on their healing process or journey. In many cases, this was a significant factor in the women's willingness to reveal their healing history. In no case, was the abuse discussed.

In order to ensure that I was not compromising counselling and psychotherapy etiquette, I referred to my supervisor, who is a qualified psychotherapist, on all matters pertaining to the means of contacting the prospective research pool and the style of communication that should be adopted.

Using grounded theory and the data collection methodology of semi-structured interviews, I asked the volunteers to reflect upon their learning experiences from the point at which they began their healing to the current day; each having already stated that they were feeling healthy and had overcome their traumatic childhood experiences.

I entered the research with a hope that the outcome would be a process map that illustrated the stages or phases of transformative learning pertaining to the healing context. It was further hoped that this would provide some clarity to those undertaking the journey as well those accompanying and guiding them to find health and well-being.

A note on approach, style and language

During the writing up stage of the thesis, I became aware of my tendency to use metaphor and to impose connotations on certain words, such as 'healing', thereby inflicting my own constructs and values on the reader. Without stripping myself of language altogether, I attempted to use metaphors sparingly and to use words that were not presumptuous or loaded in any way. However, I frequently use the metaphor of the journey, partly because that is my experience of the transformative process and partly because this construct has been reflected to me by the interviewees. I try not to use the term 'path' as it denotes a linear, progressive process which is not the experience of those that have undertaken the journey.

In further regard to the language, I try to avoid use of the word 'survivor' to describe those that have overcome their abusive pasts as it doesn't recognise the triumph of their achievement, diminishing it, instead, to the level of coping strategies. I also try not use the word 'recovery' as this suggests that abuse is something to be overcome, like an illness for
which there is a 'cure'. Nor do I willingly adopt the term 'victim'. Although these women were victims in the literal sense as children, the negative connotations that surround the word project characteristics of weakness that deny the strength and courage needed to survive childhood trauma and undergo transformative processes in adult life.

Although I have chosen a qualitative research approach, I have frequently discussed the 'analysis' of the data as opposed to 'interpretation' of the data. I am conscious that the word 'analysis' is more commonly associated with quantitative studies and its use in this thesis may therefore appear counter cultural. However, I was concerned to convey the systematic and precise process that was adopted to ensure that the conclusions were induced by the data and not from a more personal interpretation that may have been coloured by presumption or preference. For this reason, I have indulged the use of the term 'analysis' when I felt it added weight to the discussion and greater legitimacy to the findings.

I tend to use the word 'healing' as opposed to 'healed' as the process, it appears, is ongoing, generative and expansive. Indeed, I often use the term in preference to 'personal development' because of the continual and far-reaching sense of the word as opposed to the implication of incrementalism that is conjured up with the latter term. I understand that the use of this word 'healing' can be misleading as it is generally associated with bodily dysfunction or mental disorder (it is because of this fact that I have not used the term in the title of this thesis) and it is not my intention to convey these messages, nor do I hold the belief that 'something is wrong' with the women in the study. However, many express their process of personal development as a 'healing journey', the (ongoing) goal of which is feeling healthy in its most embracing sense. This includes feeling 'whole', 'complete' and having a sense of 'becoming'. Healing (infinitive) indicates the 'ongoing-ness' of the process; it is happening all the time, a truism in the context of this study. Healing is experienced positively because it brings a sense of improvement; of progress. It can also be surprisingly joyous, as the benefits manifest themselves in the lives of those going through the process. Nelson (1997) in his co-operative enquiry with priests who renounced their vows in favour of marriage comments: 'In their accounts of remarkable change, many authors express a new sense of joy, peace and freedom. They also often claim a greater sense of personal integrity as a result of their choice.' (1997: 191) For these reasons, and for lack of an obvious alternative, I will continue to use the term 'healing' but it is in the hope that the context is understood and remembered. Having made this caveat, there are some instances in the

---

8 When the term 'whole' or 'complete' is used in reference to those who have undertaken the transformative healing journey, I do not wish to imply that non-abused people are necessarily already enjoying this state. I fully acknowledge that the process of 'becoming' is one that is available to all of us, whatever the nature of the behavioural patterns that our formative experiences have created.
Interviews where the body/mind link is made most explicitly and 'healing' is the literal outcome of the women's journey. However, I am not using it in this context in the ensuing writing. There are, of course, inevitably times when I break my own rules to convey meaning.

Summary

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to introduce the study and to emphasise its breadth and complexity. I am aware of, and have presented, many views in respect of the spiritual nature of healing, or personal development. However, I am conscious of its seductive pull on me and my hope for a study that would validate this hypothesis. In fact, this study will find its own way through a community of women who have undertaken a healing journey having experienced primal wounding. It therefore aims to unravel the transformative process which leads these women out of their dysfunctional coping strategies to a feeling of well-being and wholeness. It is assumed that this process exists, that it is distinctive, that it occurs in sufficiently discreet steps to be discussed and explored and that it unfolds in a progressive way. It is also assumed that the women will be able to sift their experiences and articulate their journey in a way that will reveal common patterns that can be generalised across the wider community and perhaps beyond those that share a history of abuse. In order to convey meaning and ease understanding, certain words and metaphors will be used but in an attempt to minimise confusion, they will be used as economically as possible.

Chapter two will introduce the grounded theory research methodology and explain why this approach was chosen for the study.
CHAPTER TWO

The Research Approach and Design

Introduction

This chapter further explores the overarching philosophical perspective from which the research design was evolved and shows how the grounded theory approach was aligned with and developed from this paradigmatic view. The grounded theory methodology is laid out and presented fully to explicate and clarify the stages that the research undertook. It is not the focus of this chapter to show how the research principles were applied in this research study. This will be demonstrated fully in chapter three.

The constructivist paradigm

Reese (1980) notes that certain sets of basic beliefs are constituted into a system of ideas that 'either gives us some judgement about the nature of reality, or a reason why we must be content with knowing something less than the nature of reality, along with a method of taking hold of whatever can be known'. (Reese, 1980: 352 in Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 352) Lincoln and Guba (1985) term this systematic set of beliefs, together with their accompanying methods, a paradigm and further comment that a paradigm represents a distillation of what we think about the world (but cannot prove). They go on to say that 'our actions as inquirers cannot occur without reference to these paradigms: 'As we think, so do we act.' (1985: 15) Patton (1990) defines a paradigm as 'a worldview, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world.' (1990: 37)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) characterise the evolution of research paradigms as 'pre-positivist', 'positivist' and 'post-positivist' but as the pre-positivist era is 'the least interesting' and 'simply a precursor to the more exciting period that followed' (1985: 18), attention will be given to the two remaining eras, those of the positivist and post-positivist eras. These are compared below in Table (i)
Axioms (basic beliefs) about:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Reality</th>
<th>Positivist</th>
<th>Post-positivist (Naturalistic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reality is single, tangible, and fragmentable</td>
<td>Realities are multiple, constructed and holistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship of Knower and Known</th>
<th>Positivist</th>
<th>Post-positivist (Naturalistic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knower and known are independent, a dualism</td>
<td>Knower and known are interactive, inseparable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generalisation</th>
<th>Positivist</th>
<th>Post-positivist (Naturalistic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time and context free generalisations are possible</td>
<td>Only time and context bound working hypotheses are possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Linkages</th>
<th>Positivist</th>
<th>Post-positivist (Naturalistic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are real causes temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects</td>
<td>All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Values</th>
<th>Positivist</th>
<th>Post-positivist (Naturalistic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry is value-free</td>
<td>Inquiry is value-bound</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (1) Comparison between positivist and post-positivist paradigms. Reproduced from Lincoln and Guba (1985: 37)

Further, Guba and Lincoln (1981) define the scientific (positivist) paradigm and the naturalistic paradigm (post-positivist) as follows:

'A scientific paradigm, relying on experimentation as a fundamental technique, is one which views truth as confirmable; that is, truth is a hypothesis that has been confirmed by an actual experiment. The hypotheses are derived by deduction from an a priori theory; when enough hypotheses deriving from a particular theory have been verified, the theory itself is believed to have validity. Physics is a typical instance.'

'A naturalistic paradigm, relying on field study as a fundamental technique which views truth as ineluctable; that is, as ultimately inescapable. Sufficient immersion in and experience with a phenomenological field yields inevitable conclusions about what is important, dynamic, and pervasive in that field. Ethnography is a typical instance.' (1981: 55)

The scientific method has been mainly adopted by the 'hard' sciences for summative purposes whilst the naturalistic method has, latterly, been widely adopted in the social/behavioural sciences and is best suited to formative purposes.
In 1985, Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that 'the post-positivist era has not gained sufficient credibility or self assurance to be given a name of its own.' (1985: 28) They therefore proposed that it be called 'naturalistic'. However, in Guba and Lincoln's subsequent book (1989: 158), they state that they now prefer to call the naturalist paradigm 'constructivist'. They cite other authors as naming the naturalist paradigm 'qualitative', for instance Williams (ed) (1986: 1), Fetterman in Williams (1986: 23) and Smith in Williams. (1986: 38)

Brooks and Brooks (2001) state that 'constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own 'rules' and 'mental models', which we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences. Martin (1997) concurs and states that constructivism 'is not an objectivist theory in which reality is viewed as external to the learner where the mind acts as a processor of input from reality. Rather, constructivism presents a new view on how reality is perceived and the nature of knowledge – as internal to the learner.' (1997: 3)

Mezirow (1991), who is strongly influenced by John Dewey, a constructivist educator of the early twentieth century, and drawing from the cognitive revolution in psychology and psychotherapy also appears to agree with Brooks and Brooks' (2001) statement and arrives at the conclusion:

'It is not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment and emotional well-being and their performance.' (1991: xiii)

Although I am paradigmatically aligned with Mezirow's statement, and no doubt it is true in many educational settings, in extremis, it could be seen as denying, dismissing or negating the significance of 'what happens to people', or worse, it could give rise to accusations of 'false memory' and discredit the individual in the process of their healing and transformation. In his statement, Mezirow (1991) puts emphasis on 'how they interpret and explain what happens to them'; a constructivist stance that gives room for doubt about the relevance of the experience that triggers later interpretation or even invention. As Cooper (1993) states: 'The constructivist views the mind as a builder of symbols – the tools used to represent the knower's reality. External phenomena are meaningless except as the mind perceives them... Constructivists view reality as personally constructed and state that personal experiences determine reality, not the other way round.' (1993: 16) Gergen (1999) builds on this definition by saying that: 'Constructivists propose that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience. In this sense, the mind is not a mirror of the world as it is, but functions
to create the world as we know it. From this perspective there could be as many realities as
there are minds to conceptualise or construe.’ (1999: 236) As one of the main findings of
this research was the importance of validation, a view that the childhood experiences were
‘meaningless’ would be counter to the subsequent building of health. Gergen (1999) goes on
to differentiate between constructivism and constructionism stating that for constructivists,
the process of world construction is psychological; it takes place in the head but for
constructionists, reality is considered to be an outcome of social relationships. He ultimately
arrives at a hybrid definition which is an amalgam of the two, social constructivism in which
‘individuals mentally construct the world but they do so largely with categories supplied by
social relationships.’ (1999: 237) Gergen asserts that the social constructivist therapist will
have an intense interest in narrative which will be treated as psychological.

Although the women’s childhood experiences were not explored in this piece of research, no
doubt was cast upon the fact of them. The focus of this research was how they reflected
upon their healing journey retrospectively and what interpretations they placed upon their
process as it unfolded towards their current sense of being. My role was to facilitate them in
uncovering for themselves, that which they already knew about their healing process. I did
not join with them to construe meaning on their experiences of healing and, as they were
often relating these for the first time, they were construing meaning about the process as
they spoke. This was often signalled by statements such as “I’ve never really thought about
it before.”

In reference again to Mezirow’s (1991) statement above, the act of interpretation in the
reflective adult allows for the construal of protective mechanisms such as denial to cover
issues that need to be addressed for full health and function. Indeed, many of the volunteers
reported the creation of such coping strategies as they reflected on their reflective histories.
As the volunteers in the study were children when they experienced abuse, they were not
capable of employing their cognitive channel, their logico-deductive/inductive reasoning, to
‘interpret’ their experiences, rather they tended to disassociate from them and pack them
away until they matured sufficiently to construe meaning retrospectively. This will be further
discussed in chapter five, Delimiting the Theory, in the section entitled ‘The Core Category’.

Constructivism and constructionism both rely on cognitive processes to actualise images of
reality and although this is a strong part of the process that the women in this study
traversed, it by no means accounts for their entire transformative experience. Mezirow has
been widely criticised for confining transformative learning to the cognitive channel (See
Taylor: 1997, Hart: 1990 and Collard and Law, 1989) yet it is evident in the testimonies of
the women in this study that cognition is not the only channel through which transformative

processes flow. Indeed, it will be seen that the acquisition of 'language' is an important pre-transformational stage in the process that allows non-linguistic knowledge to be brought forward and explored. In one of the accounts, for example, the process was triggered somatically through 'cell memory' as her body re-awakened to the trauma of her abuse.

All research pursues 'the truth' about something. It seeks to answer a question; propose a theory or create meaning. Yet this outcome, or 'end point' if we are to continue to use positivistic language, is inevitably mediated by the process by which it is reached. Margaret Wheatley (1992) in her book *Leadership and the New Science* draws heavily on the world of quantum physics to construct an argument for a world of relationships and multiple realities. Taking the principle of complementarity (which states that matter exists as waves packets comprising particles *and* waves) and coupling this with Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, (which states that 'the more precisely the position [of a particle] is determined, the less precisely the momentum is known in any instant, and vice versa.' (Heisenberg's Uncertainty Paper, 1927,)) we find that whilst 'we can measure wave properties or particle properties, the exact properties of the duality must always elude any measurement we might hope to make... [thereby] changing our relationship to measurement and observation.' (1992: 35) 'No longer, in this relational world,' Wheatley argues 'can we study anything as separate from ourselves. Our acts of observation are part of the process that brings forth the manifestation of what we are observing.' (1992: 36) In short, we can suppose that nothing exists in a vacuum, isolated from or unaffected by external influences. Wheatley also says: 'If nothing exists independently of its relationship with something else, we can move away from our need to think of things as polar opposites.' (1992: 34) – an argument, indeed, for the obsolescence of positivism.

Bateson (1980) speaks of 'the pattern that connects' and encourages us to focus on relationships as the basis for all definitions. If we accept this interrelatedness as representative of the current state of affairs, we are inevitably driven towards adopting the post-positivistic (or naturalistic) paradigm when selecting modern research methods, particularly in the social sciences where the focus on relationships necessarily aligns with Bateson's impulsion.

It is essential that the research paradigm for this study allows subjectivity and caters for multiple realities. The phenomenon being researched is dependent upon how volunteers construe reality from their experiences and how this reality changes over time as they engage with their healing process. A positivistic paradigm is not conducive to changing realities. As Guba and Lincoln point out in Table (i) 'Reality' in the positivist paradigm is considered to be 'single, tangible, and fragmentable.'
Husserl (1859-1938), a student of the Brentano school and considered to be the father of phenomenology, derived the concept of intentionality from Brentano. This is the notion that the main characteristic of consciousness is that it is always intentional. He stated that every psychological act is directed at an object and every belief or desire has an object. Intentionality was used to distinguish psychical phenomena (minds) from physical phenomena (objects) which lack intentionality. As the women in the study could not have been considered to be intentional in their minds as youngsters, this paradigm cannot accommodate the essence or purpose of this study. Transformative theory also sits within the constructivist paradigm and I therefore felt that it was a good fit for this piece of research.

Having already signalled some concerns about the constructivist paradigm, I nonetheless stand by its choice for this research project as it allows for a broader appreciation of the sense-making channels and the construal of meaning as a result. Whereas, phenomenologists, according to the Centre for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, 'tend to oppose the acceptance of unobservable matters and grand systems erected in speculative thinking.' (www.phenomenologycenter.org/phenom.htm#1)

However, whilst working predominantly within the constructivist paradigm, I would like to fold in something of the phenomenological culture which deeply values the experience of the other and places it at the centre of any interaction between, say, client and counsellor. This orientation enables the client to give full expression to her experience with full confidence that this will be accepted and validated. Gergen (1999) cautions, however, that 'because phenomenological analysis holds subjective experience as its primary subject matter, it never fully gives up the individualist heritage', (1999: 129) one that is conceived by Gergen to be problematical in that it potentially alienates one from another. I must say, I find myself vacillating between constructivism, which asserts that constructions exist only in the minds of the constructors, and phenomenology, which places emphasis on the external, subjective experience and I would like to steer a line between the two that both accepts the experiences of the contributor to the study and allows them to construe meaning upon this experience retrospectively using socially negotiated symbols and language, a product of constructionism. (See Gergen, 1999)

**Grounded Theory**

Glaser (1978) asks 'Why generate grounded theory?' and responds with 'by providing the man in the know with substantive theory.' (1978: 12) He goes on: 'With substantive theory, the man in the know can start transcending his finite grasp of things.' (1978: 13)
Additionally, 'he is able to anticipate other kinds of consequences, conditions and strategies of an act... he can expand his description and meaning of incidents by placing them in greater scope as his thought transcends the details he knows so well... Concepts are easier to remember than incidents... thus [a knowledgeable person's] capacity to know is potentiatiated... and, as his theoretical view expands, his social base can expand.' (1978: 13)

Glaser also emphasises that grounded theory is 'a very useful way to understand what is going on'. (1978: 3)

Bearing the aims of grounded theory in mind and taking account of the constraints outlined in the previous section, grounded theory quickly emerged as the methodology that most closely suited the purpose, culture and context of this research. The aim of this study to reveal the theoretical basis for a transformative healing process, clearly pointed towards a qualitative approach, most notably, one that allowed 'reality' to be defined by the subject. As a result of the sensitivity surrounding this research topic, it was felt that the culture in which it took place must be one of open exploration and 'person-centred' inquiry with no pre-digested hypothesis that might portray investment in any particular outcome. It was important too to recognise that the context was one of healing and that any risk of disturbance to that process should be minimised if it was only partially complete. In addition, grounded theory allows for the experience of the researcher to inform the direction of the questioning and to identify significant data. These aspects of grounded theory created an immediate intuitive resonance that only became more robust as the approach was explored and reasoned from an intellectually rigorous perspective. The following section will lay out the reasoning behind its selection and describe how it was applied in this instance.

Essentially, grounded theory is an inductive research process for generating and verifying substantive (theory developed for a substantive or empirical area of sociological inquiry which is context specific) or formal (theory developed for a formal or conceptual area of sociological inquiry which is generalisable) theories. It outlines a methodology for taking 'the researcher into the 'real' world so that the results and findings are 'grounded' in the empirical world.' (Patton, 1990: 67) It is the intention of this study to generate a substantive theory but with the hope that it will be considered to have more general relevance and become a stepping stone to the development of a formal theory.

Blumer (1978) offers a metaphor for the generation of grounded theory. 'The metaphor I like is that of lifting the veils that obscure or hide what is going on. ... The veils are lifted by getting close to the area and by digging deep in it through careful study. ... The merit of naturalistic study is that it respects and stays close to the empirical domain.' (1978: 38 in Patton, 1990: 67)
The *verstehen* school of qualitative inquiry highlights the central role of empathic neutrality and insight in response to accusations from critics that the approach is too subjective. (Verstehen means 'understanding' and refers to the unique human capacity to make sense of the world. (Patton, 1990: 56)) Yet acute subjectivity must be moderated through the adoption of the grounded theory approach as it seeks to ‘... discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema that relates to a particular situation. This situation is one in which individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon.’ (Cresswell, 1998: 56) This process, through its focus on identifying underlying structures and core meanings in pursuit of theory must, by definition, prevent the researcher from getting stuck in his or her own heuristic loop. This search for commonality is a feature of symbolic interactionism. It seeks out the meanings that people ascribe to events; identifies the common symbols that are used to describe them and establishes a universal understanding through interactive exchange with others. This theoretical perspective provides the constructionist foundation upon which grounded theory is based. (Patton, 1990: 75)

Although the 'interactive exchange' with others is not an explicit feature of this study, it is inevitable that the interviewees' interactive exchanges throughout their transformative process have honed and refined the meaning they place on their experiences. This interactive exchange may have taken place in the context of abstract conversations in the current social climate of openness about formerly taboo topics; between members of a counselling (or other) training/development programme or on a one-to-one basis in the therapeutic or counselling setting. This 'meaning-making mechanism' and the outcome from exchanges with others provide a backdrop for the conversations between the researcher and the volunteers. The concepts, the language and the metaphors had all been well rehearsed. It was not the intention that the interviews be an 'interactive exchange' or a meaning-making exercise. In fact, they more closely resembled a 'story-telling' exercise to an audience of one who probed and asked questions rather than engaged in dialogue. (Although in recounting their transformative process, perhaps in its entirety for the first time, many commented that they had made new connections from hearing themselves speak out their thoughts.) Whilst focusing on the *process* of transformation through the accounts or 'stories' of the participants in the study, I do not mean to suggest that they have a beginning, middle and end. To this extent, the metaphor is misleading. Looking forward for a moment, this linearity was not grounded in the data but rather a dynamic, reciprocating, intuitive pattern of progression emerged. However, it was only through hearing the accounts that were related linearly, that this characteristic became apparent. Further elucidation and discussion on this aspect of the process will be signalled towards the end of Chapter four, Analysis of the Data in the section.
entitled 'The spiral as a representation of the process'. It will be picked up again during the literature review in Chapter six and finally again in Chapter seven, 'Writing the Theory'.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) define Grounded Theory as a 'theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind, rather, with an area of study. The researcher then allows the theory to emerge from the data.' (1998: 12) Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding and provide a meaningful guide to action. Although theory is grounded in data, the creativity of the researcher is also an essential ingredient. Not knowing the precise area of study as I entered the grounded theory process was certainly true in my case, indeed, as the process unfolded, my thoughts and expectations about the research project changed considerably – for the better I believe. It was this level of flexibility that was one of the attractors of the methodology for me as I fumbled my way towards a research question that I could identify with and feel passionate about.

Strauss and Corbin (1998: 73-85) are concerned with building theory through qualitative data analysis. In the process, two operations are essential; asking questions and making comparisons. Some of the categories of questions that can be asked are:

**Sensitising questions** - How can I make sense out of my material? Some examples include: What is going on here? Who is involved? How do they define the situation? What is its meaning to them?

**Theoretical questions** – How can I have a theoretical interpretation whilst still grounding it in the empirical reality reflected by my materials? Theoretical questions assist in clarifying process, variation and links between concepts. Examples include: What is the relationship of one concept to another? How do events/actions change over time? What would happen if....?

**Practical/structural questions** – These questions reveal the structural integrity of the evolving theory and highlight gaps that need filling, areas for further investigation and the direction for further sampling. Examples include: Where, when and how do I go next to gather the data for my evolving theory? Is my developing theory logical? Have I reached saturation point?

**Guiding questions** – Starting from a broad context, these open questions lead towards more specific questions which are based upon the responses to the previous questions. This
encourages the respondent to give more information on the properties and dimensions of concepts.

Making comparisons extends beyond comparing incident to incident to making theoretical comparisons. Theoretical comparisons allow us to use metaphors or analogies to highlight properties or dimensions that may elude us on first examination. With this additional insight, further directed questions may be asked to clarify the situation and to learn more about the incident being explored. This enables us to look at something objectively rather than foreclose on a classification without proper examination.

Strauss and Corbin in Denzin and Linclon (1998) state that:

'Grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed. Theory evolves during actual research and does this through the continuous interplay between the researcher and the data. The researcher, therefore should be unafraid of drawing on their own experiences as these become the foundations for making comparisons and discoveries. Emphasis is placed on knowing oneself sufficiently to recognise bias, the ability to think critically yet abstractly and the ability to show sensitivity to others. (1998: 13)

Strauss and Corbin also state that the grounded theory methodology explicitly allows 'generating theory and doing social research as two parts of the same process.'

The methodology is not burdened with rules and regulations but encourages questioning, making comparisons and generating theory from the ground (data) up.

Grounded theory may be used to explain processes. (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) 'Instead of looking for properties, one is purposefully looking at action/interaction and noting movement, sequence and change as well as how it evolves (changes or remains the same) in response to changes in context or conditions.' (1998: 167) Strauss and Corbin go on to say that analysing the data for process not only gives the theory a sense of 'life' but helps with the integration and discovery of variation. It forces the analyst to look for patterns and trends in the data that will inform the formation of the theory. The questions that should be asked when analysing data for process include:

- What is going on here?
- What problems, issues, happenings are being handled through the process and what form does it take?
- What conditions combine to create the context in which the process is located?
- How do the consequences of one part of the process play into the next?
Processes can usually be broken down into sub-processes. These are usually tactics used by an individual that together, comprise the broader process. As long as the processes are rooted in structure, this dynamic approach to grounded theory remains sound.

With regard to previous knowledge, in the case of grounded theory, the researcher is empowered to use personal experience to understand the processes whereas in the phenomenological approach, previous experience must be put aside to ensure there is no subjective corruption of the data. Baker et al (1992) point out that within the grounded theory, 'the researcher is a social being who also creates and recreates social processes. Therefore, previous experiences are data. No effort is made to put aside ideas or assumptions about the situation being studied. On the contrary, the research uses these in order to understand better the processes being observed.' (1992: 1357) Having been professionally involved in the developmental process for many years and having been through a transformative healing journey of my own, it would be difficult to withhold or bracket preconceptions (Heron 1992) and prevent them from influencing the theory formation.

Glaser (1978) argues that grounded theory allows us 'to discover what is going on' (1978 in Baker et al, 1992: 1357) and it is precisely a 'discovery' that is desired in this case; to discover what is going on in the process of healing (a basic social psychological process) as an individual emerges from trauma.

In the spirit of multiple realities, and an expansionist stance, the constructivist will use what means there are available to throw light on the focus of their inquiry. As grounded theory lies within the constructivist paradigm and is compatible with the research question, it is grounded theory that has therefore been chosen as the research methodology for this study.

**Grounded theory in practice**

The rigour in grounded theory comes from the activity of 'constant comparative analysis' of concepts and their properties and dimensions. This unique and defining feature of grounded theory is expanded in, amongst others, Glaser and Strauss (1967: 101-115), Glaser (1978: 15), Creswell (1998: 57), Lincoln and Guba (1985: 335) and Strauss and Corbin (1998: 67). The act of constant comparative analysis enables previous concepts to be subsumed in concepts or categories that are broader in scope and of a higher conceptual order until a saturation point is reached and no further abstraction is theoretically possible. At this point, theory is formed.
Strauss and Corbin (1998) demonstrate how they approach the analysis when practising grounded theory. At the outset a detailed line-by-line analysis of the data - whether they be taken from interviews, texts or the transcripts of videos - is necessary to generate initial categories and to discover the relationships among concepts (1998: 57). Strauss and Corbin make the point that the early analysis is not a rigid process, rather a creative one that allows one to draw on different types of coding which include both open and axial coding. When coding data, there are two issues that need to be born in mind beyond the data themselves; experience and knowledge. As Jones (1985) points out... 'there is no such thing as presuppositionless research. In preparing for interviews, researchers will have.... some broad questions in mind, and the more interviews they do and the more patterns they see in the data, the more likely they are to use this grounded understanding to want to explore in certain directions rather than others.' (1985: 47) It is important therefore that the researcher be cognisant of their own predispositions and preferences for thinking about the world and be aware of how this may influence the way they interpret the data. A high level of self-awareness is indicated therefore, so that a balance may be struck between using prior experience and knowledge to judge a situation or steer a direction and putting this aside to be fully open to the wider possibilities that the data offers. This statement rang true for me as I inevitably approached the study with expectations, opinions and a high level of investment.

In undertaking an initial micro-analysis of the data, the following considerations should be made. This list is derived from that presented by Strauss and Corbin (1998)

1. The coding procedure should be focused on the data, not on a preferred interpretation of the data
2. Comparisons between the data should be made along the level of properties and dimensions and ways that allow the analyst to break the data apart and reconstruct them to form an interpretive scheme
3. Listen to what is being said and how it is being said. Take into account the interviewee’s interpretation. You may alight upon ‘in vivo’ codes – codes that are directly born of the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967)
4. Ask theoretical questions to flush out concepts and their relationships
5. Maintain analytic distance by abstracting from the data and removing it from its context
6. Conceptualise and classify events, acts and outcomes. This abstracting, reducing and relating takes the researcher beyond the descriptive to theoretical coding and encourages a conceptual mode of analysis. This will form the foundation of the theory
7. Group concepts according to their salient properties – their similarities and differences
8. Place concepts into categories that show variation according to their properties and dimensions
9. Make theoretical comparisons (as opposed to data comparisons) to increase researcher sensitivity
10. Look for how patterns vary dimensionally or contextually
11. Are there any provisional hypotheses emerging.
12. Examine what personal assumptions about the data are being taken for granted

(Taken from Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 65-68)

This micro-analytical process is primarily relevant at the beginning stages of the research project and, as categories emerge, there is less need to delve into the detail and revisit the above process.

A short expansion on the two types of coding, 'open' and 'axial', that may be included in the micro-analysis is given by Straus and Corbin (1998)

**Open coding** is the act of breaking open the text to discover concepts. Broadly, the activity of open coding comprises breaking the data down into discrete parts, comparing them for similarities and differences and grouping them under more abstract concepts to form categories. (1998: 101) Glaser refers to the process of open coding as 'running the data open' which leads to an understanding of the direction to take the study through theoretical sampling. (1978: 56)

**Axial coding** is 'the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed 'axial' because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions.' (1998: 123) Axial coding results from the answers to questions such as 'Why?', 'How come?', 'Where?', 'When?', 'How?' and 'With what results?' This uncovers relationships between categories.

The theoretical coding procedure is supported by conceptual naming or labelling and memoing the data. Glaser (1978) states that writing memos on codes draws 'out the theoretical properties of the code and eventually saturates the code by helping to define its boundaries, the empirical criteria on which it rests, the conditions under which it emerges and the theoretically coded connections and significance to both the data and the major theoretical themes in the data.' (1978: 84-85) Memos can indicate where the gaps may exist in the analysis and highlight any new possible directions for the theory to follow.
Naming concepts is the first level abstraction suggested by the data. These terms are likely to be idiosyncratic due to the researcher’s unique view on the data, the knowledge base that the researcher is working from, the former experience of the researcher and the personal motivations that energise the research. The most consuming study is one of personal life-cycle interest. It literally ‘consumes’ the researcher and fuels the study due to the relevant information and personal help that it can give. (Glaser, 1978: 28) Memos are personal notes and thoughts that arise as the analysis proceeds. These point towards further data collection until saturation is achieved and the addition of further data adds nothing more to the emergent theory. There is no doubt that this study is of direct relevance and benefit to the researcher and that the grounded theory methodology allows a full and creative exploration of the territory. Such a methodological fit leads to high levels of commitment and satisfaction in pursuing this line of study.

The coding process allows the researcher to alternate between moving in close and stepping back to take a wider perspective on the data and look at the relationships that exist between the codes, the concepts and the higher categorisation that explains the data and gives birth to the theory. Questions asked of the data at each of these ‘focal points’ are based upon the six ‘Cs’ devised by Glaser (1978).

The Six ‘Cs’

- Cause – what causes the phenomenon to occur?
- Consequences – What are the consequences of the phenomenon?
- Conditions - what are the conditions for its emergence?
- Context – what is the context?
- Contingencies – Is any of the data contingent on other data
- Co-variances – How does one category co-vary with another

According to Glaser (1978) The Six C’s are ‘the ‘bread and butter’ theoretical code of sociology.’ (1978: 74) Most studies fit into the causal, consequence or condition model with their respective sub-families. This model may also be used when looking for a basic social or social psychological process, (BSP or BSPP) (1978: 96) which becomes the core category. BSPs are recognised by having two or more clear emergent stages that can be perceived and recognised as having unique properties whereas other core categories have no stages. A process may also be considered to be defined by the presence of the vector qualities of time and direction. This study falls into the category of theorising about a BSPP as opposed to a BSP. As Glaser puts it: ‘In studying a process which optimises change, fluidity and unfreezing of behavioural patterns, it is likely that the emergent mix would emphasize the BSPP.’ (1978: 96)
The following statement by Glaser was instrumental in confirming that the methodology of grounded theory was precisely that which was required to explore healing and transformative learning and, thinking about the study retrospectively, raises the issue that many interviewees commented upon; that of being unaware that they were going through a process.

'A person may perceive the events which make up stages of a process he is going through without perceiving the overall process or any particular stages. These events may be perceived as idiosyncratic... rather than as stages of a social process which many people go through. A sociologist, however, can perceive the stages because he studies large numbers of individual histories and sees as social which individuals may see as personal.' (Glaser, 1978: 98-99)

This piece of research is concerned with a process, the healing process that moves an individual from an undesirable position to a desirable one. It is characterised by a sequence of events over time and movement to 'higher' psychological and emotional ground. This makes grounded theory a very attractive methodology in this instance.

Once concepts have been 'raised from the ground', they will be further refined and linked together in the form of a hierarchy. This can be done diagrammatically in which the causal properties linking concepts together may be clearly seen. This will give rise to one core concept or category that will include and account for all that is going on in the data. Once this position is reached, the proposition arrived at can be put in to context with existing theory. As a result of this work, a working theory will be formulated which can be shared and validated.

Interviews are codified according to the response to a set of questions that began with the very general question; 'what is this data a study of?' This is moved to a more specific question; 'what category does this incident indicate?' to a yet more precise question 'What is actually happening in the data?' The responses to these questions slowly build understanding and lead the researcher towards the generation of a core category. The concept indicator model was used to direct the conceptual coding of a set of empirical indicators. It is based upon a constant comparing of indicator to indicator and, when a conceptual code is generated, comparing indicator to conceptual code. This method provides the essential link between data and concept. See figure (i) below: (Taken from Glaser, 1978: 62)
Theoretical coding is the process by which theory is woven together from the concepts that have been derived from the raw data above. Theoretical coding is done using a technique of constant comparative analysis; the rigor with which this is done will have a direct bearing on theory development, saturation, verification and the conclusions that are ultimately drawn.

Consolidation of the categories rests on the identification of more abstract definitions of the concepts. Once the definitions have been clarified, further concepts may be assigned to the category that will reinforce or expand its meaning, then basic concepts can be tested out in other situations or contexts. The frequency and intensity with which a particular concept is repeated in different situations or contexts will show it to be robust. If the concept is absent in different contexts, it appears as a context specific phenomenon. Categories are lifted to the highest level of abstraction until a point is reached where one core category emerges that subsumes and accounts for all that is going on in the data. Once this position is reached, the proposition arrived at can be put in to context with existing theory. As a result of this work, a working theory can be formulated which can be shared and validated. Validity is dependent upon the range and variety of categories sought through theoretical sampling. The wider the variety, the more generalisable the theory becomes.
Theoretical sampling draws in data that is specifically related to the emerging theory. It uses the codes already identified in the data purposefully to access further, hopefully reinforcing, data. This process ceases when no further additions or deviations to the codes occur or saturation of the data is reached. (1978: 36)

Grounded theory is, in essence, an inductive process. Deduction is only used to derive from the induced codes, where to go to next for more data to generate theory. Theoretical sampling enables theory to be built from the outcome of the progressive stages of the analysed data, it should not be used for the verification of preconceived or pet hypotheses. Indeed, this would be the antithesis of the methodology as it would require 'force-fitting' the data into a theory rather than 'unwrapping' the theory from the grounded data.

Figure (ii) below depicts the research process for this study. It is hoped that the dynamic nature of grounded theory and the constant comparative process are graphically conveyed by the forward and reverse arrows.
Data collection – qualitative interviewing

The chosen paradigm, constructivist, and the chosen research methodology, grounded theory, informed the data collection process and thereby, assisted in the design of the research.

Data collection in grounded theory is commonly based upon the interview. This is an attractive data collection tool as analysis can occur concurrently and inferences drawn as a result of the constant comparative method as the researcher listens; draws from personal experience and accesses different sources of material. Initially, the research pool is constructed theoretically and the net is thrown relatively wide to capture data that will lead to a more selective approach. The data collection process allows for areas of emerging interest to be explored in more depth and for changes to the questions being asked. Refinement or verification of the emergent theory is sought through a literature search and through additional rounds of interviews until no fresh data is forthcoming and a point of ‘saturation’ is reached.

Data collection in this study was primarily by means of the semi-structured interview; a purposeful, or guided, conversation within which the interviewee had the freedom to explore their healing process freely. This enabled rich data about their process to be recorded. Berg (1995) defines an interview simply as a conversation with a purpose; that of gathering information. Kvale (1983) described the qualitative interview as one ‘whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena... neither in the interview phase nor in the later analysis is the purpose primarily to obtain quantifiable responses.’ (1983: 174-175) The common feature in each definition is to elicit and understand the perspective of the interviewee. Patton (1990) reinforces this point by stating that ‘the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind.... To assess the perspective of the person being interviewed.... To find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit.’ (1990: 278)

Patton (1990) gives good guidelines for the collection of qualitative data. In addition to his six categories of questions: Experience/behaviour, Opinion/value, Feeling, Knowledge, Sensory, Background/demographic, he suggests the following forms of question.

- Open questions should be asked
- Yes/no questions should be avoided unless they are required for clarification
• No presuppositions should be made by the interviewer. Assuming shared meaning or shared experiences may prove to be erroneous
• Don’t ask two questions in one. One at a time only so that the interview has a chance to respond fully to each question
• Don’t assume cause/effect relationships. ‘Why’ questions therefore should be avoided
• Neutral questions allow the interviewee to respond freely. Illustrations or examples may assist the interviewee in pitching their response
• Avoid leading questions
• Putting the interviewee into a role-play can provide helpful context
• Introducing the next question through preparatory statements helps the interviewee collect their thoughts
• Probing and follow-up questions enables further clarification and richness of data
• Affirm and summarise as you go
• Always have a contingency question. (1990: 290-333)

Burgess (1982) in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1991) defines the qualitative interview as ‘the opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply to uncover new clues, open up new dimensions.... and to secure vivid, accurate inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience.’ She goes on to say that the main reason for conducting qualitative interviews is to understand.... ‘how individuals construct the meaning and significance of their situations.... from.... The complex personal framework of beliefs and values which they have developed over their lives in order to help explain and predict events in their world.’ (1982: 107 in Easterby-Smith et al. 1991: 72-82) This maps very closely on to the purpose of the study central to this thesis and reinforces the decision to conduct qualitative interviews with the group of volunteers that formed the research pool. As a result of the flexible structure characteristic of a qualitative interview, it is important that the interviewer is able to convey their full understanding of the interviewee’s perspective and be able to explore, without prejudice, the other’s thoughts and opinions. In order to elicit rich information, the environment in which the interview is to be conducted must feel ‘safe’. This includes such matters as territorial neutrality, confidentiality, a trusting relationship and a topic that is of relevance and interest to the interviewee as this, according to Easterby-Smith et al (1991), will enhance their participation. In addition, interest and commitment on behalf of the interviewer often yields much better results than a more clinical, detached approach.

Although, in the case of this research study, the aim was to use an open and exploratory style of qualitative interview, in some instances, it was challenging to honour this whilst creating boundaries around the territory to be explored. Even though the agenda for the
interview was clear, occasionally, interviewees became committed to 'telling their story' to a willing audience (sometimes an 'oblique' story that was not strictly relevant) in spite of the fact that this was not requested or desired. Patton (1990) asserts that the interviewer must keep control of the interview by 'knowing what one wants to find out, asking the right questions to get the desired answers and giving appropriate verbal and non-verbal feedback to the person being interviewed.' (1990: 330-331) He stresses the importance of 'active listening' and the use of interruptions and appropriate probes to keep the interview on track. Easterby-Smith et al (1991) identify a range of ways in which the probe can be used.

- **The basic probe** – a repetition of the original question
- **Explanatory probes** – Asking questions such as "What did you mean by that?"
- **Focused probes** – To access specific information
- **The silent probe** – a pause (Deliberately creating silence often draws the interviewee to fill the silence with more information.)
- **Drawing out** – Repetition of the last few words followed by an open statement such as "Tell me more about..." or "What happened next?" (This was the most useful phrase in the interviews that were conducted for this study as illumination of a progressive process was sought.)
- **Giving ideas or suggestions** – This is a technique that can add momentum to a interview that is slowing down however, it is important not to 'lead the witness' or influence the content of the information being divulged. Questions such as "Have you thought about...?" or "Have you tried...?" may be helpful. Also, divulging other's perceptions or perspectives on a topic can encourage more input. (Please note that giving ideas or suggestions is not appropriate for the grounded theory approach taken and was therefore not part of the interviewing protocol.)
- **Mirroring and reflecting** – Summarising and repeating back what has been said allows the interviewee to check the meaning they have conveyed and clarify or adjust their comments. (1991: 80)

**Capturing the data**

Although Easterby-Smith et al (1991) acknowledge that the use of a tape recorder enables the interviewer to demonstrate their active listening capabilities and to guide and direct the interview more precisely, they do not recommend its use as the counter effects are too costly in terms of the richness of data that may otherwise be captured. (1991: 79) However, as they are primarily concerned with the managerial and organisational context, the issue of the 'political sensitivity' of the matters being discussed and the fear that the information may find its way into the wrong hands may make tape-recording a less desirable data capturing medium. However, another advocate of the qualitative interview suggests that 'A tape-
recorder is part of the indispensable equipment of the researcher using qualitative methods.’ (Patton, 1990: 348) as it allows the interviewer to concentrate fully on what the interviewee is saying. As there was only one opportunity to meet with volunteers in this study, it was important that the interview was tape-recorded and that the pitch of the voice, the use of inflection or innuendo; the use of pauses, silences and interruptions were all captured and available for use in the analysis.

The place of the literature review

Glaser (1978) advocates that ‘reading the theoretical literature should be avoided when possible until after the discovered framework is stabilised.’ Glaser (1978: 51) This is due to the fact that it is easy to become derailed by external and irrelevant details that close down the researcher’s thinking prematurely. Indeed, he suggests that the researcher engage in normal social activity and read widely during the research – ‘but in a substantive field different from the research’; (1978: 31) so that the researcher can genuinely tap into his or her own creativity when generating theory. The danger with reading literature during the grounded theory process is that it could ‘contaminate’ efforts to generate concepts from the data with preconceived ideas and so force the data in the wrong direction. (1978: 31) This approach to the literature review and its timing is one of the key differences between deductive and inductive, or generative, theory making. Only after theory begins to emerge and is sufficiently ‘grounded’ is exploration of the literature recommended and this, only with the idea of locating or relating the emergent theories to others through the integration of ideas. Once the saturation point has been reached, selecting and reading the literature can be quite rapid as only relevant texts are chosen so greater coverage can be achieved.

Glaser promises a phase in the research process called ‘the drugless trip’ which occurs as a result of the transition from input into depression and out through writing memos at which point, ideas start to ‘flow like crazy’. (1978: 24) These ideas would not flow if the researcher was concerned to orientate or force fit them into some already established theory. The lure of the drugless trip prevents clouding the mind with extraneous information at the early stages of the grounded theory research process.

Although broad familiarity and interest in the topic of transformation characterised my approach to this research, the literature review genuinely took place once the analysis had been completed and will appear subsequent to this section of the thesis.
Feminist approaches

Although I do not consider myself a 'feminist' researcher, my thinking is bound to be refracted through a female lens. Reinharz and Davidman (1992) points out that; a) utilising the researcher's personal experience is a distinguishing feature of feminist research; b) feminist researchers frequently present their research in their own voice and c) many feminist researchers describe how their projects stem from, and are part of, their own lives. If meeting these three criteria qualifies me to be called a feminist researcher, then that is what I am. I will be using my personal experience, speaking in my own voice and I have already described the connection this research has to my own life.

Reinharz and Davidman (1992) also point out that: Feminism is a perspective, not a research method; feminists use a multiplicity of research methods; feminist research may be transdisciplinary, intent on creating social change, develops special relationships with the people studied and defines a special relation with the reader. (1992: 240) To this extent, this thesis may be considered the outpourings of a 'feminist' researcher.

The research pool is unquestionably that of a group of women who were dominated and controlled by men in their childhoods, a theme that prevails in feminist literature – and this domination took place in a patriarchal society created by men, for men. However, as the focus on the inquiry is not on the context in which damage was done, rather the healing and transcending process, attention will be placed on this rather than on the feminist issues wrapped up in the original abuse. Nevertheless, there are several ways in which the research study did adhere to feminist approaches. This was not so much contrived; rather it was a natural as a consequence of the empathy the researcher felt towards the volunteers.

Roberts (1981) defines feminism as 'an attempt to insist upon the experience and very existence of women.' (1981: 15) This stance, in itself, makes feminism a feature of an ideological conflict and it cannot therefore call for an unbiased or value-free methodology. Becker (1971) argues that 'we cannot avoid taking sides for reasons firmly based in social structure.' (1971: 213)

'In feminist research approaches, the goals are to establish collaborative and non-exploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification and to conduct research that is transformative.' (Cresswell, 1998: 83) Indeed, in placing the researcher within the study, feminists lay themselves open to criticism about the lack of objectivity – a criticism that is equally levelled at naturalistic inquirers by those of the positivistic persuasion. (See Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 292-293 for their debate on objectivity, subjectivity and intersubjectivity.) Indeed, the central position of the researcher in this study
happened as a result of shared experiences, gender compatibility, cultural, intellectual and professional similarities. It was not intended at the outset that this should necessarily be the case. In the original advertisement calling for volunteers, it was hoped that people would respond from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and that both men and women would volunteer to be interviewed. However, in this case, it would appear that the feminist research approach was satisfied by chance.

Lather (1991) comments that feminist researchers see gender as a basic organising principle that shapes the conditions of women’s lives. It is a ‘lens that brings into focus particular questions.’ (Fox-Keller, 1985: 6) The questions feminists raise relate to the issue of gender being a central influencing factor in shaping the consciousness of women. Lather (1991) further comments that the aim of this ideological research is to ‘correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to endings women’s unequal social position.’ (1991: 71) Although this study did not achieve this grand aim, many of the women volunteers achieved this on their own terms, emerging as competent, confident, visible, choosing adults in a world noisy with echoes from their past. Notwithstanding this, some of Lather’s recommendations for a feminist researcher were certainly a feature of the interaction with volunteers. Dialogue entailed self-disclosure (after the interview) to foster a sense of collaboration and interviews provided potential for deeper probing and reciprocally educative encounters. A high level of self-reflexivity is suggested by Stewart (1994) who asserts that researchers need to assess how their role or position may impact their understanding of another woman’s life. She also highlights the need for researchers to guard against the assumption that women have ‘one voice’ and remember that each interprets her social contract as a woman differently and uniquely.

Interviewing women

Ann Oakley in Roberts (1981) argues that interviewing is a masculine paradigm as it reinforces differences in status between the interviewer and the interviewee; the conversation flow is from the questioner to the responder; interviewees are generally considered to be passive in the process and it reduces interviewers to a ‘question asking and rapport-promoting role’. (1981: 37) This typifies the interviewer as both a recorder and a reporter. She goes on to say that whilst the interviewer must treat the interviewee as an object or data-producing machine, the interviewer has the same status as the authoritative body he or she represents thus depersonalising both participants in the research process. The second typification of interviewers in the literature is that of the interviewer as a psychoanalyst. This status differential is caused by the ‘expert’ delving for information from the ‘non-expert’. This demands a non-directive interviewing approach which uses probes to encourage disclosure and access information. Oakley points out that ‘the term ‘non-directive’
is derived directly from the language of psychotherapy and carries the logic of interviewer-impersonality to its extreme.’ She concludes that ‘the mechanical and psychoanalytic typifications of the ‘proper’ interviewer owe ‘more to a masculine social and sociological vantage point than to a feminine one.’ (1981: 38) The term ‘proper’ appeals to values such as objectivity, detachment, hierarchy and ‘science’ and infer that ‘poor’ interviews are distinguished by subjectivity, involvement and the ‘fiction’ of equality. In the case of women interviewing women, Oakley extrapolates from her argument that interviewers define their interviewees as subordinate by stating that: 1) the use of prescribed interviewing practice is morally indefensible; 2) general and irreconcilable contradictions at the heart of the textbook paradigm are exposed and 3) it becomes clear that, in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship.’ (1981: 41)

Drawing from her experiences of interviewing women who were transitioning into motherhood, Oakley points to the difficulty of not being drawn into their worlds and responding to their questions, particularly as the nature of their exchanges was so personal. In addition, she felt that she was burdening them with further interviews after the birth of their baby at a time when they were often busy and stressed and this level of intrusion seemed uncomfortable merely to satisfy a research question and perhaps yield a book. In this case, the interviewer-interviewee relationship necessarily had to exist as something beyond the limits of those advocated by the ‘proper’ interview; it was ‘intimate’ and non-hierarchical. Oakley decided to depart from convention by responding to questions posed by the interviewee, however personal they were, and acting as a ‘broker’ for those who wanted more specific information and advice. Having identified strongly with the women, she also wanted to give them ‘voice’ and visibility in society. In conclusion Oakley advocates that ‘seeing the researched and the researcher as objective instruments of data production be replaced by the recognition that personal involvement is more than dangerous bias – it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives. (1981: 58) In this research project, Oakley was anything but a ‘data-producing instrument’, an example I wished to follow in my own engagement with the women who volunteered to be interviewed for this research project.

Limitations of the study

This study sought to identify the basic social psychological process (BSPP) (Glaser, 1978: 102) apparent in the healing of women who had been sexually abused as children. A BSPP refers to social psychological processes such as learning, communicating or healing. A BSPP is considered by Glaser to have ‘transcendent’ properties such as ‘becoming’, ‘highlighting’,
'personalising', 'health optimising', 'awe inspiring' and so forth. (1978: 102) In his terms, a BSPP has a broad focus rather than a unitary focus; it is independent of time or space; it is free from perspective; it is durable and it is both generalisable and transferable (along with many other advantages). (Glaser 1978: 109-113) However, due to the likely sensitivities of those volunteering to be interviewed and the difficulty of finding and accessing volunteers, it was considered unnecessary to cast the net too wide and conduct more interviews than were absolutely necessary to reach saturation point. This decision was born out by the high levels of consistency and the early emergence of a processal pattern.

As volunteers were drawn from a community of people who had been trained and were practising as counsellors, they formed a purposive rather than a random sample. A total of twelve interviews were carried out (thirteen including my own) - eight in the initial purposive sample and four in the next theoretical sample. All the volunteers, both purposive and theoretical, were drawn from the pool of respondents to the initial advertisements. The division between the two categories of sample were primarily due to availability and ease of logistics rather than any defining characteristic or context that either enjoyed. However, the intention with which I approached each community was different. In my approach to the purposive sample, I was engaged in collecting data from which patterns could be identified and initial conclusions drawn. This differed markedly from my intention as I approached the theoretical sample. To this group, I had the intention to present, refine and validate my findings through critical discourse. Comparing this study to others (Dudley (1987) and Daniels (1990) in Mezirow 1991: 184, Nelson (1997), Kreklewetz and Piotrowski (1998) to name a few)9, it does not seem wholly unreasonable to draw conclusions from this sample size especially as the richness of the participants' interviews give testimony to their own experiences and the experiences that had been shared with them by clients in their practice.

One of the possible limitations of this study is that it might not be wholly transferable to other groups in different contexts and therefore, a substantive rather than formal theory will be the result. The reason for this is that there may be characteristic or idiosyncratic aspects to the findings that make them unique to the community of women under study. Indeed, women's natural propensity towards relationship and connection (Gilligan, 1979, 1982; Belenky,

---

9 Nancy Dudley (1987) studied the process of paradigm shift (perspective transformation) in five men and five women; Molly Daniels (1990) studied ideas about critical reflection and its facilitation and perceptions of the influence of institutional culture on transformative learning among seventeen faculty members and administrators in a unit of a non-traditional university that placed major emphasis on developing critical reflection. (Dudley and Daniels in Mezirow, 1991: 184); Alex Nelson (1997) undertook a co-operative inquiry with six priests into imagining and critical reflection (autobiographical learning) with those exiting their priesthoods to get married; Kreklewetz and Piotrowski (1998) conducted in depth interviews with sixteen 'incest survivor mothers' to see how they perceived the protection of their children and how they acted to protect their children from sexual abuse.
Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986; Loughlin, 1993) and the fact that they are hoist by their bodily petard (Erikson, 1968 reflecting Freud) which can be represented as a receiving, nurturing, growing space, acting as the physical analogy to 'being receptive of people' – although this idea is rejected by Chodorow (1989) who maintains that women are socialised into this characteristic – perhaps means that their process is more likely to be triggered when they identify with their offspring as they reach the age or stage that they were when their abuse took place. Loughlin (1993) speaks for Erikson in her précis of his conviction that: 'A woman's identity is critically connected to her resolution of the intimacy/isolation crisis and is significantly determined by her anatomy.' (1993: 19) What may be thought of as the trigger experienced through maternal investment in the offspring was identified by Rachel and Kate amongst others in this study. If, women are more susceptible to triggers of this nature, it would imply that this study is limited to the community of women and could not be generalised to include men. This point is further reinforced by the fact that many psychological studies, from which current wisdom has been established, have been conducted by men, on men. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1979, 1982; Tannen 1990, Chodorow emphasise this point which will be further discussed in the literature review, Chapter six, in the section entitled 'Female models of psychological development'. The significance of this male bias rests on the different, sometimes negative, interpretations of the timing of women's developmental stages in relation to those of men.

Another limitation of the study derives from the composition of the sample. The volunteers comprised women from a middle-class, white Caucasian background. They were all well-educated, articulate and familiar with reflective processes. It was not the intention that men should be excluded from the study, nor was it the intention that representation from other ethnic groups be absent. Nevertheless, this will undoubtedly have a bearing on the legitimacy of generalising the study.

It is also the case that the women were reflecting on a process that had its roots in the past. Goleman (1985) introduces the concept of a lacuna. Lacunas are: 'psychological analogies of the opioids and their anti-attention effects. Lacunas are black holes of the mind, diverting attention from select bits of subjective reality – specifically certain anxiety-evoking information.' (1985: 107) Although there was never an intention to encourage the interviewee to revisit their traumatic experiences, it seems reasonable to expect that there may have been episodes in their healing experience which were traumatic, perhaps risking the 'lacuna effect' in the telling of their process. Henderson, Hargreaves, Gregory and Williams (2002) state that 'numbing' or dissociation, learned during times of abuse when the limbic system was overwhelmed with incoming information, may disrupt autobiographical memory retrieval and lead to 'overgeneral' memory as a means to control and minimise
negative effects. Remembering involves the recreation of past events. As Mezirow says: 'It [remembering] is enhanced if the events have been integrated well with previous knowledge and distracting events have not intervened. Remembering may be reproductive, constructive or reconstructive and can involve a copy of an experience, the construct of the meaning of a new experience or the reconstrual of a meaning previously assigned to an experience.' (1991: 10) The retrospective nature of the study has both positive and negative attributes. Positively speaking, the events being recalled have already been reflected upon and the meaning of these events has already been integrated into the volunteer's meaning schemes. However, these events may have been put through a selective filter or second reflective filter, thereby distorting their meaning.

Finally, I brought my own limitations to this study. My enthusiasm for the topic, my expectations and the hoped for outcome must have coloured my behaviours and cognitive processing. From time to time during the PhD programme, I kept a journal in an attempt to raise awareness and learn how to control some of these potentially distorting constructs and behaviours. I may have been partially successful in achieving this in the end.

Summary

My intention throughout this chapter was to 'prepare the canvas' on which the behavioural patterns and processes of this study will be drawn.

At the outset, I discussed the philosophical approach and methodology that was used for conducting the research. Constructivism was presented as the higher order sense-making framework, albeit with some reservations about the extent to which this may be deemed appropriate in respect of any negative implications regarding the authenticity of the volunteers' experiences. Grounded theory followed this choice naturally as a means of dealing with the data and inducing theory. The semi-structured interview was the vehicle chosen for data collection and this was explored in the context of feminism and control; a construct reflective of the 'male' orientation. In addition, the issue of building a relationship, or not, with the interviewee was discussed in respect of the level of disclosure and intimacy possible and the impact that this may have on the interview. Generally, the behaviours that were thought most appropriate were those of an active listener showing respect and regard for the interviewee with any relationship building reserved until the end of the interview. The process of analysis was outlined with specific emphasis being laid upon the technique of constant comparison to build concepts and categories from the coded data. Codes would be alighted upon by recognising their significance from a personal perspective and from

10 Meaning schemes are 'habitual, implicit rules for interpreting.' (Mezirow: 1990: 2)
witnessing common themes as the interviews progressed. Some limitations to the study were highlighted, most specifically, the issue of generalisability in the light of an all female sample taken from a shared professional pool.

The next chapter will focus on how this chosen research methodology was applied in practice.
CHAPTER THREE

Applying the research methodology and early stage analysis

Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe the research process that I went through in order to arrive at my conclusions. I will include information on how I found the volunteers who contributed to the study; how I prepared and tested the interview protocol; my own reflections as the study started to unfold; the ethical issues and approach I adopted and how I collected, coded and collated the data from the purposive sample. In addition, I will show how I used the theoretical sample to ensure that full saturation had been achieved.

My over-riding interest in undertaking this research was to understand and map the transformative process in the context of a healing journey. The question to which grounded theory orientates itself is 'What is going on here?' and it was precisely this question that I wished to answer in my research study.

Identifying and finding potential contributors to the study

Glaser (1978) points out that researchers will firstly 'go to the groups which they believe will maximise the possibilities of obtaining data and leads for more data on their question.' (1978: 45)

To make headway, I sought a group of people who had survived their abusive pasts and who felt sufficiently healed from their trauma to speak of their healing process. However, the question of how to identify and access a robust group of people who would not be likely to be unsettled by discussing their healing journey quickly arose. As a researcher with no formal training in psychotherapy or counselling (but with extensive coaching and facilitation skills), I was aware that I should not expose any volunteer to the risk of being re-traumatised. (The means by which I did this is contained within the section entitled 'Ethical considerations of the research study' below.) In thinking through where I would find such a group I reflected that many people, once they had overcome a significant trauma of their own, go on to help others experiencing similar situations.

In December 1986, after her 25-year-old daughter disappeared without trace, Diana Lamplugh set up The Suzy Lamplugh Trust as a registered charity to find ways of helping young women, and other individuals, avoid unnecessary risks. (www.suzylamplugh.org) In 1987, Gordon Wilson publicly forgave his daughter's murderers after she was killed by the...
Eniskillen bomb and worked tirelessly for peace thereafter until his death in 1995. In 1982 friends of Terrence Higgins set up the Terrence Higgins Trust (www.tht.org.uk) to ‘personalise and humanise AIDS in a very public way’. (www.tht.org.uk/about_us/index.htm) Terrence Higgins was the first man in the UK to die with AIDS. These three examples, along with countless others, illustrate the human inclination to assist others suffering from the same affliction as themselves or facing up to similar crises. In each of the above cases, the impulse to create something positive out of a traumatic experience led them to take action of one sort or another. In this spirit, I anticipated that many counsellors would have been through their own healing process and would equally have the impetus to assist others. Also, due to the requirement to follow the principles laid out by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), I assumed that they would also have sufficient professional knowledge to know how to access counselling support for themselves should they feel they needed it. As a result of this reasoning, and in receipt of qualified advice from my supervisor, I placed an advertisement in the BACP Journal asking for volunteers who felt they had transcended their traumatic childhood history and who would be prepared to talk about their healing journey.

The advertisement appeared in the BACP Journal in July 2000. The transcript of the advertisement is shown as Appendix II.

In total, I received fourteen replies to my advertisement. All were women. This was not intentional, as I had not envisaged the research study being confined to one gender group. Indeed, I would have welcomed a gender mix to see if the emerging theory respected or disregarded gender. The volunteers were well dispersed around the British Isles and I could quickly see the logistical problems of meeting with them all. One came from Scotland, another from Wales, a third from the South coast of England, a fourth from the Midlands and a fifth from the East coast of England. Only a few were conveniently placed in relation to me.

The following extract is taken from the Ethical Principles of Counselling and Psychotherapy which are published on the BACP website: www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework/index.html

Self-respect: fostering the practitioner’s self-knowledge and care for self

The principle of self-respect means that the practitioner appropriately applies all the above principles as entitlements for self. This includes seeking counselling or therapy and other opportunities for personal development as required. There is an ethical responsibility to use supervision for appropriate personal and professional support and development, and to seek training and other opportunities for continuing professional development. Guarding against financial liabilities arising from work undertaken usually requires obtaining appropriate insurance. The principle of self-respect encourages active engagement in life-enhancing activities and relationships that are independent of relationships in counselling or psychotherapy.
I wrote to each volunteer within twenty-four hours of receiving their letter to ensure they felt acknowledged and valued. In addition I gave them more background on the research study, stressed the fact that I would not be exploring their childhood abuse but only their healing journey and asked if they would confirm that they were still happy to participate. I undertook not to contact them again if they chose to withdraw from the study at this point. In total, ten volunteers agreed to remain in the study. To increase the size of the research pool I placed another advertisement; this time in Self & Society, a journal that I believed would attract a thoughtful group of people who were addressing issues of personal significance in relation to their societal role. I received one response from this advertisement. In addition to this community of eleven, I managed to recruit a colleague who learned of my studies and was interested in contributing to the research. I also had the transcript of my own interview which I intended to fold into the rest of the data. This final count of twelve (thirteen with my interview) served to form the basis from which my findings were induced.

Two of the volunteers said that they had put themselves forward because they thought the process would help them. From my own experience, I could see that this could be the case but I didn't welcome this as their primary motivation. It made me wonder if they were still 'in recovery' and again, compelled me to think of the ethical issues of conducting this study. Before each interview, therefore, I asked if the volunteer had a 'safety net'; someone to whom they could talk if issues arose for them during the interview. All of the volunteers were either in an active counselling relationship or had access to a network of counsellors or supporters from the profession and were comfortable with this level of support. In addition, I offered free access to me if they wanted to give me any feedback or discuss anything in further depth. After each interview, I sent the volunteer a letter thanking them for their participation and again, offering to receive calls or letters if they needed some support. They were also offered a copy of the transcript, stripped of all identifying names or locations. Several volunteers declined to receive this, perhaps indicating their comfort with the process and trust in the propitious use of their data.

**Preparation for the study – the interview**

There are a number of different communication channels open to the interviewer which range from the more remote electronic channel to a face-to-face interview. In this instance, it was felt that the face-to-face interview was unquestionably the correct approach. It is during this type of encounter than an interviewer can create a trusting and confidential environment in which the interviewee feels free to disclose their material; ‘read’ the body language to ensure a high level of rapport and pick up on any ambiguous signals so that they may be explored in greater depth.
The qualitative interview, which embraces such typologies as 'depth', 'exploratory', 'semi-structured' and 'unstructured' is described by King (1994) as having the following characteristics: 'a low degree of structure imposed by the interviewer; a preponderance of open questions and a focus on specific situations and action sequences in the world of the interviewee rather than abstractions and general opinions.' (1994: 15) Patton (1990) suggests that in a semi-structured or 'interview guide' approach, 'topics and issues are outlined in advance but the question order and wording is decided by the interviewer during the interview. The strength of this approach is that 'The outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent. Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed and interviews remain fairly conversational and situational.' (1990: 288)

Kvale (1983) outlines the twelve aspects of a qualitative interview. 1) It is centred on the interviewee's life-world; 2) Seeks to understand the meaning of phenomena in her life-world; 3) It is qualitative; 4) descriptive; 5) specific; 6) presuppositionless: 7) focused on certain themes; 8) and it is open to ambiguity and 9) changes; 10) It is also dependent upon the sensitivity of the interviewer; 11) Is an interpersonal interaction and 12) it is hoped that it will be a positive experience. Although the interview should be presuppositionless, the requirement of sensitivity to, and fore-knowledge of, the topic of the interview conflicts with this aim. To resolve this, 'the tension between these two aspects may be expressed in the requirement of a deliberate conscious naïveté on the part of the interviewer.' (1983: 174-178) 'This must be achieved by the interviewer whilst she creates an atmosphere of 'positive feelings of common intellectual curiosity and reciprocal respect.' (1983: 178) It is clear that the qualitative interview demands that the interviewer be able to juggle many demands, not only of suspending suppositions whilst being knowledgeable about the area under discussion but also of drawing a line between a research-interview and a therapeutic interview. Kvale points out that 'both may imply increased understanding and change but with the emphasis upon intellectual understanding in a research interview and on personal change in the therapeutic interview.' (1983: 179) Nonetheless, I felt that the qualitative interview had the advantage of being exploratory yet sufficiently well contained to prevent any slippage into areas that may be threatening to the equanimity of the interviewee. For these reasons, the semi-structured interview approach was adopted.

Whatever the definitions, the qualitative interview is a powerful process and, as Patton (1990) points out, 'Because qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal; because naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world where people live and work and because in-depth interviewing opens up what is inside people – qualitative inquiry
may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests and other quantitative approaches. (1990: 356) Patton recommends seven key ethical points that should be remembered when designing or carrying out qualitative interviews:

1. Promises and reciprocity. Keep to promises made.
2. Risk assessment – determine if the interviewee is likely to be at risk as a consequence of participation in the research in the realms of psychological stress, legal liabilities, ostracism and political repercussions.
3. Confidentiality – What level of confidentiality needs to be assured and can be honoured.
4. Informed consent – making clear the basis on which people consent to participate. This is to ensure the protection of both parties.
5. Data access and ownership – Who owns the data, who will have access to it, how will it be stored and how will it be disposed of?
6. Interviewer mental health. How might the interviewer be affected by the interviewing process and what care and support is in place to ensure that his or her mental health is preserved?
7. Advice. Who will act as the interviewer’s ethical mentor should something unpredictable arise during the interviewing process. (1990: 356-357)

Cresswell (1998) recommends the use of an interview protocol, ‘a predetermined sheet on which one logs information learned during the interview.’ (1998; 126) This protocol could contain five or six questions that should be asked in a particular order but little more guidance than that. This is to ensure a natural free flow between the interviewer and interviewee. Although the interviews were going to be recorded and no notes were necessarily required to capture the content of the interview, an interview script with some key questions was nonetheless produced so that each interviewee received the same promptings to encourage their disclosures. These were open questions that did not precipitate a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response but rather a descriptive discourse that could be further probed and explored. There was also space to record any points or issues raised that would be valuable to return to later.

I felt that it was desirable that the interview be recorded so that there was no distraction as I tried to catch vital points as they flowed in the interviewee’s account of their healing journey. Much vital material could have been lost in this way and a distortion of interpretation may well have occurred during the capturing of the data as concepts were filtered through my world view. Also, I felt that the use of a tape recorder would alleviate my anxiety about capturing the data and leave me free to attend to the interviewee; offer them the
concentrated attention they deserved and keep eye contact so that they were sure they were being heard. Kvale (1983) recommends this approach (1983: 174) and, as Patton (1990) points out, 'Tape recorders do not 'tune out' conversations; change what has been said because of interpretation or record words more slowly than they are spoken.' (1990: 348) He goes on to say that tape recorders allow the interviewer to be more attentive as they do not have to capture data and respond appropriately to the interviewee's cues. However, he takes Lofland's (1971) point that using a tape recorder doesn't exonerate the interviewer from attending to what is being said. 'One's full attention must be focused on the interviewee. One must be thinking about probing for further explication or clarification of what he is now saying; formulating probes, linking up current talk with what he has already said; thinking ahead to putting in a new question that has now arisen... and attending to the interviewee in a manner that communicates to him that you are indeed listening.' (1971: 89)

The initial question was designed to be a positive description of where the interviewee felt they were now and how they defined the term 'healthy'. It was intended that this should start things off on a good note. The second question asked them to return to the beginning of their journey and all subsequent questions led from that point to reconnect with the present day again so that the interview would finish on a 'high'. In Patton's (1990) terms, the interview started with a 'feeling question' based in the present and proceeded with 'experience/behaviour questions' which were based in the past. Patton prefers to start qualitative interviews with a non-controversial question which begs straightforward answers that are easily shared. This creates a good foundation from which to explore at a deeper level. (1990: 294)

In order to identify the questions that were to be used in the interviews, I decided to ask one of my PhD colleagues to interview me with what I believed should be the questions and prompts that would help me relate my healing journey. In the case of my interview, it was largely unstructured and quite exploratory with the aim of eliciting as much information as possible on the transformative process. The question that instigated the interview was:

"You answered the advert that was asking for people who have had experience of sexual abuse in childhood and have now got to the point of feeling healthy. I wonder if you could tell me a little bit, first of all, about how you define healthy? How is your life healthy for you?"

This was followed by open questions such as:

"Can you tell me what triggered the process?"
and validating statements to confirm understanding such as:

"So this was a pattern that you saw developing?"

The experience of being interviewed was illuminating - but not always pleasant - and, as a result, led to modifications in my planned approach that ensured the focus was explicitly upon the transformative process. As I responded to my colleague’s questions, a whole new perspective on the situation struck me and I began to feel optimistic that this would be so for the volunteers too. Kvale (1983) points out that ‘A well carried through qualitative interview may be a rare and enriching experience for the interviewee.’ (1983: 178) However, there were also times when I found myself back in a traumatic memory and, at one point, the process became so distressing that I had to stop the tape and recover myself. This was explicitly what I didn’t want to happen as I was intending to concentrate on the more positive process of emerging from trauma, not on reliving it.

A few weeks after the interview had taken place, I began to transcribe it. In doing so, I was surprised to find that I came up against further feelings of distress. Below is an extract from my learning journal written during the transcription process.

'It is the 3rd August and I am transcribing my interview. I have to record that I think it is dreadful and I don’t feel that I ever want to recount my story again. It feels like I am wallowing in the drama of my own history and I am embarrassed to hear my voice and the things that I have said in the interview. The whole intellectualisation exercise sounds trite and inauthentic. It also sounds as if I was stringing together all the traumas in my life as if they were beads on a necklace that I could then hold up and say, "There, look at all that I have been through!" I wonder if I’m in the habit of threading more and more beads so that people will say "What a long necklace! Hasn’t it been awful!" and then I can feel like a tragic heroine and walk away with a satisfied glow. I thought I had stopped playing this game but I think it must still be playing out otherwise it wouldn’t have been so cringe-making. It makes me wonder what I am doing and why.'

As an aside, this piece of journaling brings to mind a concept that has been identified and explored by Caroline Myss (1997). She named it ‘woundology’ and proposed that, in these days of ‘therapeutic fluency’; a new intimate language has developed that legitimises the revelation of our wounds as a means of binding relationships. Indeed, this has become such common practice that it could be called the ‘currency’ of relationships which is used to control situations and people. We see this phenomenon in action in television ‘chat shows’ such as Rikki Lake, Vanessa Feltz, Trisha, and Jerry Springer, all of whom dig deep into the intimate lives of volunteers and sensationalise wounds that in previous times, would have been considered shaming, or even illegal, and kept secret for the purposes of social nicety. The more positive side of this phenomenon, if indeed it is to be considered negative, is that it
allows the expression of deeply seated traumas which may be causing behavioural or relational difficulties. Once these are made explicit, perhaps choices can be made that allow them to be put to rest in some way.

I wrote another entry the next day.

'I had nightmares last night about clearing a room. Taking plaster off the walls and making sure all the nooks and crannies were scrapped out ready for the new plaster. There was a vast spider in my dream. My husband hoovered it up. This process is more disturbing that I thought it would be.'

Although painful and quite shocking, this experience was enormously valuable in helping me to understand the dangers of the context in which I had chosen to work. It was not my intention to 'open old wounds' nor was it my intention to make the interview needlessly distressing, I was merely wishing to understand a process; a process of transformation that took the participating women into new meaning perspectives and a positive place in their lives.

On reflection, the questions that were asked of me were often boundaryless and tended to lure me into details that were not relevant for the purposes of the study. Questions such as "Can you say a little more about the dysfunction?" were bound to become intrusive and result in detailed descriptions of abusive experiences rather than focus 'outside' and 'beyond' these to descriptions of progressive healing.

In spite of the discomfort of going through the interview process, it gave rise to some valuable insights. It was the aftermath, the standing back and listening to the interview 'objectively', that was the most painful. Hearing myself speak on the tape, as if I were another, made manifest some of the dynamics that I had previously ignored and led to new insights. This had not occurred before, as I had never been in other than a subjective mode when recounting my experiences to counsellors or therapists. The experience of my own interview forced me to think seriously about the process and to return to the ethical issues to think about them in greater depth.

The script for the interviews was altered after my own interview experience and, although still essentially 'open' and 'exploratory', the questions were put in the context of 'the journey' and not in the context of the abuse. Prompts were designed to be benign and content free. Mostly, they took the form of further open questions such as 'What happened next?' or 'Can you tell me more about this phase of the process?' The interview outline is included as Appendix III.
Ethical considerations of the research study

Janesick, in Denzin and Lincoln (1998) points out that the qualitative researcher, being ideologically driven, cannot create a value or bias free research design, nor can they avoid ethical dilemmas as they deal with people face-to-face in the moment and in a particular context. For these reasons, resolving both values and ethical dilemmas characterise the quantitative researcher's activities and demands that they are sufficiently self-aware to articulate the positions or dilemmas that they find themselves in. (1998: 41) Stake, also in Denzin and Lincoln (1998) picks up the topic of ethics in his discussion of the case study research methodology by stating that 'case studies often deal with matters of public interest but for which there is neither public nor scholarly 'right to know'. (1998: 102) Although not strictly a case study based piece of research, the sentiment nonetheless rings true for all qualitative approaches. In this research, people's private lives are being entered and their views are being sought to illuminate a process that will be placed, through publication, into the public domain. Stake goes on to say that 'the value of the best research is not likely to outweigh injury to a person exposed. Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict.' (1998: 103) In as much as those whose lives and views are being explored risk exposure and embarrassment, issues of reportage should be discussed in advance and boundaries put around accessibility. In addition, agreements must be reached in respect of how the participant will be reported, quoted and represented by the researcher and safety nets regarding feedback and aftercare should be put in place. Stake recommends that great caution be exercised to minimise the risks and that rules for protecting participants should be exceeded, thereby avoiding unreasonable probing of sensitive issues. (1998: 103) In this study, transparency on these matters was achieved and reinforced in all communication with the participant including a verbal statement that prefaced the interview and which was recorded along with the rest of the session. Further information on this aspect of the study is contained below in the section entitled 'Ethical protocol used for this study'.

These views are supported by Mezirow (1991) from a transformative learning perspective but I would argue that they also have applicability to the interviewing process as meaning perspectives may be unravelled and recreated during 'critical discourse'. Critical discourse is the vehicle by which 'the learner has the opportunity to make a new interpretation of his or her experience which, in turn, can transform meaning schemes and perspectives.' (1991: 71) Although the element of 'challenge', an essential feature of critical discourse, is not present during the research interviews, it is nonetheless quite plausible that a participant could challenge their own views as they hear themselves lay out their experiences. Mezirow recommends that:
- Transformative learning is not precipitated without the understanding and consent of the learner
- Perspective transformation\(^\text{12}\) is not facilitated when its consequences may include dangerous or hopeless actions
- Learner's beliefs should not be questioned or problematised
- One's own perspective should not be presented as it may be unduly influential
- One does not refuse to help a learner because one's personal convictions are in conflict with their desired action
- When 'psychic distortions' are likely to impede a learner's progress, no intervention should be made

In short, as Paul Barber puts it, 'do no harm.' (1999: 18) Or, in Levinas' terms (1969, In Loewenthal, 1996: 379) good ethics is about 'putting the other first'.

I also turned to the ethical principles published by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy for guidance. Below is an abridged statement of these principles.

'Ethical decisions that are strongly supported by one or more of these principles without any contradiction from others may be regarded as reasonably well founded. However, practitioners will encounter circumstances in which it is impossible to reconcile all the applicable principles and choosing between principles may be required. A decision or course of action does not necessarily become unethical merely because it is contentious or other practitioners would have reached different conclusions in similar circumstances. A practitioner's obligation is to consider all the relevant circumstances with as much care as is reasonably possible and to be appropriately accountable for decisions made.'

- Fidelity: honouring the trust placed in the practitioner
- Autonomy: respect for the client's right to be self-governing
- Beneficence: a commitment to promoting the client's well-being
- Non-maleficence: a commitment to avoiding harm to the client
- Justice: the fair and impartial treatment of all clients and the provision of adequate services
- Self-respect: fostering the practitioner's self-knowledge and care for self.

(www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework/index.html)

\(^{12}\) Perspective transformation will be explored more fully in Chapters five and six but for ease of understanding, Mezirow describes this phenomenon as: 'developing a revised frame of reference and a willingness to act on the new perspective.' (2000: 297) Clark (1991) identified three dimensions to a perspective transformation: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems) and behavioural (changes in lifestyle). (In Mezirow, 2000: 297) Each of these dimensions seem relevant in Sue's case.
Cresswell (1998: 132) points to the code of ethics outlined by American Anthropological Association (AAA) as reflecting appropriate standards for qualitative researchers. It is emphasised that these can supersede the goal of seeking new knowledge.

The AAA ethical obligations include:

- Avoiding harm or wrong, understanding that the development of knowledge can lead to change which may be positive or negative for the people studied
- Respecting the well-being of people
- Consulting with the individuals to establish a working relationship that can be beneficial to them
- Doing everything they can to ensure their research does not compromise the safety, dignity or privacy of the people with whom they work.
- Establishing the level of anonymity that the researched wish to have and making clear the likely impact of visibility or invisibility
- Obtaining the consent of the people being studied in advance and providing them with relevant information
- Negotiating the limits of the relationships developed during the research project
- Being non exploitive.

Cresswell (1998) also highlights the issue of whether a researcher should share their experiences during an interview. Although he confines this concern to phenomenological, ethnographical and case study research methodologies, it is equally relevant in grounded theory where personal experience should be ‘bracketed’ to prevent ‘contamination’ of the data. (1998: 133)

On the matter of informed consent, Usher and Holmes (1997) lay out the necessary elements of informed consent in their paper entitled 'Ethical Aspects of Phenomenological Research with Mentally Ill People'. In spite of the fact that the research pool for this study was not classified as ‘mentally ill, Usher and Holmes point out that the level of psychopathology may not be indicative of the ability to consent to participate in a research study, indeed they conclude ‘that people with a mental illness may be no more vulnerable than other potential research participants.’ (1997: 50) In as much as the volunteers for this research may be considered ‘vulnerable’, they deserve the same level of consideration as any other group for which protective structures are put in place, however they may be labelled. Informed consent is considered to be the result of a process of communication which enables an individual to decide whether or not to participate in the study. The necessary elements of informed consent are described as:
• A fair explanation of the procedure to be followed
• A description of the possible discomforts and risks
• A description of the benefits expected
• Disclosure of any alternative procedures that might be advantageous to the participant
• An offer to answer any queries concerning the procedure
• Instruction that the participant is free to withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation in the project. (1997: 51)

I took care to meet the ethical standards outlined above and will explain how I did so in the following section.

In addition to the above considerations, it was noted that the data should be collected, held, used and protected according to the Data Protection Act 1998: Chapter 29, a copy of which may be found on: http://www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980029.htm

**Ethical protocol used for this study**

The ethical protocol drawn up for this study was as follows:

- After potential interviewees had responded to the advertisement, they were sent an outline of the study and information regarding the extent of their possible involvement
- The boundary conditions of the interview were defined and they were assured that if they should no longer wish to be involved, they may deselect themselves from the study without risking coercion. (The boundary conditions included the estimated duration of the interview, the nature of the questions, the fact that it was to be recorded and the commitment to send the transcript of the interview to them. Reassurance was given that at no time would questions be asked about the abuse that they had suffered.)
- Respondents were offered further information or a telephone discussion if they wished
- Respondents were asked to choose the location for the interview to ensure they were comfortable with their surroundings and a date and time agreed upon
- A release document was given to the interviewee to sign before the interview took place to confirm that they were willing participants and took responsibility for the outpourings of the interview. (All of these are held securely and can be presented if requested.)
Before the interview commenced, reassurance was sought that the interviewee had an open channel of communication with a supervisor, counsellor or therapist in the eventuality that material emerged that subsequently needed dealing with. In addition, my contact details were given with an open invitation to call should they wish.

- No sharing on my part took place during the interview to ensure that there was no influence on the interviewee’s thoughts and disclosures.
- The interviewee was shown the ‘off’ button on the tape recorder and was asked to use this if they wanted to curtail the interview. In actuality, no-one ended the interview in this way.
- In every case, the transcript was offered to the interviewee and a letter of appreciation sent reconfirming an open channel of communication should any issues or concerns have arisen.

For my own protection, I used a post box for the responses to the advertisement and only supplied my contact details once communication had been established.

Research Design

In respect of the final point in Usher and Holmes’ (1997) elements of informed consent: ‘Instruction that the participant is free to withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation in the project.’ (1997: 51), I have shown below a diagram of the research design showing the points at which the volunteers were free to withdraw from the process.
Figure (iii) - The Research Design.

The research design evolved as an intentional consequence of the grounded theory methodology chosen. Due to the nature of the sample, and the depth of the interviews, it was considered imprudent to attempt to gather large volumes of data from large numbers of volunteers. Not only would the amassed data be unwieldy and repetitive but also time constraints were such that this would have proven impossible. It was felt more appropriate in this case to conduct a piece of research with sufficient structural integrity, elegance and depth to ensure that the findings were accurately induced.

Data Collection in the purposive sample

As already highlighted in Chapter 2, Research Approach and Design, in the section entitled 'Limitations of the Study', the purposive sample was defined not so much by any characteristic differences between it and the theoretical sample but by members' availability and the relative ease of access. It was the intention with which I approached each group that differentiated them one from the other. The purposive sample was approached to furnish the study with data whilst the theoretical sample was approached to validate and refine the early findings of the study and to ensure that there was no misalignment between the groups. In this way, confidence that the theory had been accurately raised from the ground was won.
The first interviews took place over a period of six months during which I managed to see six volunteers. Many interviewees expressed a preference to have the interview conducted in their home or consulting room. This meant that the time spent on the road was high and the logistics of organising lengthy trips whilst also working was complex. In addition, each interview demanded the utmost care and restraint on my part from trying to turn the interview into a conversation, as there were many resonances between the interviewee’s and my experience, or into a discussion, as many points that the interviewees raised would have been a good basis for such an exchange. Visiting others’ homes is usually a social act and it felt quite strange to occupy this environment whilst drawing information from the hostess without giving anything back – although after the interview a social dynamic frequently was established during which the connections and resonances could be revisited.

During this concentrated period, data was amassed quickly and I gained a good ‘feel’ for the research as a consequence of this submersion. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed using different names for the interviewees to ensure that their identity was protected. In addition, any reference to identifiable people, places or establishments were changed or removed.

To manage the expectations of the reader, I include below a list here of the pseudonyms that were given to each of the volunteers.

**Purposive Sample**
1. Claire
2. Emma
3. Heather
4. Kate
5. Mary
6. Rachel
7. Sue
8. Vicky

**Theoretical sample**
1. Jay
2. Julie
3. Margaret
4. Sharon

After the first interview with Heather, I reviewed and revised the questioning style again. The reason I did this was because I felt that I was assisting her in her interpretation of the journey that she had been on. It was clear I needed to ask more ‘open’ questions that put the onus on the interviewee to make associations, interpretations and find meaning. Reading the transcript from an objective standpoint, I found I had created constructs for Heather through the use of metaphors (like a journey). These were meaningful to me but might not
have been meaningful to her. Also, I needed to check my understanding of 'implicit' statements and not assume that I 'knew' what the interviewee was getting at. I noticed that I had a tendency to use either/or statements and for asking two questions at a time. I needed to discipline myself to reflect the interviewee's own language and beware of summing up and feeding back in too generalised a way.

Having conducted the first interview, I found that I had to develop a balance between being too empathic (risking the danger of 'smoothing' over the content) and allowing the interviewee to lead the discussion (sometimes into 'challenging' territory) in whichever way she felt was appropriate. I was concerned that the session would deteriorate into a one-way conversation, with me just nodding coldly when something traumatic had been revealed, if I did not 'rescue' the situation and make it 'OK'. However, I learned to trust the fact that the interviewee had chosen to do this and the process would only be fruitful if they were given sufficient space and freedom to relate their story in their own way.

During the data collection phase of the research process, I found that there were some interviewees with whom I could have struck a friendship, and others, of course, with whom I could not. This forced me to be very clear about boundaries and to set these explicitly prior to the interview taking place. Although I was prepared to be contacted after the interview for feedback and further thoughts, I was not able either to enter a counselling or therapeutic relationship with the interviewee nor was I able to give my commitment to friendship.

I was very interested too in the dynamic between me and the interviewee in respect of 'hierarchy'. In most instances, it was assumed that I shared a similar history to that of the interviewee but in some, I was asked directly if this was the case. This seemed to make a difference to the level of openness that an interviewee was prepared to display. As a result of this, I could only assume that this level of empathic engagement may have been responsible for drawing more from the interviewee than would otherwise have been possible - in spite of the fact that we were not 'comparing scars' or indeed dwelling in the childhood past at all. In one instance only, the interviewee chose to have her (newly acquired) partner in the room with her in addition to making her own recording of the interview. I was told this was to ensure there were no discrepancies between her version and mine when the transcript arrived. I was surprised at this level of self-protection when she had volunteered freely to be interviewed and I was very concerned that her partner was aggressively protective of her and threatened to 'ring me up and shout at me' if there were any emotional repercussions in his partner after the interview had taken place. In response to this, I asked him if he would like to give me feedback on how he had experienced the interview and he conceded that it had been conducted 'professionally and caringly', so I left somewhat reassured. However, this
does reinforce the need to be ethically 'water-tight' in conducting interviews of this nature and illustrates the type of risk that a researcher needs to consider beforehand.

Analysing Procedures

Coding and memoing

According to the principles of grounded theory, coding took place after all the transcripts had been completed and followed the recommended grounded theory approach. Initially, the transcript was combed for data that carried a high level of significance in relation to the unit of analysis – the transformative process of healing. This proved to be an enormously difficult task as vast amounts of interesting material that did not relate to the unit of analysis had to be ring fenced and put aside to ensure that the relevancy of the data remained high and were not diluted by interesting yet diverting aspects of the interviewee's story.

It was clear from the outset that I was looking for a basic social psychological process (BSPP); a moving, fluid process that marks a transition from one state of being to another. Glaser (1978) defines a process as having at least two stages. 'Processing refers to getting something done which takes time or something happening over time. A causal-consequence model is a process.' (1978: 74-75)

I found that the coding did not spring naturally from static descriptions or categorisations extracted from the data as they did not display the essential dynamic attributes of a process. Having become bogged down in an early exercise of categorisation, and referring again to the texts for guidance, Glaser (1978) pointed the way. 'There seems to have arisen a tacit rule in naming BSP's. It is turning a substantive noun or verb into a gerund.' (1978: 108) Although, having asserted this, he does warn not to get over dependent on the use of gerunds as they could mask a basic social structural condition.

Anything carrying the vector qualities of time or direction were highlighted and 'movement' that was contingent upon something else being in place first was noted. This was done on the computer screen and the 'highlight pen' was used to draw attention to the coded material for later scrutiny. At the same time, memos were written to capture immediate thoughts as the data came to light. Any relationship to, or resonance with, data in previous interviews was noted and insights, questions to pursue and signposts to further enquiry were included. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 101-107) Each coded datum and each theoretical note was given a unique alphanumeric identifier so that the data could always be re-contextualised. Being steeped in the data in this way was both enlightening and exhausting. An example of the resulting document is shown below in Figure (iv). This is a portion of Heather's interview
with my questions italicised. The yellow highlighted text shows the coded data in the raw text, and the blue highlighted text is when I have noted resonances with other's transcripts. The full transcript of Heather's interview is shown in Appendix III.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OK, I'm interested in the term 'fragmented' so I'd like to come back to that at some point but I wonder first if you could tell me what triggered your process of recovery?</td>
<td>6h Recognising that she was repeating the patterns in her marriage that had characterised her past.</td>
<td>6h. Making connections between her father and her husband and recognising similar patterns of behaviour. It seems she couldn't make these connections until she observed the dynamic between her husband and her daughter. Was this because she could observe the dynamic more objectively? Subjectively, it didn't have the same impact. Perhaps because she was so used to being treated in a certain way that she didn't see anything wrong with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What triggered it? Or was there a trigger? Perhaps I should ask.</td>
<td>7h Making connections between her husband and her father - reaching a point of realisation.</td>
<td>7h, 8h, 9h. (Moustakas, C., Phenomenological Research Methods, Sage Publications, 1994, pp127 - taken from Palmieri’s Study of Childhood Abuse, 1990 – The Experience of Adults Abused as Children. Taken from his interview with ‘Geraldine’. “I know what scared me the most was mainly with my oldest daughter...she’s going to be ten and starting to develop. That’s a strong fear of the same thing happening to her that happened to me.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK, I’m interested in the term ‘fragmented’ so I’d like to come back to that at some point but I wonder first if you could tell me what triggered your process of recovery?</td>
<td>8h Feeling trapped in her marriage once she realised that she was repeating patterns.</td>
<td>7h, 8h. Seeing her own dysfunctional behaviours reflected in her daughter’s behaviours led to fear of the same history unfolding for her daughter. As a parent, this was unacceptable and it stimulated action on Heather’s part that began her own journey of healing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6h. Um, gosh I’d have to think. I think... I reached a point, being married to my ex-husband, he was quite abusive um, and I think I reached a point where I realised that a lot of what was happening in our relationship was happening because of what had happened to me before.</td>
<td>9h Seeing behaviours in her daughter that she recognised in herself.</td>
<td>11h. When Heather made a choice to protect her daughter it occurred to her that the situation wasn’t OK for her or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mmm.</td>
<td>10h Wanting to protect her daughter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was kind of like repeating patterns and.. I probably married Chris because he was very like my Dad and when I realised that, that seemed to be the turning point because until I’d realised that, I was trapped in that relationship and it was when I realised that I no longer wanted to be, even though I couldn’t do anything about it at that time, I think that kick started something and I’m trying to think if there was anything particular that did that. I think, something that might have done it was um Chris’s attitude to Maddie, that’s our youngest. Maddie had a lot of health problems when she was young and has minor learning difficulties – nothing major, but minor learning difficulties and Chris was never very um comfortable with her, to say the least, because she wasn’t what he perceived to be perfect.</td>
<td>11h Fearing her daughter would experience abuse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6h. Um, gosh I’d have to think. I think... I reached a point, being married to my ex-husband, he was quite abusive um, and I think I reached a point where I realised that a lot of what was happening in our relationship was happening because of what had happened to me before.</td>
<td>12h Recognising that what was causing her younger daughter to behave in a certain way was not OK for Heather and her other daughter.</td>
<td>12h Recognising that what was causing her younger daughter to behave in a certain way was not OK for Heather and her other daughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6h. Um, gosh I’d have to think. I think... I reached a point, being married to my ex-husband, he was quite abusive um, and I think I reached a point where I realised that a lot of what was happening in our relationship was happening because of what had happened to me before.</td>
<td>13h Realising that she needed help.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6h. Um, gosh I’d have to think. I think... I reached a point, being married to my ex-husband, he was quite abusive um, and I think I reached a point where I realised that a lot of what was happening in our relationship was happening because of what had happened to me before.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

76
And, whilst that didn't matter so much when she was smaller, because he was hardly here anyway and I did a lot of the caring, as she got older, I realised that she was picking that up and I could see her behaving in ways that I had behaved and I think that was the trigger and I thought I don't want this, this is not OK anymore. He wasn't abusive.

It was abusive but he wasn't actually physically or sexually abusive um and I could see that that was going to have a detrimental effect on her and I didn't want that so I suppose in some ways, it was really..... it started because I wanted to protect Maddie from anything like that which could have bordered on emotional abuse in a way, and I didn't want that to happen and I think maybe that then started making me realise what had gone before and that maybe this wasn't OK for any of us really. And that started.... and I think at that point, perhaps I started to realise as well that I needed some help with a lot of the things that were going on because I was struggling to parent the girls at that stage.

And, I was sort of succeeding but I wasn't..... I was aware that I wasn't doing it in a way that I was happy with and I felt like, ah what... there was something missing almost. Everything had been fine up until the girls reached a certain age I think. When the girls reached a certain age, things changed and I think, I don't know whether that was linked with stuff from my past, I don't know, but when they reached a certain age it somehow became more difficult for me. I couldn't give them the same kind of physical contact and, you

| 14h | Struggling to parent the girls. | her other daughter either. It was at this point that she started seeking help. |
| 15h | Succeeding on one level but not on another. Something was missing. | |
| 16h | Making possible links between the girls at a certain age and own experiences as a child. | |
| 17h | Withholding affection from children as they reached a certain age. | |

15h-18h. Being able to parent the girls on one level (practical) but withdrawing affection and physical comfort from them (emotional) when they reached a certain age. Compartmentalising? Coping in one domain but not in another. Intuitively recognising that something was wrong but not being able to determine what it was. The act of withholding triggered concern and brought the situation into focus. Wilber, In the Atman Project credits Gardner, (and indirectly, Piaget) with the

77
know, the affection that they needed and... I think that naturally happens when children reach a certain age, that they don't want you to kiss them at the school gate and that kind of stuff but it was more than that...

18h Sensing that 'something was wrong' in her parenting skills.

insight that development is composed of a variety of domains (developmental lines) and that a human can be competent in one domain whereas this competence would not be identical to that in other domains. This may explain why Heather was a practically competent as a mother but emotionally withheld.

Figure (iv) - An excerpt from Heather’s interview showing the open coding and theoretical memos.

Conceptualising and categorising

The themes were early to emerge but not wishing to fall into the trap of early foreclosure as highlighted by Glaser (1978) and potentially endanger the groundedness of the methodology; I delayed gratification and forced myself through the process. Glaser writes: ‘In grounded theory, much happens fast.... categories emerge before a few interviews are over... integrations appear that seem to fit the data perfectly. A personal recipe for pacing the discovery process helps the analyst put the brake on these premature forays.’ Even though he acknowledges that ‘often, nothing changes that much, but modifications and re-emphases can be replete, and concepts may later emerge that parsimoniously draw together other concepts.’ (1978: 20) Bearing these words in mind, I printed all the coded material, cut it into separate pieces and tried to identify, through the suspension of belief and constant comparative analysis, the common concepts. The use of the concept indicator model shown in chapter two, Figure (i) was helpful in this.

As the activity built its own momentum the data found their natural partners and concepts began to appear and reappear. Further, as more data was folded into the analysis, higher order concepts began to emerge indicating categories and sub-categories - the conditions under which a category exists – the when, where, why and how of a category. (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 114) In time, as the process moved on, some of the categories merged whilst others separated; broad categories began to subsume smaller ones and new categories were suggested by the data. This continued until the natural boundaries of the categories had been identified. The description of this process in a relatively few lines belies the time, concentration and effort that was taking place. In reality, there was a large volume of coded information spread across the floor in complete disarray. As progress was made, small piles of compatible bits of coding emerged until there was a physical sense of order created. Each
of the 1,200 coded pieces of information from the first eight interviews was placed only after an internal debate had occurred, which may have resulted in other coded information being repositioned or brought out for further comparison; a collapsing of two categories or the beginning of a new category. The concept indicator model was continually used to generate higher order concepts and categories which would then be used as the basis for generating theory. Examples of these are shown in Chapter 4.

During the analysis process, many other issues and questions emerged. It was apparent that a number of the interviewers used analogies and metaphors as they related their experiences. This seemed to help them 'make sense' of their journey and helped them to illustrate it accurately and graphically, a concern they all had in common.

In many cases, interviewees would say things like 'I've never really thought about it before. She was that age. The same age.' (Kate) as if having a realisation as a result of stringing together and relating the journey for the first time. Kate also said: 'It's an interesting question because I've never thought about it before.' when asked to reflect on whether her ability to disconnect from herself as a child has helped her move on. Heather commented: 'It has been helpful for me to have an opportunity to look at the process. My process. To get an overview of it. Because sometimes, you're living it and, it's hard to get an overview. You can't see the wood for the trees as it were.' Finding 'where pieces fit' as they spoke about their experiences seemed to be a natural outcome of the interview process and a contributing factor to the contributors' on-going sense making activities. This resonates with Patton's (1990) assertion that an interview is an intervention. 'They [interviews] affect people. A good interview lays open thoughts, feelings, knowledge and the experience not only to the interviewer but also to the interviewee. The process of being taken through a directed, reflective process affects the persons being interviewed and leaves them knowing things about themselves that they didn't know – or least were not aware of – before the interview. Two hours or more of thoughtfully reflecting on an experience, a program or one's life can be change-inducing.' (1990: 353-354)

**Theoretical saturation**

After the analysis of eight interview scripts, no new concepts were emerging. Similar stages, critical break points, common themes and descriptions were being employed by the interviewees so consistently that indeed, the last two transcripts served to validate evidence rather than extend the breadth of the study.

Although it is pointed out by Glaser (1978) that in talking to others, ideas will flow, he cautions against losing this ideational energy because once exhausted, these ideas may be
lost to the analysis. 'To talk is to reduce this energy which may even generate forgetting the ideas and which may never be recaptured as one goes on to energising new aspects of the analysis' (1978: 23) Nonetheless, I valued the opportunity to talk to my PhD colleagues researching similar fields.

**Theoretical sampling**

'Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process is controlled by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal.' (Glaser: 1978: 36. See also Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Theoretical sampling is used as a way of checking the emergent conceptual framework and creating more abstract levels of theoretical connections as theory is induced from the progressive stages of the analysis. The basis question in theoretical sampling is: to what group does one turn in order to collect more data?

After a lengthy process of constant comparative analysis and the emergence of several distinct categories, I decided to approach a group of people who would be likely to be familiar with the process (of 'healing') and who could either validate or challenge my findings. This theoretical sample, numbering four, comprised practising counsellors; two of whom occupied prestigious professional positions in specialist and academic institutions in England. The remaining two were experienced counsellors who ran their own practices.

The paper I sent the theoretical sample to lay out the research process, the initial findings and my purpose in approaching them is attached as Appendix IV.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate how the grounded theory methodology was applied in practice. As well as outlining the ethical considerations and presenting the code of practice used for this study, I took the reader through the research sequence as it took place and highlighted the considerations and internal debates that I had whilst undertaking the process.

The purposive sample was obtained through an advertisement in the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal and comprised eight volunteers, each of whom participated in a qualitative interview which was tape recorded and transcribed. I used the experience of being interviewed myself to 'put my feet in the shoes' of the interviewees and speculate upon what ethical and protective mechanisms needed to be put in place to ensure
that their participation in the study did not expose them to any risk of being unsettled. This led me to seek and apply the ethical standards enforced by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the American Anthropological Association (AAA).

Together, the techniques of constant comparison of coded data and the concept indicator model, raised coded data to the level of concepts and categories. After the initial analysis had been completed, early findings were sent to the theoretical sample comprising four professionals in the counselling and therapeutic arena for scrutiny and further refinement.

The next chapter presents the early findings and charts the emergence of the model of 'Adults' Experiences of Transformative Learning as part of Personal Development'.
BLANK IN ORIGINAL
CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of the data

Introduction

From Halcolm's Laws of Evaluation Research à la Murphy in Patton (1990)

'Analysis brings moments of terror that there's nothing there and times of exhilaration from the clarity of discovering ultimate truth. In between are long periods of hard work, deep thinking, and weight-lifting volumes of material.' (1990: 371)

Although an attempt will be made in this chapter to be succinct, it nevertheless will invite the reader to share in some of the deep thinking as the 'volumes of material' are sifted, sorted and constantly compared in order to extract patterns and construct frameworks. As Miles and Huberman (1984) point out: 'We have few agreed-on canons for qualitative data analysis, in the sense of shared ground rules for drawing conclusions and verifying their sturdiness.' (Miles and Huberman (1984: 16) in Patton, 1990: 372). Patton reinforces this point and concludes that there are no rules for analysing qualitative data as each study is unique and demands its own approach. 'Because qualitative inquiry depends, at every stage, on the skills, training, insights and capabilities of the researcher, qualitative analysis ultimately depends on the analytical intellect and style of the analysts. The human factor is the great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis.' (1990: 372) In bringing myself to the analytical process and breaking into the data, I will seek guidance from the grounded theorists but allow my best instincts and knowledge to take over when their guidance runs out of steam in respect of this study.

Glaser and Strauss (1995) recommend an approach that lies between coding the data first followed by analysing the data and merely inspecting the data for new properties of the theoretical categories and writing memos on these properties. The former approach is used for testing a hypothesis whilst the second approach is used for generating theoretical ideas. (1995: 101) What they call 'the third approach, is one that combines, by use of constant comparison, the explicit coding procedure of the first approach and the theory development of the second. 'The constant comparative method is designed to aid the analyst who possesses these abilities [the skills and sensitivities to generate theory] in generating a theory that is integrated, consistent, plausible and close to the data.' (1995: 103) 'No attempt is made by the constant comparative method to ascertain either the universality or the proof of suggested causes or other properties. Since no proof is involved, the constant comparative method requires only saturation of data - not consideration of all available data, nor are the
data restricted to one kind of clearly defined case.' (1995: 104) Indeed, the constant comparative method may be used in the same study to compare data from different sources including documents, articles, books and so forth. The breadth of purpose and flexibility of the constant comparative method used in the 'third way' is appealing in regard to this study so the analysis will follow the four stages as identified by Glaser and Strauss:

1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category
2. Integrating categories and their properties
3. Delimiting the theory
4. Writing the theory (1995: 105-113)

The question of 'how much' data is required to reach saturation is relevant here. Most grounded theorists point towards the repeated emergence of codes and concepts until sufficient substance has been built for a category to be considered robust. Strauss and Corbin (1998) qualify saturation as the point at which 'no new information seems to emerge during coding'. (1998: 136) Creswell (1998) considers a category to be saturated when 'no more information that continues to add to it can be found.' (1998: 56) Glaser (2002 in Allan, 2003) concurs with this saying that the data have to be 'analysed in a systematic and rigorous manner to discover the concepts leading to a category' (2003: 9) but on the question of how many concepts are required to form a category, he advises that 'one (concept) is enough if it is significant.' (2003: 9) He does not elucidate on the term 'significant', preferring, perhaps to leave it to the judgment of the researcher and their instinct about the issue, which is likely to be 'informed' as they have been steeped in data throughout the study.

**Comparing incidents applicable to each category**

The intention is to present one coded interview in great detail and to draw upon the others to reinforce points or to illustrate more fully the emergent concepts and categories. Heather's interview was chosen for this purpose because it was 'information-rich'. 'Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.' (Patton, 1990: 169) However, although Heather's interview illustrates many of the concepts derived from the full complement of interviews, it was not given any greater prominence in the analysis nor did it unduly influence the interpretation of the others, rather it is used here to illustrate the analytical process. As described in chapter three, the codes from each interview were extracted from the text and printed onto paper. These were then cut into strips containing the code and physically placed according to the concept that they were describing. This clustering exercise had the advantage of physically illustrating the emergence of the concepts and categories.
Heather is a social worker specialising in the care of children who had been abused and who were residing in a special unit. She had been in counselling for many years to address her own childhood abuse but was currently not seeking external support or assistance. She had also been trained as a counsellor and used these skills in her work in an informal way. She was extremely thoughtful and articulate and used rich description and metaphor to illustrate her comments. This interview was conducted in Heather's home, recorded and transcribed. Her name, the names of the significant others that she refers to, and all references to identifying establishments or geographical locations have been changed. This interview is abridged. The full version may be found in Appendix III.

The Purposive Sample - Data Analysis

For clarity, I have used italics to indicate when I was asking questions or making comments. The alphanumeric codes relate the blocks of text to the open coding and the theoretical memos. The number relates to the block of text being examined and the letter, 'h' in this case, associates the text with the interviewee, Heather. For instance, the text in block 1h is expanded into five pieces of code (1h, 2h, 3h, 4h and 5h). The first theoretical memo refers to all of the open codes in the block, 1h-5h, whilst the second theoretical memo only refers to the open code given the identifier 1h. The second block takes the final number of open coding from block 1, 5h in this case, and recommences from here. In this instance, the second block starts with the code 6h. A new block is created when a natural break-point is reached in the interview.

Heather's interview

I began the interview with an affirmative, present day question in order to create an environment of optimism and positivism. Although Heather listed her achievements rather than described her feelings of health, she nonetheless indicated satisfaction in her movement forward and her ability to manage her life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wonder if you could tell me first about how it is you feel now?</td>
<td>1h. I feel that I'm quite successful in my life. I've raised two children, I have a successful career which I'm developing all the time and I feel as if I have a sense of myself these days, a sense of</td>
<td>1h. Listing achievements - successful, raised two children, career - equating these to feelings. 1h-5h. Definition of 'health' compared to the beginning of the journey of healing - integrated with a sense of self. This is not an 'absolute' point, (use of words like 'less' or 'more' implying that there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2h. Having a sense of self.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
my own identity which has been lacking through a large part of my life. It seems like it's different now.

Right.

I feel less fragmented really. More sort of whole, complete than I have done through my entire life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Feeling Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3h</td>
<td>Feeling different now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4h</td>
<td>Feeling less fragmented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5h</td>
<td>Feeling 'whole', 'complete'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

may be further to go) rather this is another step along the way with many interviewees anticipating further work and further healing. Perhaps this is a description of a stage, or resting place, on the journey that creates the foundation for the next phase.

1h. When asked how she was feeling now compared to the beginning of her journey she offered a list of her achievements, not feelings.

1h-5h. Being a successful parent and managing a career contribute to feeling well. These are outward, measurable qualities; the other qualities (whole, complete, less fragmented) are more internal and abstract.

3h. Feeling different now to how it was before. However difficult it is to grapple with what that means, it indicates that a transition has occurred.

Emma responded to this same question by saying: '[I feel] much less chaotic. Certainly less vulnerable, yet more vulnerable at the same time, having reached a point where my defences are certainly down compared to what they used to be which allows me to be more openly, or almost more openly vulnerable than I was a year ago.' Kate responded: 'Well physically I'm very well... I very very rarely get illnesses... I'm generally happy, confident, outgoing.' Mary: 'Well I'm able to cope with life better now. At one time, I was continually in a state of crying and depression... I feel more or less 'normal'. ' Rachel talked of 'feeling healed' and Vicky said: 'I'm feeling pretty happy and I am feeling much more confident now.' Sue said that being healthy for her meant 'Being able to think and to feel and to be alive,' and Claire said that she felt 'almost as if it didn't happen.' All these statements express a feeling of positive self-regard which was absent before the healing journey took place. Mezirow (1991) points out that 'all those who have completed a process of transformative learning experience a feeling of rebirth, of a new beginning.' (1991: 158) – a sentiment reflected in these women's words. Nelson (1997), in his study of priests who have renounced their vows to get married also found that they expressed feelings of joy, peace and freedom as well as a greater sense of personal integrity.
The next section presents Heather’s description of what triggered the process for her. In asking this question, I was assuming that there was a trigger, although I realised that was my construal of the process and may not have been Heather’s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What triggered your process of recovery?</td>
<td>6h Recognising that she was repeating the patterns in her marriage that had characterised her past.</td>
<td>6h. Making connections between her father and her husband and recognising similar patterns of behaviour. It seems she couldn’t make these connections until she observed the dynamic between her husband and her daughter. Was this because she could observe the dynamic more objectively? Subjectively, it didn’t have the same impact. Perhaps because she was so used to being treated in a certain way that she didn’t see anything wrong with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7h Making connections between her husband and her father – reaching a point of realisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8h Feeling trapped in her marriage once she realised that she was repeating patterns.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9h Seeing behaviours in her daughter that she recognised in herself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10h Wanting to protect her daughter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11h Fearing her daughter would experience abuse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12h Recognising that what was causing her younger daughter to behave in a certain way was not OK for Heather and her other daughter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13h Realising that she needed help.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14h Struggling to parent the girls.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7h, 8h, 9h. (Moustakas, C., Phenomenological Research Methods, Sage Publications, 1994, pp127 – taken from Palmieri’s Study of Childhood Abuse, 1990 – The Experience of Adults Abused as Children. Taken from his interview with ‘Geraldine’.

“I know what scared me the most was mainly with my oldest daughter...she’s going to be ten and starting to develop. That’s a strong fear of the same thing happening to her that happened to me.”)

7h, 8h. Seeing her own dysfunctional behaviours reflected in her daughter’s behaviours led to fear of the same history unfolding for her daughter. As a parent, this was unacceptable and it stimulated action on Heather’s part that began her own journey of healing.

11h. When Heather made a choice to protect her daughter it occurred to her that the...
Although I had 'spoon fed' the idea of a trigger, it was apparent that Heather was indeed propelled into the process as a result of the realisation that her daughter's behaviour was beginning to reflect her own. A similar trigger was described by other interviewees. Kate: 'My daughter was about seven and she would have been the age then that I was .... the first time I was sexually abused so it might have been that there was a trigger there. I've never really thought about it before. She was that age. The same age.' During the interview, Kate made the connection that when her daughter reached the same age as she was when she was first abused, this acted as a trigger to her process. This was a revelation to her. Rachel described the trigger as 'When my son reached seven that was a trigger, because that was when my mother didn't want me. So, I'm clear about that, it was a trigger.'

Others described the trigger as a health crisis or a repeated experience in adulthood of the abuse they had received as a child. In response to the question, 'What triggered the process for you?' Kate responded 'My body was rigid, literally rigid. I wandered around like a thunderbirds puppet, my whole back, my neck, was solid. All the muscles in my back were locked and my hips were locked and the pain of that, constantly, I think was probably what made me first begin [the journey].' In all the interviews, either one, or a number of triggers, heralded the journey of healing and transformation. Learning and personality theorists use the term 'crisis' (Erikson, 1963), 'distress' (Kegan, 1982), 'perspective distortion' or 'disorientating dilemma' Mezirow (1991) to describe the trigger for transformative growth. Any challenge to one's previously held suppositions can be both difficult and painful. 'They call into question deeply held personal values and threaten our very sense of self.' (Mezirow, 1991: 168)

The interview continued with a description of how things proceeded after the trigger had been experienced.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15h. And, I was succeeding but I wasn't...... I was aware that I wasn't doing it in a way that I was happy with and I felt like, ah what... there was something missing almost. Everything had been fine up until the girls reached a certain age [then] things changed and I think, I don't know whether that was linked with stuff from my past I couldn't give them the same kind of physical contact and the affection that they needed.</td>
<td>15h Succeeding on one level but not on another. Something was missing. 16h Making possible links between the girls at a certain age and own experiences as a child. 17h Withholding affection from children as they reached a certain age. 18h Sensing that 'something was wrong' in her parenting skills.</td>
<td>15h-18h. Being able to parent the girls on one level (practical) but withdrawing affection and physical comfort from them (emotional) when they reached a certain age. Coping in one domain but not in another. Intuitively recognising that something was wrong but not being able to determine what it was. The act of withholding triggered concern and brought the situation into focus. Wilber, In the Atman Project credits Gardner, (and indirectly, Piaget) with the insight that development is composed of a variety of domains (developmental lines) and that a human can be competent in one domain whereas this competence would not be identical to that in other domains. This may explain why Heather was a practically competent as a mother but emotionally withheld.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19h. I was aware that they had become more aware of the difficulties I was having. I'd been able to protect them from that up to that point. And in protecting them, I suppose I was in a sort of denial. We were ticking over [but] the cracks were beginning to show, I think I realised at that point.... when children start to say things like 'why', why do you do that, why are you like that, I started to question that myself. And then I realised that it was obvious to everybody else [that] these things I used to do, these compulsive things, the odd little behaviours that I had were apparent to other people and once I realised that, I didn't like that, I</td>
<td>19h Being questioned by children about her behaviours. 20h Recognising strategy of denial. 21h 'Ticking over' in her role as a parent. 22h Starting to question herself. 23h Feeling exposed 24h Combination of triggers.</td>
<td>19h. Children were observing Heather's behaviours and asking 'why' she did certain things which made her question herself. Had the children reached a certain stage in their development that mirrored Heather's when it was arrested by abuse? Not having experienced 'normal' development herself, she may not have known how to fulfil her role as mother. 20h. Fulfilling her role as a protector of her children meant that she could deny the dysfunction in herself but it reached a point where the enormity of the denial was revealed by her daughters' questioning and the strategy was no longer effective. At this stage, there was nothing else for it but to do something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
realised that I perhaps needed to do something about it.

So it was all of those things seemed to come together at the same time. I'd reached a stage where I had become more self-aware maybe and it was only that combination of factors that triggered that awareness really.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>25h. The difficulties probably initially started with Bethany. (The older child) I found I was drifting further and further away from her. And I gave myself lots of excuses for that but there reached a point when I realised that really there was no excuse, it was something that was going on inside of me that was responsible for that. I'm not sure what it was, but something was happening.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25h Drifting further away from elder daughter led to recognition of internal process – but unable to determine what it was.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25h. Something felt wrong but Heather was unable to determine what it was. Withholding affection from your children must feel wrong at some level. How do we know how to parent our children? Who teaches us? Is it innate in us? Was affection withheld from Heather when she was the same age as her daughter? Some people see abuse as the only 'soft touch' a child may receive; the only demonstration of love or affection. Perhaps this is an indication of the brutality of Heather's abuse?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>28h. Once I started to become aware of those things... and of course, the other thing that happened around that... actually, I don't know why I forgot to say that... The important thing, probably, that happened at that point was that my Mum died.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28h Death of her mother – trigger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29h Things started to come undone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29h-30h. When her mother died, all that she had 'held on to' escaped her grasp and things 'started to come undone'. Had she colluded with her mother to keep things under wraps and her departure triggered the questioning process? – Use of metaphor very strong. Ref: Metaphors we live by. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 30h Coping strategies failing. |
| 31h Coping on two levels. Managing quite well on the social level, not the psychological level. |
| 32h Withholding self from others. |
| 31h, 32h. Disassociation? Split personality? |
probably functioned on two levels. There was a bit of me that was always separate from the self that people saw, the person that people saw. When my Mum died, and it was around that time, um, it was like I couldn't do that anymore.

| 33h. Losing the ability to function as before. |
| 34h Counselling due to the impact of her mother's death - but 12 months afterwards. |
| 35h Resorting to 'old' coping strategies – compartmentalising things – but they didn't work. |
| 36h Nothing working. |
| 37h Everything was disintegrating; falling apart. |
| 38h Unable to 'get a hold'. |
| 33h. Strong use of metaphor - boxes becoming unhinged, juggling. Many interviewees pepper their accounts with metaphors to describe their process. Perhaps because they just don't have the words. In Rachel's interview, she reported that she couldn't talk about her abuse until she became educated and had the language to convey what had happened. |

I think everything was falling apart, it was disintegrating really, because my strategies for coping were no longer working.

This is a very powerful description of how things 'started to come undone' once the process had commenced. As things unravelled in her life, Heather began to look back and understand the coping mechanisms that she had employed, recognising that these were no longer working for her. It was as if there was nowhere to go but into the transformative process where previously held values, assumptions and beliefs must be scrutinised and re-evaluated.

Others described a similar phase. Rachel: 'I went through an awful period really of, I don't know whether it was depression but it was just... I think it was probably a psychotic episode, if one wanted to name it. It was awful. I, kind of, was hanging on by my finger tips really.' Emma: 'I was quite shocked at my inability to carry on and I was getting extremely worried.
about some practical things like driving my car into the nearest wall deliberately, just because I couldn’t stand the….the overwhelming tiredness was horrendous but it was also leaving me continually at risk of not being able to maintain emotional control.’ Vicky: ‘I was in the most horrendous place I could ever be. I was living in a squat in [a European city] and I was taking a lot of drugs, drinking a lot of alcohol and totally out of it really and I think I could have died at that stage because I didn’t care anymore, whatsoever, I couldn’t be bothered.’ There seems to be a common experience of chaos in all these testimonies; a place where nothing makes sense; a place of despair. All of the interviewees had experienced this at the outset of their healing journey.

Heather continues to describe the role of her counsellor at this stage of her process and how just talking about things, helped her clarify matters.
Extracts from the data

39h Going every week to the counsellor gave me a different coping strategy. I began to get a picture of my life as it was then and a much clearer picture of what it was like for the girls, what my relationship was like with Chris, although I never explored any of those things, just talking about my week helped me to begin to see in a way I’d never been able to see before. Previously I’d been moving through this fog and not been able to see anything in front of my face and now I began to see things in front of my face and that’s when I began to realise, very very gradually, it didn’t happen overnight, it took a long time ... that that couldn’t continue.

Because it was affecting the girls and I suppose that was my impetus for change, really, that it was affecting the girls more than that it was affecting me. I needed to protect them. It was always very important to me that they were OK, more so than myself. It was as if I didn’t count but they did. They were important.

Open Coding

39h Talking about things each week enabled her to get a picture of her life.

40h Clearing the fog.

41h Being able to see things in a new way.

42h Putting the girls’ well-being before her own.

43h Recognising that the situation was affecting the girls and she needed to protect them.

44h Low self-esteem. ‘I didn’t count. ’ ‘They were important.’

Theoretical Memos

39h. Going to a counsellor every week and just talking about what had happened during the week was a new coping strategy. It enabled Heather to get a picture of her life through externalising her thoughts and hearing herself. Is there something about this externalisation process that helps create clarity about what is going on? ?The therapeutic effects of talking and being heard.

40h. Using the metaphor of not being able to see in front of her face because of the fog and, through talking, she was able to see a much clearer picture of what it was like for the girls and what her relationship was like with her husband.

The role of the counsellor was touched upon by all the other interviewees, but what was most striking in each case was the importance of speaking out, being heard, being witnessed, being ‘seen’, perhaps for the very first time. Kate commented: ‘The last two and a half years of therapy I had I think is what moved me on both physically and emotionally (the italics are my emphasis to highlight the two channels of transformation) and it was being heard [that] was very important.’ Mary talked about her counsellor: ‘Well she listened and I think, I think if somebody listens, and you know they’re listening by their body language and everything else, you know, you feel valued.’ Although Rachel was describing a relationship with someone other than a counsellor, she nevertheless highlighted the importance of ‘being heard’. She commented: ‘For one of the first few times in my life I felt listened to and heard.’

In Vicky’s interview, she described the feeling of having been in touch with an organisation
called 'Mothers against Incest'. This is what she said: 'I felt so supported by them and seen and understood in a way that I have never ever from my own mother and it made such a difference for me.' She also said: 'I think the biggest part of that journey was connecting with somebody that would believe me and trust me, and working through a lot of unresolved sadness, grief, anger.' In a similar way to Vicky, Sue used The Rape Crisis Centre as a means of being heard. 'I then contacted the Rape Crisis Centre because I needed to tell my story. I needed to hear myself telling my story and I needed to see other peoples’ reactions to it.' Claire talked of the importance of being witnessed: 'I think its important to piece together your own story, to have... you need a thread, you need continuity and witnesses, witnesses are terribly important.' Vicky: 'I think my therapists really made a connection with me and gave me the, you know... connected with me in an empathic, and in a kind of embracing, accepting... acceptance was very important... an accepting way and I think that has been very very important.' Throughout the interviews, this theme was revisited time again and, using the concept indicator model, the core concept or category of 'being validated' emerged. This is shown in Figure (v) below.

Figure (v) - Concept indicator model indicating the emergence of the category: 'Being validated'

Not only did counselling validate the interviewees' experiences but it was often instrumental in helping to clarify their thoughts and feelings. Heather said: 'I'd been moving through this fog and not been able to see anything in front of my face and now I began to see things in
front of my face.' Rachel uses the same analogy: 'I was about seven years trying to find my way in a fog. [You] know with the jahari window again where there's a bit... where you're blind, you can't see.'

Within the grounded theory tradition, the researcher looks for the sub-categories within the core category to 'dimensionalise' the property. (Cresswell, 1998: 57) Straus and Corbin (1998) advocate thinking about a category in terms of its properties and dimensions and break it down into its sub-categories that explain when, where, why and how the category is likely to exist. (1998: 114) In the case of 'feeling validated' the conditions under which it was most apparent was at the beginning of the exploratory process, although not exclusively, and necessitated an 'audience'; someone who was prepared to listen and validate the 'story' and feelings of the abused. 'Being heard', 'being believed' and 'being witnessed' are therefore sub-categories or elements of 'feeling validated'.

Continuing the discussion with Heather, I asked about the coping strategies that she had employed to keep her life in tact until she reached the trigger point(s). I was interested in the tension between maintaining old coping strategies and the fear of letting these go; examining and dissolving them before reassembling them in a new form that was not ruled by threat or fear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So you were talking about coping strategies prior to this period. What sort of coping strategies are you talking about? You talked about compartmentalising, is that what you mean by a coping strategy?</td>
<td>45h Coping strategy; disassociation. 46h Living life in a disassociated state. 47h Living on two levels. 48h Putting on roles as a coping strategy. 49h Hiding part of herself – Withholding. 50h Disassociating/denying. 51h Never forgot, put memories of abuse on hold. 52h Busying herself with tasks to offset the risk of memories coming through – obsessive cleaning/compulsive disorder</td>
<td>45h. Disassociation. Splitting oneself and living on two levels as a means of getting through life. Hiding a part of herself away and never letting it out. The hurt child? Numbing herself to life. 45h-55h. A great deal of effort was put into containing the situation so that it didn't have to be addressed. It was as if Heather knew that to face the memories and deal with their significance would be extremely challenging and she tried everything to veer away from having to do that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45h. I think that's probably one. I didn't know then what my coping strategies were. I know now by looking back but what had happened to me as a child, in order to cope with that, I had disassociated from the experiences and I think that continued. I think I lived my life like that, disassociated from any kind of real contact with life, if you see what I mean? I know what it means, I can't explain it! So that I was ... it's this business of splitting, almost, again, living on two levels. There was a
bit of me that never came out. It was only just... I could almost put roles on, you know, I was a mother and I did that bit, I would go to work and I'd do that bit and nobody would ever know. In fact people commented as I got to know them that they never really knew me because they didn't... there was no way they were ever going to get to know anything about me because that was risky. It made me feel vulnerable. And I think that was a level of disassociation that I lived on and I think denial as well. Although I never forgot. I always had the memories, although I think what I'd done with the memories was put them on hold. They were always there but I'd put them on hold and if anything ever threatened to... if anything was triggered or anything threatened to come through, I would probably disassociate even more or I would do things like... cleaning was one of my things. You know, I would clean frantically. All sorts of practical things I would do. I had to distract myself. I probably did a lot of that with the girls really. Threw myself into that. I was exhausted a lot of the time because of all the things that I was doing to avoid anything coming through.

So it was like the life that had gone before had been put on hold. It was there and it wasn't part of my... I didn't bring that with me into my adult life somehow and therefore didn't live a complete adult life I was only living that on the surface, if you see?

| 53h | Exhausting herself trying to avoid memories from emerging. |
| 54h | Life that had gone before was put on hold. |
| 55h | Living on the surface. |
Heather describes what she eventually recognised as her coping strategies. These were not known at the time she employed them but with the wisdom of hindsight, she could see very clearly what her coping strategies were and it was these that she was referring to when she said that 'everything started to come undone'. She went on to say that 'everything was falling apart; it was disintegrating really, because my strategies for coping were no longer working.' In other interviews, this realisation was also apparent in the process. Kate talks about how she managed to survive her early years and the strategy she adopted in order to do that: 'I think, that was probably my bloody-mindedness, that was a real survivor technique that, as I child, I had to develop, a bloody-mindedness of 'you are not going to get to me.' Emma outlines her survival strategy in the context of describing her relationship with her counsellor: 'I wanted her to be challenging and I wanted her not to follow me in my avoidance, that if she challenged at the 'right time', that was the key that I couldn't get hold of myself, that's the thing that I couldn't do in terms of avoiding because I would just go into a whole physical and psychological process of switching off my emotions.'

I asked how Heather moved on from that period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 56h. That [taking to a counsellor] actually helped me a lot. I started to take small steps forward. Going out with the girls from work was a major step for me, major hurdle and a lot of the time I used to cry off but gradually, I started doing small things like that. It was taking little steps like that that gradually built my self-confidence a little bit, and I needed to do that because I couldn't actually have made any major changes in my life without building those small steps and I was very fortunate in having some friends who... work colleagues who were very good, very supportive because they knew, they could see what Chris was like. They used to help me out with the girls because Maddie was ill in hospital a lot and I found it difficult initially to actually accept any support or anything, I felt like I had to do everything on my own. | 56h Taking small steps to build self-confidence.  
57h Going out with the girls at work.  
58h Finding external support.  
59h Beginning to feel that she didn't have to do everything by herself. | 56h-59h. The importance of achieving the small steps to build sufficient confidence to make major changes is articulated here. The process of changing patterns of behaviour in small ways and being strong enough to go against her husband. This was dependent upon having a supportive network outside the home, people who could 'hold' the situation and not make frightening demands to make major changes. This seems to be a core process and many interviewees talk of building confidence/strength, bit by bit, until they are ready to make a significant change. This seems to go hand in hand with a 'sense making' activity - piecing things together to gain understanding. |
60h. Each step I took made me feel different about myself. I think, although I wasn't aware of it at the time but that was obviously what was happening. I was gradually building self-esteem and being able to trust people to help me if I needed help. I was always very careful not to get involved but I was getting better at receiving the help and support that was offered. It was building on itself probably over about five years and then eventually I injured my back and I wasn't able to work and I was devastated and my manager suggested I went and trained for the Social Work Diploma and I was very very hesitant because I didn't have the confidence but she pushed and pushed and got all the information and kept putting it in front of me and eventually I did apply and I did go but I had to build some experience towards doing it twelve months hence. Doing that, helped me to see what was out in the 'real world'. I had lived this very isolated experience. I was isolated at work because I had isolated myself inside and, gradually, by going out there and having to take a step forward each time, I was breaking that isolation, but in doing that, I was also making myself vulnerable.

60h Feeling different about herself as she took successive small steps.
61h Being validated by her manager.
63h Finding out about the 'real world'.
64h Becoming less isolated.
65h Making herself vulnerable.

60h. Gradually building self-esteem and being able to trust people. This process was piecemeal and took a long time. The process of breaking down old paradigms and replacing them with new ones.

62h. Many interviewees have talked of the role of academic study in their healing journey. Perhaps it's because it deals with situations in the abstract which can then be related back to their own experiences. It is a less threatening environment. One in which like-minded people congregate and personal agendas are not at the forefront. This might be the first experience an abused person has of a supportive environment and a real education in how healthy relationships are formed and maintained. Is this a process that healthy children go through when they go to school and start becoming individualised? Refs: Erik Erikson's Childhood and Society. Robert Kegan, The Evolving Self.

In this extract of the interview, Heather talks extensively about 'living on two levels' – another coping strategy that she shares with others. She says: 'I think I probably functioned on two levels. There was a bit of me that was always separate from the self that people saw.' In addition, she made the comment: 'It's this business of splitting, almost, again, living on two levels. There was a bit of me that never came out. It was only just... I could almost put roles on, you know, I was a mother and I did that bit, I would go to work and I'd do that bit and nobody would ever know.' This relates strongly to other interviewees' comments. Vicky, in describing her move away from her native country, differentiates between the outer and inner levels: 'It was creating distance on an outer level, but also on an inner level.'
Rachel described the two levels of her existence: 'I think I was coping. I was coping in a way that my own system could allow me to cope and, doing what I did and living in turmoil, was coping.' Emma discusses the difference between addressing issues on an intellectual level and an emotional level (the italics are my emphasis to draw attention to the two channels of transformation): 'I was realising it was incredibly helpful what we were doing but it wasn't going to achieve anything on an emotional level.' The related theme of a split was introduced by Sue when she spoke of the experience of meeting her father who she hadn't seen for thirty seven years. During this meeting, he acknowledged that he knew she was being abused by her grandfather: 'That was such a physical thing because I still carried this thing of being split, with this river of blood that went down me like this [she motioned a line down the centre of her body] and as I sat there looking at this man with him telling me that... this thing just went 'Pochhh' inside me and it healed..... This jagged river. This split inside me.'

It is fascinating to me that this process is beset with everything from healing revelation to slow, arduous processing. Physical, mindful and emotional determination to stay with the constant challenges and the courage to withstand the shocks of sudden revelation must be two of the human qualities needed to engage with this process successfully. This is not just about psychology, I believe, it involves the whole body and all the sense-making mechanisms that are available to it.

Heather also raises the issue of vulnerability as a mark of her progress. This is a theme identified by others as they relate their experiences. It is clear from the interviews that a certain level of self-confidence, or belief in oneself, needs to have been acquired in order for a person to demonstrate the qualities of vulnerability and the ability to manage or expand their boundaries. Demonstrating vulnerability is therefore contingent upon prior 'upstream' development that results in sufficient self-confidence or positive self-regard being put in place to meet the risk of being vulnerable.

Emma stresses, as a signal of her progress, the fact that she is: 'less vulnerable yet more vulnerable at the same time having reached a point where my defences are certainly down compared to what they used to be which allows me to be more openly, or almost more openly vulnerable than I was a year ago.'

Sue talks in some detail about being less vulnerable, in particular, outside the therapeutic relationship. She advocates: 'If that's what you feel like doing [any activity outside the therapeutic relationship] and you're not going to hurt yourself or hurt somebody else, try it. There's more work done outside of the therapeutic hour, if you like. Try everything you can
and let it be OK. It is OK.’ Again we see reference to an holistic process, one that extends beyond the therapeutic relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66h. And that was creating other problems, because I was making myself vulnerable, but nevertheless, I had this need to keep doing it.</td>
<td>66h Making herself vulnerable but had an internal impetus to continue doing it.</td>
<td>66h. In spite of the downside of making herself more vulnerable, Heather had this impetus to continue doing it – an internal driver that she didn’t understand. Is this what Ken Wilber describes in the Atman Project as a compulsion to actualise (or something like that)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Chris wasn’t here, gradually I got more and more confidence and would put the answer machine on and not answer his [Her father’s] call or, or if he was knocking at the door, I would actually pretend I wasn’t in and finding that I could do that, and the world didn’t fall down around me, was a huge learning for me but it was very scary at the time.</td>
<td>67h Finding the need to continue on the journey in spite of increased vulnerability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That breathing space while he [Chris] was away was really freedom... from him and from my Dad. But it also freed me from some of the isolation because my friends would actually call. So, that actually made a difference too and it was all just beginning to branch out. I was beginning to branch out in very small ways but each step I took was actually... they were building on each other.</td>
<td>68h Making choices; creating new boundaries.</td>
<td>68h-72h. This was a scary but freeing stage in the process as Heather learned to control her space and find freedom within it. She was challenging her own behaviours and assumptions and being rewarded for doing so. This catalysed building supportive relationships with people in her external environment and gave her the courage to branch out in a way that she had not done before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69h Learning how to control her environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70h Finding freedom for the first time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71h Building a supportive network.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72h Beginning to ‘branch out’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This piece illustrates the need to start creating structures outside the home and beyond the abusive experience – and outside the self, where old patterns are free to run their course without being challenged or checked in any way. Many talked of the role that further education played in this sense. Not only did it allow a new definition of the self to be established but it also enabled new networks and through these, a different view on life. All the interviewees trained as counsellors but more than this, Heather completed the Social Work Diploma, Sue took a photography course at College, Rachel embarked on a full education programme from GCSEs through ‘A’ levels to University where she is still seeking higher educational qualifications, both Sue and Mary trained to become Rape Crisis counsellors and Sue went on to establish a Rape Crisis Centre in her home town. Although
these examples are academic or professional frameworks, the interviewees also offer examples of learning personal skills such as Karate, swimming, walking, keeping fit, writing - poetry and prose, and painting. Exposure to this wider world seems to assist in the process of clarification. Seeing how other’s deal with their issues; being challenged by theoretical constructs and theories; delving into one’s own creative energies; all these serve to illuminate the cognitive and affective structures that hold a person in a state of stasis and with this light, brings the opportunity for review and renewal. Heather talks more of this mechanism as she describes how she encountered the theoretical material on her Diploma course which reintroduced her to the chaos of her post-trigger experience. Again, she used graphic language to illustrate the feeling ‘it all seemed to be falling apart’ and she ‘couldn’t hold it together anymore.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73h. The theory that we were covering on the course suddenly started to trigger all this stuff that I'd always known, but had always felt that it was in the past and it was ‘done and dusted’ and that was OK. But I didn't know what was wrong with me. I just knew that I had reached the point where everyday going into college was a struggle, going into placement was a struggle, I was tired, I thought I was ill, it felt like I was ill. You know, all sorts of things, all seemed to be falling apart like I couldn't hold it together anymore and I still couldn't identify what was wrong and I wondered if... because I would listen to the theory slots and think, I know it, you know, I know this, this is not news to me and all of this, but never... and being aware that it disturbed me and I was unsettled but not thinking it was having any effect.</td>
<td>73h Feeling physically ill after the course content triggered 'stuff' from the past.</td>
<td>73h. The course content resonated with Heather's childhood experiences and, although she was unsettled, she didn't think it was having any effect, yet she was feeling tired and physically ill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77h. I went to see the counsellor that they had at college. I just felt that maybe I wasn't cut out to do this academic course and maybe I needed to change direction so I was kind of trying to explore</td>
<td>77h Reaching a point of realisation through talking to the College counsellor.</td>
<td>77h, 79h. Heather was confused that the course was causing her distress because she held the belief that her past experiences had nothing to do with her present feelings – even though it was</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | 78h Making connections between course content | }
that and it was whilst I was exploring that, that all this stuff, it just kept popping up and eventually I don't know how, but it came into the counselling relationship and I brought it into the arena.

And, I kind of needed to speak to somebody who wouldn't be giving me advice, who would just let me put it all out there so that I could see what was going on and it was whilst that was happening that I gradually came to realise... There was definitely one day when there was a turning point. It was like somebody had put the light on, and I realised why I was having all these difficulties. Because I'd had that space to look at it all and it kept coming up and I kept thinking 'why am I harping back on this stuff, what's the matter with me?' And at the same time, of course, it was all erupting anyway. It was all just coming up in all sorts of ways and I still kept thinking, it's nothing to do with that, it's the fact that I'm no good at this but when I actually put it out there, and I suddenly realised, my God, you know, that is why. That's what the problem is. That's why all these things, all these memories are coming back, all these things are happening to me and I couldn't understand what the flashbacks were and... She picked that up and then we started to talk about it and it was just like somebody had put a light on and I realised that all this time, that all these things that I had been struggling with was all related back to that.

And yet I still resisted that because I didn't think that that could be possible. I felt that that was all in the past

| Reading time: 79h | Finding clarity – like a light being switched on. |

making her feel ill. (psychosomatic illness?) The process she is describing is one of clarifying, which I begin to think is the basic social psychological process that defines the healing journey; bringing light to the dysfunctional patterns so that they can be seen and understood.
and therefore, why was that affecting me there and then. I couldn't understand that... I'd done... I'd dealt with that, well, I hadn't dealt with it, it was all in the past and I didn't think.... It took me a long time to, kind of, accept, really, that the difficulties that I was experiencing were actually all related to that.

80h. I couldn't think that something that happened thirty years ago was actually affecting me in this way now. But when I realised, when we really looked at it, I realised that it wasn't just affecting me there and then, that it had actually been affecting me in lots of different ways all my life really.

80h Making connections between today's behaviours and what happened thirty years ago.

Heather had reached a valuable realisation that all the material she was studying resonated with her own experience at such a deep level that it made her feel ill and unable to cope with the course. Sue implies here that her emotional disturbance leads to physical illness, reinforcing the point made on many occasions by other interviewees, that there is a link between the mind and the body in respect of this process. Sadly, as the course ended and the counselling service was no longer available to her, Heather 'packed it away' (the realisation) as she had always done and told herself that that was 'OK'.

Much of the next section of the interview describes how she came to the decision to instigate divorce proceedings against her husband. 'The very fact that I made that decision was like a huge weight being lifted and I felt like... I knew things would never be the same again.' The decision to get a divorce was a turning point in Heather's process and a sub-category to 'controlling' her boundaries and making decisions about her and her daughters' lives.

Other examples of women taking their power and controlling their environments come from the interviews with Emma, who said that the first step on her process was 'to leave my husband', and Mary who, despite her religious strictures, got a divorce from her abusive husband. Mary's journey of healing began having offered to be a listener at the Rape Crisis Centre which triggered a great deal of her own process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82h. At the same time, I was doing a lot of child protection work. I was a field Social Worker. And suddenly realised that I couldn't do that any more. It happened the same way it had happened at college. It was almost like the process was the same. I was worried about the girls all the time and I wanted to be at home so that I could protect them [from her father] and yet I needed to do the work to earn this living and yet I found that I couldn't do the work and then I started to question, am I able to do this work? In actual fact, I wasn't able to do the work, not because I didn't have the ability, but because of the actual content of the work; the material I was working with.</td>
<td>82h. Anxiety about not being able to protect the girls whilst at work. 83h. Doing child protection work - content made it impossible to continue working in this way. Associating with others' experiences.</td>
<td>82h. At college, Heather was presented with her past through her studies and as a Field Social Worker, she was presented with her past through the content of her work. It's like, if she didn't do it for herself, something would drive her to do it. Does this process always take over? It's like it has a life of its own. Does it naturally seek resolution - whatever that means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92h. So, I went in to residential work instead. I thought, that by doing that, I wouldn't be faced with the child protection stuff but, what I actually found was that I was working with people who were living those experiences, or the aftermath of those experiences, and a lot of their behaviours I could identify with and I found that incredibly unsettling and yet kept telling myself this was OK, I could do this and, after all I knew it, so I told myself that I would be immune to the effects but in actual fact, it was tapping in all the time to stuff and it reached a point where I was struggling ... but then I was seriously assaulted by one of the young people and that just blew me out the water. All the stuff just came flooding back and I couldn't work. I mean work thought I was off after the assault, which I was, but it was</td>
<td>92h. Seeing own behaviours reflected by those in residential care. 93h. Assaulted seriously by one of the youngsters in care. 94h. Flooded with memories. Couldn't work. 95h. Reaching crisis point.</td>
<td>92h. Heather seems to have an unerring ability to encounter her past through her occupation. Firstly, it was the Social Work Diploma, then it was working as a Child Protection Officer and then it was Residential Care Work. All these situations triggered 'stuff' and made her question her suitability to work in these domains. Is this process orchestrated by a subconscious understanding of the phases and a need to work through them? 93h. Do we put ourselves in the path of experiences we need to have????!!!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is interesting that in spite of employing the coping strategy of 'denial', telling herself it would be 'OK', Heather was continuously put in the position where she was confronted by the issues that were disabling her until there was no avoiding them, 'stuff just came flooding back'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96h. I went to see my GP who suggested I had some counselling. But then a friend of mine, who was a Social Worker in another area, actually said to me that she knew somebody who had worked with an agency specifically for adults who had been abused and suggested, that I contact her. And it took me ages to do it, but eventually did and she was brilliant, really, because she knew... I didn’t have to keep explaining and justifying myself, she knew what was around and so that really was the best chunk of counselling that I’d had. And that moved me on a lot. I was able to go back to work. I saw her for a long time. I saw her for two years I think, maybe more but that enabled me to go back to work and so when I was back at work, when things were coming up, because I was still seeing her, I was able to work the two things alongside.</td>
<td>Working with counsellor who specialised in working with adults who had been abused.</td>
<td>96h. It is amazing how many people have 'false starts' with counsellors who apparently don’t understand what the needs of the client are or who don’t understand the process they are going through. Ref: Survey of CACREP-Accredited Programs: Training Counselors to Provide Treatment for Sexual Abuse.; By: Kitzrow, Martha Anne13, Counselor Education &amp; Supervision, Dec 2002, Vol. 42 Issue 2, p107-118 argues that lack of training can re-traumatise victims of childhood sexual abuse and that a high proportion of counsellors do not receive adequate training in this area. The quality of the counsellor seems to be of tremendous importance in these cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97h. Moving on a lot. Able to return to work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98h. Taking issues raised at work to counsellor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99h. Integrating healing process with work experiences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although not shown in detail above, Heather discussed the poor level of counselling that she received through her GP’s recommendation. Many of the interviewees have been damaged by poor counselling or therapeutic relationships and have had their process interrupted whilst they recovered from these poor quality interventions.

13 The survey of CACREP-Accredited Programs by Martha Anne Kitzrow in Counselor Education & Supervision (2002) argues that lack of training can re-traumatise victims of childhood sexual abuse and that a high proportion of counsellors do not receive adequate training in this area.
Heather describes how her counselling training triggered another exploration, this time into her past. During a module on Human Growth and Development, she was encouraged to look at her entire life-span. Heather comments: ‘it was like my life had been laid out in front of me.’ Taking a longer view on life is one of the features that seemingly allows an individual to synthesise or integrate their experience with their current meaning perspective and distance themselves from it, thereby being free to embrace a more positive disposition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100h. So, in some ways, it was quite good, although it was difficult and I questioned lots of times, whether I needed a change of client group but it was triggering my material and it was stuff that we could work with so, whilst it was very intense, it actually helped me to move on from it. I don’t think you ever leave it behind but I was able to leave it at that point.</td>
<td>100h. Processing being triggered by client group but able to work through this with counsellor.</td>
<td>100h. This seems to have been a powerful phase in Heather’s healing journey where she was able to address issues raised through her work immediately with her counsellor – a kind of parallel processing perhaps. This enabled her to move rapidly along the healing path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101h. Intense but helped to move Heather on.</td>
<td>102h. Recognising that you don’t ever leave it behind.</td>
<td>102h. No longer separating her past experiences from her present. She used to try and compartmentalise her abusive past but now acknowledges that it has an impact in her present life and will probably continue to do so. Perhaps this begs a different coping strategy? Is this a critical realisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather describes how her counselling training triggered another exploration, this time into her past. During a module on Human Growth and Development, she was encouraged to look at her entire life-span. Heather comments: ‘it was like my life had been laid out in front of me.’ Taking a longer view on life is one of the features that seemingly allows an individual to synthesise or integrate their experience with their current meaning perspective and distance themselves from it, thereby being free to embrace a more positive disposition.</td>
<td>103h. I started the counselling course the same situation as I had on the Social Work course [came up] where I was fine until we hit the Human Growth and Development module because, we looked at ourselves across the life-span and what had affected our development and how we’d reached the point where we are now. I found that incredibly difficult because then, for the first time, it was like my life had been laid out in front of me and I had to look at the impact on each of the losses and continued impact of the abuse. Seeing this as another stage in the process. Are there discrete phases in the process? Is there a natural ordering of these stages that can be</td>
<td>103h. For the fourth time, Heather puts herself in the line of fire and the pattern repeats. Starting the counselling course raised numerous issues. 105h. Recognition that taking an holistic view was another phase in the process and she needed to seek help to deal with the losses and continued impact of the abuse. Seeing this as another stage in the process. Are there discrete phases in the process? Is there a natural ordering of these stages that can be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
107h. Further exploration at a deeper level. This cleared a lot of it away.

107h. Heather conveys a sense that there is deeper processing as the various stages are moved through. Others have described this as ‘peeling the layers off an onion’.

108h. Whereas as before it helped me to feel less fragmented. All the different bits of counselling that I’d had before had addressed it at the level I could manage at that time, but I hadn’t got rid of that feeling of being fragmented and I think, this last time, I managed to get rid of that feeling somehow. Possibly because I’d seen it all laid out in front of me. It’s like having a jigsaw, you’ve thrown all the pieces down, and I needed to look at each piece to see where it fitted to make the big picture, to make the picture complete. So I knew where they fitted but I needed to look at each piece and that’s what I did this last lot of counselling and put it back together. And I know that some of the pieces still don’t fit very well and I know that there’s probably still work there that I could do but it’s not creating problems at the moment so I’ll leave it until it is probably, or maybe I won’t leave it this time until it creates a problem, maybe I’ll actually go back and do it before it does.

108h. Feeling less fragmented – perhaps because she could see it all laid out like a jigsaw and she was able to fit the pieces together to make the picture complete.

109h. Seeing counselling as addressing things at the level she could manage at the time.

110h. Looking at each piece and putting it in place.

111h. Losing the feeling of fragmentation.

112h. Integrating the whole.

113h. Anticipating needing to look at the pieces that still don’t fit. May do this proactively, before the problem arises.

108h. Feeling less fragmented – is this about integration? Being able to fit the pieces together like a jigsaw is a common metaphor for this phase of the process.

109h. The concept of layers is referred to again and the idea that processing becomes deeper and deeper as it progresses. To begin with, Heather just talked of what was happening to her during the week and this was what comprised her counselling. No abuse was addressed at this stage. Now, her life is being laid out in front of her with all the patterns and implications coming into focus.

113h. Recognising that some pieces of the jigsaw still don’t fit and that they will need to be addressed sometime in the future. In fact, Heather did go into another cycle of processing after the interview as a result of which her counsellor encouraged Heather to report her abusers to the Police and threatened to do so herself if Heather did...
not. Heather felt tremendously let down by this episode and finished seeing this counsellor with whom she had formerly enjoyed a strong and trusting relationship. She is now questioning the wisdom of finding another counsellor to assist her further work.

The issue of fragmentation is not an uncommon theme in the series of interviews that were conducted for this research project. Emma, in describing her current sense of strength says: 'I'm grounded enough now to actually deal with some of the big emotional stuff whereas before, maybe, to some extent, I was a little bit too fragile to actually put it all together, you know, maybe I would have realised my worst fears and become totally fragmented whereas now, I think I'm in a much better position to deal with that.'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>114h. I feel as if what people see now is me. Whereas before what they were seeing was what I thought they wanted to see or what they needed to see or it was a role that I had to play. Now it feels like the inside has joined the outside more, so it's more one whole than lots of different pieces.</td>
<td>114h Feeling that now, what people see is 'me' not what I thought they wanted to see. 115h 'Inside' has joined the 'outside'. – Integration.</td>
<td>115. Feeling of integration, wholeness. This stage has been hard won and it is graphically described by Heather. Although this isn't the end, it is certainly a stage that has been reached.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heather uses language that suggests she is in a new place of integration. 'The inside has joined the outside', 'it's [I'm] more one whole than lots of different pieces. The feeling of fragmentation that she mentioned at the outset of the interview is less apparent, although she acknowledges that there may be more work to do yet. Rachel uses the analogy of a spile to describe her newfound containment. 'It felt like a spile in a cask of wine. You know, you put the.... that wooden spile in, stop it from leaking? Because I felt I was leaking. I couldn't contain stuff. And then once I'd done that psychodrama, it felt like the spile had been knocked in. And I just felt 'Yep, that's it. I'm healed.'

I was particularly interested in the role that anger had to play in Heather's process. She had described her journey in a fairly intellectual way and I wasn't sure whether an intellectual accommodation of her process was sufficient to make it robust. I asked her if her process had been an exercise in rationalisation or whether there were other aspects to it that enabled her to reach a point of 'wholeness'.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>116h. When I was a child, I spent hours and hours working people out and working out what was happening and, I would come to a conclusion; I'd find myself an explanation for what was happening and then something would happen that would just blow that explanation away and I'd have to find another one. And if I could find an explanation, it was OK for that period of time and I've done that all my life to some degree or other and I did a lot of that in counselling as well. I could keep it, I could intellectualise it, I could talk about it like it was an interesting... somebody else's case study, it was interesting and I understood the theory and I could relate the theory to myself and, you know, that was OK and I still prefer to do that I have to say but with Kim, the two year block [of counselling] I started off like that but I couldn't maintain it at that level and, because when I was assaulted, that tapped in to stuff in a way that got beyond the intellectual, you know, and I was quite seriously injured and even as a child I was seriously injured, a few times, and I think it took me straight back in to that so, although with Kim, I kind of was able to keep it on that intellectual level for quite a lot of the time, especially in the beginning, eventually, I couldn't.... that was a defence mechanism and I actually couldn't.... I think she was very skilled as well, and I couldn't maintain that any longer. It actually was very difficult when I couldn't maintain it any longer.</td>
<td>116h Observing people's behaviours as a child and finding explanations for their actions.</td>
<td>116h. As a child, Heather spent hours and hours working people out. This is something that other interviewees have spoken about. (eg Emma) I wonder if it has something to do with the level of confusion and isolation they experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117h Used the intellectualising process to remain detached from the experience in the early stages of counselling.</td>
<td>118h Dealing with the assault and working with an experienced counsellor prevented Heather from continuing to use intellectualisation as a distancing mechanism.</td>
<td>118h, 119h. The brutality of the assault shocked Heather into having to dig beyond her intellect and deal with it on another level. Emma also talked of using the intellectual level as a defence mechanism. In her interview, she speculated that the next step of the process for her was to move to the emotional level and this seemed to be a real challenge for her. Yet Heather's counsellor helped her make this transition. In Emma's case, she spoke of becoming so intellectually adept at defending herself that counsellors had to be more able than her in order to help her change this dynamic. Is this level of counselling a matter of luck?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119h Dealing with the assault tapped into something beyond the intellectual.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Extracts from the data

120h. When I couldn’t maintain that defence mechanism it meant I had to look at how it had affected me emotionally or [how] I connected with it. And, because I connected with it, that was extremely difficult. It was extremely painful to connect with it and I thought I would have a break down. I thought I was having a break down actually, and that's why I couldn't function. I couldn't function. I would sit. I'd forgotten all this. I would sit for hours, and I must have been just sitting, looking at a wall, and not even knowing... you know, I would look at the clock, perhaps I would sit down for a coffee and then suddenly realise, two or three hours had passed ... and I think I was having some sort of a break down really, although I didn’t disintegrate, it was a form of a break down, but I feel like I needed to have that break down. It was like a break down of the defences, if you see what I mean?

Open Coding

120h Making the transition from intellectual processing to emotional processing.

121h Connecting with the assault as opposed to intellectualising about it.

122h Becoming immobile – sitting for hours –

123h Breaking down defence mechanisms.

Theoretical Memos

120h. Making the transition from intellectual processing to emotional processing was extremely challenging because Heather couldn’t understand the process. She thought she was having a breakdown although she didn’t disintegrate. Interesting that she uses the word disintegrate, which seems to equate to descent into chaos in the context of this process. There must have been something in her that was able to hold the process together, even though her behaviours were surprising to her. Taking an idea from Rachel’s interview, perhaps she didn’t have the language to intellectualise about the process, she just had to ‘be’ in it.

121h. Allowing the pain to be felt. Perhaps Heather had never allowed the pain of her abuse to be felt. She talked of observing people from a distance and making stories up about them so that there was some sort of order in her world. Was this an intellectual coping strategy? “I could intellectualise it, I could talk about it like it was an interesting... somebody else’s case study.”


123h. Catatonia (integration period enabling Heather to connect with her feelings) – essential step in moving away from intellectual defence mechanisms.
Breaking down the intellectual defences took the form of a kind of catatonia, just sitting for hours on end and losing sight of the time. Emma talks of a similar experience having noted her defence mechanism of hiding in her cognitive processes. ‘That defence mechanism, yes it allowed me to carry on but I think that’s the destructive part about it, that it brought me almost to a full stop. Even to the point where ... I sat in a chair for two days and didn’t get up, get a drink of water or anything.’ This seems to be an interesting stage, although not one that the others described, but I wonder whether it was a ‘latent’ processing stage where the intellectual channel was short-circuited so that the subconscious could deliver its wisdom without interference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>124h. That had to happen because those defences were preventing me from accepting what had happened and that it wasn’t OK. Having done the Social Work course, I could actually understand how these things had happened because I could understand the theory of family dynamics and all this kind of stuff and all of that was actually getting in the way because whilst I could find an explanation and reasons and excuses for my parents, it was stopping me feeling justified in feeling what I was feeling, or having any feelings about it at all. [I intellectualised] that it was nobody’s fault and, in actual fact, it was somebody’s fault but I was hooked into this self-blame as well for a long, long time. It was when I’d actually seen it laid out that I realised, Oh my God!, you know, it’s... although I knew rationally I wasn’t to blame, I was hanging on to self-blame because it meant if I was blaming myself I didn’t have to blame anybody else. And I couldn’t face the fact that my parents had actually done that, really, and that this had been the impact over my life-span.</td>
<td>124h. Intellectualising prevented Heather from accepting what had happened.</td>
<td>124h. Although her ability to intellectualise had enabled her to survive it was now preventing her from feeling justified in feeling what she was feeling – or feeling anything at all. If you can intellectualise, and be objective about an experience, you can’t connect with it from an emotional perspective - in the way that Heather did her assault. This coping strategy then becomes a blocking strategy. This seems to be a critical part of the process. Changing the way you think about things. Having realisations. Ah ha moments. In this case, it happened when Heather saw ‘it all laid out’. In this sense, she was able to ‘see’ what was happening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125h. Intellectualising getting in the way of feeling justified in feeling what she was feeling – or having any feelings at all.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126h. Using self-blame to avoid blaming anyone else.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracts from the data</td>
<td>Open Coding</td>
<td>Theoretical Memos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So, when you'd connected with those feelings how did you move yourself on from there?</td>
<td>127h Allowing herself to feel the pain enabled her to move on.</td>
<td>131h. Disassociation as a child enabled her to withstand the abuse. As an adult, she had to allow herself to experience the feelings that she had denied herself as a child. Refs for Disassociation Identity Disorder or whatever this mechanism is called that enables someone to separate themselves from the experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127h. How did I move on? I think simply by allowing myself to feel them helped me move on. The fact that I wasn't allowing myself to feel them was stopping me from moving on. You know, I'd done all this counselling and yet I still wasn't OK, at some level I wasn't OK, and it was because I hadn't allowed myself to experience the pain and all of the stuff that went with it because I was too busy rationalising it. So I needed to do that in order to move on. I needed to experience it.</td>
<td>128h Counselling had remained largely at the cognitive/rational level and Heather still wasn't OK.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was experiencing it all you needed to do or did you have to do anything else with the experience?</td>
<td>129h Thinking she was going mad as she let herself experience the abuse emotionally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, if I'd just experienced it I think I would have gone mad. If I'd just stayed there in the experience I think... there were times when I thought I was going mad, actually. And had I not had [my counsellor] there to, sort of, normalise that for me, because I did think I was going mad because as a child, I'd never experienced feelings. I felt like that was the first time I had experienced those abusive experiences, if you see what I mean?</td>
<td>130h Experienced abuse for the first time without defence mechanisms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a child, I had separated from them to such an extent I didn't feel it. I knew it was happening but I didn't feel it and I certainly didn't connect with it emotionally and I think, for me, it was like experiencing it for the first time. It was like I had to move through this, whatever this was, in order to come out</td>
<td>131h As a child, Heather never experienced feelings – separated from them to such an extent that she didn't feel it; didn't connect with it emotionally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Heather goes on to say that had she not been in counselling, she would have probably gone back to self-harming or committed suicide. She also explains that her abuse stopped because she had attempted suicide and her parents (the abusers) were concerned that questions would be asked that would expose their predilections. She credits her counsellor for getting her through this phase of the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>135h. And I think, because she actually helped me to accept where I was and understand why I was feeling the way I was feeling, I was able then to, kind of, put the responsibility where it lay, I think, with them and accept that, well you know, they didn’t love me, they were abusive and accept that reality. Until I did that, I couldn’t let it all go I don’t think. Um, it took me a long time. It was like letting it go a bit at a time, of this heavy weight. Like just casting a bit off at a time. And each bit that I actually accepted and let go of, meant that I could take another step forward. It was lightening the load and, and then I found that when I went back to work, I wasn’t as enmeshed in the whole thing, I was separate from it. I think had I not been assaulted, something would have happened anyway. There would have been a crisis of some sort that would have taken me to counselling and I would have had to do the work whatever.</td>
<td>Learning to accept and understand where she was.</td>
<td>137h-141h. Use of metaphor again – lightening the load, casting off a bit at a time, taking the next step forward. Building a picture of a journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135h Learning to accept and understand where she was.</td>
<td>Putting responsibility where it lay, with her parents.</td>
<td>142h. It is interesting that Heather conveyed the belief that had she not been assaulted, ‘something’ would have happened to move her on in her process. Does this indicate a belief in an external moderator/motivator for the process; that fate is somehow wrapped up in the process? If so, what happens to those who don’t go through the process? How is someone ‘chosen’? Because they are strong enough? Because they are worth while? OR Is the process inevitable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136h Putting responsibility where it lay, with her parents.</td>
<td>Letting go of the need to be loved by her parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137h Letting go of the need to be loved by her parents.</td>
<td>Undergoing intensive therapy whilst learning to let go.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138h Undergoing intensive therapy whilst learning to let go.</td>
<td>Letting it go a bit at a time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139h Letting it go a bit at a time.</td>
<td>Lightening the load.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140h Lightening the load.</td>
<td>Learning to separate her ‘stuff’ from client’s ‘stuff’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141h Learning to separate her ‘stuff’ from client’s ‘stuff’.</td>
<td>Believing that had she not been assaulted, something would have happened to take her to counselling and she would have had to have done the work anyway.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142h Believing that had she not been assaulted, something would have happened to take her to counselling and she would have had to have done the work anyway.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There seems to be a lot of releasing in this passage; a lot of letting go but this, in itself, instigated more processing, this time, emotional. It is interesting to note Heather’s comments that had she not been assaulted, something would have happened to take her back to counselling. There is ‘inevitability’ in her mind that she had to ‘do the work’. I
wonder, therefore, if there is a life-stage or a context, which precipitates the need to do this work or perhaps, we are fated to do so. If this is so, who is choosing the path?

Interestingly, Emma talks of her relative inability to let go and perceives this as the next challenge on her path towards healing. ‘I’m in a position now where the possibility of any sort of catharsis or release is slightly less intimidating, less potentially catastrophic than I would have said it was a year ago.’ Emma goes on to say that although her process has been very slow, and she is still very much in it, she thinks ‘it’s really important not to devalue any very small steps...[because they are] going to sustain me to the next stage of therapy where, you know, I might get into a more cathartic emotional release and movement.’ As Emma anticipates the ‘release’ stage of the process of healing, she unwittingly pegs her progress on the journey. It seems she has a natural instinct about what is to come next but is resisting entering that phase currently, thereby, at least temporarily, arresting her progress and rendering her journey less than complete.
**Extracts from the data**

What did you have to do in order to move away the feelings?

143h. What did I do? I think I had to make a conscious effort to let it go. Once I'd actually started to experience all that emotion I felt like I would never move on from that. I felt like almost like I didn't want to move on from that. I wanted to get away from the pain. It almost felt so difficult at that point that I could not see a time when I could move beyond it and I could not see a time when it could be different and I wanted it to end there.

How did you express your feelings?

150h. How did I express them? I cried a lot. I was angry. I was very angry and when my Dad died recently, he died earlier this year.... My Dad had a workshop and we had to go and clear it out and my brother was away. I had free reign really. And I thought that I'd dealt with all that anger and, because it was the workshop that he used to take me to, and when I realised ... when I went there to clear... you know, we were starting to clear out the house, and I thought I wouldn't go near the workshop, but I did. And I felt almost drawn to it. And I smashed so many things in that workshop! And I... I thought I had finished with my anger, I really thought I had and I just smashed it. I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>143h Making a conscious choice to let it all go.</td>
<td>143h. This seems to be a phase of hopeless despair. Once the pain and the emotions started flooding in, Heather could not see to the next phase of the process. Not feeling that it would ever change, she just wanted it all to end there. She was subsumed in the process at this point and still can't articulate how it came to an end. Back in the 'black hole'? The process seems to move people back and forth at various stages of the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144h Being overwhelmed by the emotion she was experiencing for the first time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145h Feeling stuck in the emotions, not wanting it to end but wanting it to be the end.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146h Experiencing intense pain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147h Feeling depressed, de-energised.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148h Feeling that it would never change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149h Not being able to say how it became different.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150h Expressing feelings through tears.</td>
<td>150h-152h. This is the story of Heather's catharsis. The sudden and physical release of years of anger. Having thought that she had dealt with the anger (intellectually), visiting her dead father's workshop, the place of her abuse, and finding the instruments of abuse, tapped into her anger which she expressed physically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151h Expressing feelings through anger.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152h Releasing anger in a physical way. Smashed up father's workshop after he died – where she was abused. Couldn't get angry until that day.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
started to put things together, you know, in, sort of, boxes and stuff and I found a box, under other things, that he had used to store things that he used when he was abusing me, and it started with that and I just smashed it. Just was furious really. I was so bloody angry. And I was upset. I was upset as well and I smashed it and smashed it to smithereens and then I smashed the work bench. I didn't destroy that because it was too solid but I was exhausted afterwards, and then I sat and cried and then I just left it because I couldn't do anything with it then, you know, but... there was all hell to pay when everybody else arrived but anyway, you know, I wasn't there, I got some phone calls that... they let me know what they thought because they don't know you see but my brother does now, it's not true actually, my brother knows but er, so I don't know I... the anger was the thing that I had a lot of trouble with. I couldn't get angry for a long time, but I was angry that day. Really angry that day.

I have left the above passage more or less in tact because it is such a graphic expression of the eventual release of anger. Others have talked of the same need to deal with their anger. Mary, in response to the question about what emotional work she was doing in addition to the cognitive work said: 'I did a lot of drawing, and I don't draw, but I mean most of it was a lot of anger that came out, 'cos I was just getting a pen and just slashing the paper with it and things like that. There was so much anger there, in fact, Felicity, my therapist called it...what was it? - 'murderous rage'. And I can't do it now because my thumbs are very painful but I would go out and prune the shrubs right down to practically non-existent... they always came up again fortunately but that helped a lot and, when Cassie, my best friend was here one afternoon I went out and cut a buddleia tree down. First thing she heard was a crash and she couldn't see me! And I'd been swearing at this branch...I don't swear, but I did! And that released an awful lot of tension and anger. You've no idea! Since then, I mean, only as recent as three or four weeks ago, I had a cushion, a very thick cushion, it was
very hard and I've got a set of Sebbatier knives, I think they're called. Well there's one that sort of pointed, it's about 'that' long and its pointed and serrated on both sides and I had this [cushion] on top of my freezer and I was just going at it like that and slicing through and that was a tremendous relief so I think that and drawing and I've written to various abusers and, not sent the letters but written it all down exactly what I'd like to do to them and, you know, all the swear words that came out with it and that was helpful.’ Claire talked of writing letters to her abusers in order to rid herself of anger: 'I wrote loads and loads and loads of letters. Just telling him how I felt, how I feel now, how my life was then, how it is now, what he was responsible for.'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracts from the data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>If there was one thing that you could bring forward in your journey that really made a difference, what would it be?</em></td>
<td>153h Divorcing husband most significant stage of the process.</td>
<td>153h. Not only was divorcing her husband a way of removing herself from continual abuse, it was symbolic of her reclaiming herself, her power and making choices for the first time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153h. One thing? Divorcing Chris, I think. Yeh. Reaching.... even reaching that decision to divorce him because it took.... for me it took an extraordinary amount of courage to do that. Because I knew I would be made to pay for it and that's something I had never done before, stepped out of the, the victim role. That's when I started to reclaim myself. I needed to reclaim myself, what was left, you know, what they'd left. Yeh, I think it was the best thing I ever did was divorcing Chris. It was a huge relief.</td>
<td>154h Stepping out of the victim role by making one active choice.</td>
<td>153h-158h. I notice that Heather uses the terms 'Mum' and 'Dad' which are generally accepted as affectionate terms for parents. It seems strange that she refers to them in this way. She also uses the possessive term 'my' when speaking about them. I don't know about the psychology of this but perhaps there is still a part of her that yearns for loving parents and these terms help her to identify with that need?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155h Reclaiming what was left of herself.</td>
<td>156h Death of father enabled her to reclaim herself.</td>
<td>157h. Making a distinction between playing a victim and really being a victim. Is this the difference between colluding (playing a victim because you are getting something you need from it) and genuinely being a victim, (being under someone else's control)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157h Differentiating between 'playing the victim' and 'being the victim'.</td>
<td>158h Counselling helped but was never going to change anything by itself.</td>
<td>159h. There is nothing like taking your power and making active choices to thwart victim consciousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159h Making a choice not to be a victim.</td>
<td>160h Until 'I was not a victim' nothing could change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

117
In this part of the chapter, I have attempted to illustrate the richness of the interview with Heather and the resonances her revelations had with other interviewees’ testimonies. I have not yet drawn from the theoretical sample to substantiate these findings. However, before doing that, I will illustrate below, the outputs from the concept indicator model which uses, as data, coded extracts from the raw data and raises them to the conceptual level. This will provide an initial view of the findings and track the development of the emergence of the model of transformative learning as part of personal development.
Integrating categories and their properties

Using the notation from Figure (i) and taking the codes (indicators) from a number of different interviews, a worked example of generating a concept is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Codes/indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-1</td>
<td>Succeeding on one level but not on another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-2</td>
<td>Living on two levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-3</td>
<td>Managing quite well on the social level but not the psychological level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-4</td>
<td>Living on the surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-5</td>
<td>Hiding part of myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-6</td>
<td>Putting on different roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-7</td>
<td>Compartmentalising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-8</td>
<td>Living disassociated from any kind of real contact with feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-9</td>
<td>Put memories of abuse on hold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-10</td>
<td>Disassociating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concept 'Splitting off' as a coping strategy

In the above example, all the data suggested a kind of splitting off from one level of existence in order to cope on another. These data could also perhaps be considered to be unconscious avoidance tactics or denial, enabling the individual to continue with life in an apparently 'normal' way without having to face the reasons they needed to employ such tactics.

A second example of the derivation of a concept is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Codes/indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-1</td>
<td>Losing the ability to function as before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-2</td>
<td>Everything was falling apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-3</td>
<td>Life in turmoil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-4</td>
<td>Things started to come undone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-5</td>
<td>Couldn't hold it together any more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-6</td>
<td>Flooded with memories, couldn't work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-7</td>
<td>Feeling fragmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-8</td>
<td>Coping strategies failing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-9</td>
<td>Physically sick/eating disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-10</td>
<td>Moving through this fog and not being able to see anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-11</td>
<td>Sense of chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-12</td>
<td>Entering a big black hole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concept Disintegrating
In this example, the respondents describe a phase in their journey where everything seemed to be falling apart. In Heather’s account she described it in the following graphic way.

‘I wasn’t even able to compartmentalise my Mum’s death and at the same time all these other boxes were opening and so it was all beginning to come unhinged and I couldn’t hold it and, then the behaviours that I had had before which enabled me to cope, the strategies, were no longer working. Nothing was working.’

In another of Heather’s descriptions:

‘Things almost started to come undone. I was as if I’d been holding on to everything, all these threads, as it were, very tightly, and juggling everything.’

From these examples, it can be seen very clearly that a kind of unravelling or disintegration was occurring. These kinds of comments were reflected in each one of the interviews.

I have included one more example of the derivation of a concept below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Codes/indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-1</td>
<td>Being able to see things in a new way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-2</td>
<td>Finding clarity – like a light being switched on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-3</td>
<td>Talking about things enabled her to get a picture of her life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-4</td>
<td>Reaching a point of realisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-5</td>
<td>Breakthrough in terms of awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-6</td>
<td>Clearing the fog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-7</td>
<td>Finding a new (intellectual) perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-8</td>
<td>Continuing to clarify patterns of behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-9</td>
<td>Seeing it all laid out like a jigsaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-10</td>
<td>Piecing the bits together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-11</td>
<td>Learning to see what had happened from different perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Crystalising/Clarifying/Seeing things from a new perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There seems to be a connecting/clarifying/illuminating stage in the process which occurs after the ‘big black hole’, the ‘chaos’, the ‘fog’, the disintegration. This is often presented as the turning point where, finally, some semblance of order is beginning to be achieved and sufficient understanding is gained to start moving forward in a more positive way.
Below is an indicative list of concepts derived from the purposive interviews. This is not an exhaustive list because in reality, it was changing and evolving all the time. As it stands below, it merely reflects a stage in the process of conceptualisation.

Using coping strategies
Disintegrating
Gaining a deeper understanding of oneself and one's behaviours
Releasing anger
Creating fantasies
Suppressing memories
Denial
Becoming vulnerable
Despairing
Awareness of inner process
Controlling boundaries
Seeking help
Making sense
Finding patterns
Training and Education

Each of the concepts listed above was identified in the same way as those illustrated in the preceding tables. In the way suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998), these concepts were further 'grouped under a more abstract, higher order, concept based on its ability to explain 'what is going on?' (1998: 113) For example, the concepts of 'creating fantasies', 'suppressing memories' 'compartmentalising', 'living on two levels' and 'denial' were considered to be part of the category 'employing coping strategies' recalled by the interviewees as the means by which they coped before their process was triggered.

Findings from the purposive sample

Figure (vi) below illustrates the findings of the analysis of the first eight interviews. The circular arrows between each stage indicates the fluidity of the process and the fact that interviewees reported a back and forth motion between the stages. Without these arrows, the diagram is in danger of imposing the impression of a process comprising neatly defined, incremental steps, which is not the case. In reality, the women expressed their process in much more 'analogue' than 'digital' terms. Indeed, there were times of hiatus and apparent inactivity; times of returning to old coping strategies and putting a stop to further processing and there were times of confusion when any sense of progress was lost; sometimes preceding a sudden breakthrough in perception. These vicissitudes are hopefully symbolically represented by the two dimensional graphics. It is intended that the larger arrows at the top and bottom of the model convey similar mobility; indicating the possibility of returning to the beginning of the process having completed an initial pass or part thereof. Interviewees have
suggested that this pattern of healing is a life-long journey but that with each full iteration, the process becomes 'easier' and more abstracted. Some describe it as going through the process again but on a 'higher level', indicating the sense of constant movement forward and/or upwards – a spiralling upwards I would suggest.

Continual process of healing – "I just get better and better."

Figure (vi) – The categories that emerged from the analysis of the purposive sample – A model of transformative personal development

As the reader examines this model, I hope it will be clear that the categories, named in the boxes at the top of the diagram, have emerged from the cluster of concepts in the column below the category heading. In effect, the concepts in the columns are the data that were contained within the concept indicator model before they were abstracted into a category. The order in which the categories have been placed reflect the order that the interviewees talked about the stages. I have not illustrated the BSPP in this diagram as it emerged much later in the process of analysis after I had 'sat with' and thought about the model for a while. This will be derived and discussed in the next chapter under the heading of 'the core category'.

122
In the next section, I shall use the theoretical sample to validate and refine my findings.

Findings from the theoretical sample

Without further elaboration and without referring to texts on the subject of transformative learning, I presented the above model to the four members of the theoretical sample for verification and stabilisation. This was done by asking them to appraise and give more data on the categories that were emerging from the process of constant comparison. Glaser (1978) points out that: ‘Relevance can also be checked and elaborated by asking top informants to appraise and give more data on categories proving to become core to the analysis, which proves on-going sampling, verification and stabilisation of focus.’ (1978: 47)

Their input was confirmatory and helpful in pointing me towards some theoretical underpinning for the process of healing and in adding further richness to the interviews that had already been used to create the model.

Glaser and Strauss (1995) state that ‘theoretical sampling for saturation of a category allows a multi-faceted investigation in which there are no limits to the techniques of data collection, the way they are used or the types of data acquired. (1995: 65) These different slices of data all play their part in the verification and stabilisation of the categories. Glaser and Strauss also remind us that ‘theoretical sampling requires only data to be collected on categories for the generation of properties and hypotheses.’ (1995: 69) For these reasons, the categories were presented to the theoretical sample for their thoughts and comments in a discursive mode of communication rather than the more formal and controlled mode of the interview. Although the interviews were qualitatively different, due to the freedom to suggest, probe and share more explicitly with the interviewee, they nonetheless confirmed that the basic framework derived from the purposive sample resonated with their understanding and experience of the process indicating that the categories had indeed become saturated and that there was little to add.

I have included below, some of the initial responses that I had when I met with members of the theoretical pool.

Margaret:

‘I looked at that [the framework illustrated in figure (v)] and thought there was just so much there that applied to me and my journey. It had so much resonance.’

Julie commented:
'I remember thinking, gosh, I'd never conceptualised it in stages before and I know that you're indicating that people can go back and forth between the stages of the process, I'm sure I did.'

And Sharon:

'It did resonate a lot.'

Jay:

'When you began to talk about the descriptive overview [in the paper sent to the theoretical sample]... that's when I began to really connect on a personal level...And reading that, and just making connections with... yes, that kind of made sense to me...and as you were describing that, going through, there were a lot of connections with the... [model].'

Going through the interviews the model remained robust, however, there were some additional insights in terms of people's ability to suspend the process in a healthy way and on the issue of returning to the beginning of the process and engaging in another cycle of healing.

Sharon was concerned with the issue of timing and that people should be allowed to determine when and how their healing should take place without following a process that is prescriptive and thought to be healing. She emphasised the positive aspects of 'latent' healing.

'Very often you hear counsellors talking about 'Oh, they're avoiding the issue, they won't...'; you know, if you don't want to talk about a certain thing or you don't want to explore a certain issue, then you're avoiding it and I don't necessarily believe that's true. I think you can choose not to talk about something but just because you're doing that, doesn't mean to say that the healing isn't going on. It's like a scab, I think. So it's quite protective and it doesn't look nice for people around you perhaps but when it falls off, it's OK.'

Are you saying that there's a phase prior to all of this where there's a kind of latent healing process taking place that sits ahead of this entire process?

For me there is. And it doesn't look nice. You know, it doesn't look nice for people around you. It doesn't look nice for counsellors because they want to chip in and get...that was my experience anyway. It doesn't look nice for people around you because they say 'go for counselling' and you may say 'I don't want to go yet.' Timing, I think, is really important because people around you want you to be cured or get better but for me...but then that point is really good.

What do you mean it doesn't look 'nice', do you mean....

It doesn't look nice for people around you. I think people can sense that you're in pain, that you're not happy that you are avoiding stuff, that you are living on a different level, that you are dissociating from things that you become angry, that
you're probably not a nice person to be around, I know I wasn't nice for a couple of years but I don't think that's a bad thing. I believe that there's something going on underneath the surface of that and that you're not even in touch with it. Just like when you've got a scab on your hand, you can't see what's going on underneath the scab.'

In this passage, Sharon was advocating allowing people the space to avoid issues and to allow the psychological processes in the subconscious to bring them to a point where they actively engaged in their own healing. During this 'latent healing' period, progress was in fact being made but it was an unobserved inner process that, according to Sharon, had its own wisdom and unfolded in its own time.

This concept was reinforced by Mary who acknowledged that she was avoiding looking at a particular issue:

'I haven't really wanted to look at that yet because, I suppose he...I trusted him, and he totally betrayed that trust, I just never thought that, you know, it could be as bad as that, so I haven't really wanted to think about it, so, at the moment, that's a taboo area.'

Mary also went on to indicate that she was anticipating this issue coming to the surface eventually:

'I'm sure that it won't be too long before it will happen.'

There have been several instances where interviewees have indicated that they 'knew something was going on inside'. Heather mentioned this in her interview when she was recalling her recognition that she was 'drifting' from her older daughter:

'And I gave myself lots of excuses for that but there reached a point when I realised that really there was no excuse, it was something that was going on inside of me that was responsible for that. I'm not sure what it was, but something was happening.'

Emma indicates that she is anticipating 'a catharsis' suggesting that there is a 'natural order' in the unfolding of the process and an 'unconscious knowing' of what the process holds in store. This is another general theme amongst the interviewees. Emma commented:

'I'm in a position now where the possibility of any sort of catharsis or release is slightly less intimidating, less potentially catastrophic than I would have said it was a year ago.'

She added:
‘I never have achieved any particularly emotional release or catharsis because the way she was working was cognitive analysis and, it... just fed in to my intellectual processes which allows me to avoid a lot... What it’s really achieved is leaving me in a position where maybe I’m grounded enough now to actually deal with some of the big emotional stuff whereas before, maybe, to some extent, I was a little bit too fragile to actually put it all together, you know, maybe I would have realised my worst fears and become totally fragmented whereas now, I think I’m in a much better position to deal with that.’

The spiral as a representation of the process

I have already alluded to the fact that many of the interviewees did not perceive the process to be linear; commencing with a trigger and ‘ending’ with a feeling of wholeness or a greater sense of self. Rather, they saw it in terms of reciprocating motion; a movement away from one particular issue followed by a move towards another issue that drew them back into the process. Mezirow (1991) quotes the findings of Stephen Singular who has written that ‘women who have experienced perspective transformations and have succeeded in their careers... discover that ‘beyond the rainbow there awaits another set of chains’. This process may lead to another perspective transformation and so it goes on, throughout life. (1991: 158-59)

Building on her metaphor of the garden, Rachel expresses the ongoing nature of the process:

‘I stub my toe sometimes... what was in my mind at that point was, when you chop a tree down, you can get right down to the roots but sometimes those roots stick up, and sometimes you forget that they’re there and you stub your toe, and that’s what happens with abuse. Suddenly, I’m aware that I’m in a bad place or I’m not feeling too good and if I start thinking about it, it nearly always goes back to a strand that I had not recognised.’

Kate also acknowledged the ‘ongoingness’ of the process. At the end of her interview she commented:

‘I’m not sure that I will ever complete the journey.’

Jay, makes an observation with respect to the ‘spiral’ nature of the process and, incidentally, includes a comment that indicates a new ‘readiness’ to look at a particular issue that had been avoided in past therapy. Perhaps this is more evidence of the concept of latent healing and, using Sharon’s terminology, another ‘scab’ to shed?

‘But what’s also happened to me was that eighteen months ago... [having] thought I’d got everything sorted... I went through the same model [figure (vi)]... and that didn’t feel cyclical it felt like it was attending to an aspect that I hadn’t been ready to attend to before. So there’s something about... it not being cyclical, but... [being] more like a spiral really.’
Although these interviews did not result in a radical change to the model, they nonetheless suggested one further concept; that of 'latent healing', and added a third dimension to the model which represented the progressive nature of the process, thus creating a spiral rather than a model that reciprocates in two dimensions. (See figure (vii) below). Although I am not intending to create a personality development model, the resultant spiral shape is akin to the model outlined by Kegan (1992); a model that also reflects progressive stages of development in a similar way to the those depicted in the revised 'model of transformative personal development'.

Reflecting on this model still further, I decided to make an additional enhancement to recognise more precisely the comments made by interviewees in the purposive and theoretical sample groups. This relates to the notion of the accumulation of learning on each pass through the process; the integration of former states or stages into the new ones, thereby embracing more complexity than before. We have already seen Jay's comment above regarding the spiral natural of the process but she also goes on to talk about the accumulative nature of the process:

![Diagram of the healing process model with a red arrow indicating upward motion and a blue diamond labeled 'Trigger'. The diagram shows a series of interconnected stages, representing the progressive nature of the process.](image-url)
'What I'm aware of now is that as I'm coming into this process [again] it is very similar in essence but this time I'm coming to it with my understanding and... I had 'meaning' already. So the first time round I didn't... I had to find meaning through that process, this time round, it was like, I had the meaning, I mean, I had still to make more meaning, but it wasn't new to me.'

Heather said that:

'The real problems began... once the abuse stopped. And it is a lifetime. I'm not saying it's a life sentence, but I think it's with you [forever]. When my Dad died, all of that stuff was thrown up again... different life events throw it all up again, maybe not in the same way but it throws it all up and we have to deal with that... I know there are still things that I could probably do with working on and working through but... [But you're in a much stronger place now?] Yeh. Oh yeh. God yeh. When I think what I was like, even ten years ago, huge, huge difference.'

Sharon:

'I think the triggers go on forever don't they? I've got a [metaphorical] scar on my hand and I know that that's always going to be tender and that I've got to look after it... I don't see that having a scar means to say that you aren't healthy so... like people talk about having the scar and it's so terrible but it's not so terrible, it's just a scar and now and again it erupts and you have to look after it... It's the same with the triggers... you realise what it is and you deal with it and then it's gone again. It's like rubbing cream in. So that lasts forever doesn't it?'

Coupling these comments with a theoretical perspective, Mezirow's concept of transformative learning results in 'viewpoints which are more functional, more inclusive, discriminating and integrative of our experience.' (1994: 223) At each major stage of Wilber's14 (1996) model of evolution, there is 'the emergence of a higher-order structure; the identification with that higher structure; the differentiation or disidentification with the lower structure; which amounts to a transcendence of the lower structure; such that the higher structure can both operate upon and integrate the lower structures. (1996: 40-41) (The italics are my emphasis.) In both of these developmental models, nothing of the previous stage is lost; rather it is added to, integrated and built upon in the new phase of development, thereby increasing the scope of the self. Together, these considerations led me to re-interpret the model one final time and impose a conical spiral to suggest the integrative and progressive nature of the process through time. This is shown in figure (viii) below:

---

14 Ken Wilber (1996) is an evolutionary theorist who has synthesised the work of many in the creation of a 'definitive' model of human evolution which he published as The Atman Project. In undertaking this massive piece of work, he drew from the work of prominent theorists in the spiritual and psychological traditions. His model revolves through many lifetimes and is represented by a circle on a page showing the seventeen stages which are placed according to their position in the subconscious, self-conscious and super-conscious realms.
Figure (viii) - The Conical Spiral illustrating the transformative personal development process derived from the interviews with the purposive and theoretical samples.

Summary

In this chapter, I aimed to lead the reader through my thinking as I engaged with the data and began the process of sifting and sorting it; comparing and contrasting it; ordering and making sense of it. I feel fortunate that the women in the purposive sample were extremely articulate and able to reflect their process clearly. In each case, the participant’s account reflected many of the generic features found in other participants’ accounts, leading me to believe that I had tapped a rich vein.

From the analysis of the data from the purposive sample, a model of transformative learning as part of personal development emerged. It comprised several stages beginning with ‘unconscious coping’ which prevented the interviewee from entering the process. This was disturbed by a trigger; either an experience that echoed the past or a mirroring of the age or stage of abuse in respect of an offspring. From this point, it would seem, the coping strategies were revealed and became ineffective, preceding a descent into chaos and despair. Many described this period of disintegration graphically and recalled the sense of hopelessness they felt in this part of the process. However, when they were able to seek help and begin to relay their stories, to be heard, witnessed and validated, a new direction
was marked and progress into a reassessment or critical review stage occurred. This enabled the interviewee to look at her life from a new perspective and reassemble or re-make the meaning of her experiences. In highlighting this phase of the process, I do not mean to suggest that there was a compulsion to re-interpret the meaning perspective, rather, there was an opportunity, and a choice given, to do so. Also, as a result of looking at the data, it would seem that the outcome of this activity is not 'set in stone' indefinitely, there may be a future occasion where the new meaning perspective is revisited and re-created again depending upon the robustness of the new structure and its ability to 'hold' meaning. It could, of course, be an elaborate construct of denial that temporarily or permanently prevents deeper penetration into personal truth or, a lacuna, as Goleman (1985) calls it.

This is the phase that transformative learning primarily focuses on; the use of critical review to create a new meaning perspective. As a signal of their progress, each member of the sample went into a phase where they felt able to make choices, control their boundaries and act on their own behalf to reorientate their life-path. The penultimate phase in the process is one of 'integration', where meaning is inclusive of all that had been learned or experienced in the past. Finally, a sense of distance from the memory is obtained. Without jettisoning or denying the past, this allows all available energy to go into creating a new future - and results in joyous feelings of wholeness, confidence and health.

When presented with the model of transformative personal development, the theoretical sample confirmed its relevance and applicability to those seeking healing from their traumatic childhoods.

I have attempted to present my analysis without bias, only deferring to others' thinking or opinions during engagement with the theoretical sample where preferred theories and resonances were presented and discussed during the interviews. My intention was that a 'pure' model should emerge that was free of my predispositions and not damaged by premature closure. I feel quite confident that my analysis was completed without undue influence and that it does indeed accurately reflect the processes that the purposive sample of women have been through, however, I believe it is yet to be further shaped and burnished in the light of others' work so it is to their models and theories that I present my findings for comparison, illumination and refinement in the next and subsequent chapters.

Sadly, I did not experience the 'drugless trip' promised by Glaser (1978) but I did achieve a great sense of satisfaction as the patterns emerged so clearly and locked together in a relatively ordered way.
CHAPTER FIVE
Delimiting the theory

Introduction

It is the purpose of this chapter to delimit the theory by illuminating the parallels and showing exactly where the grounded model of transformative learning as part of personal development fits with, and adds to, existent theories. In the course of doing this, I shall be drawing from the literature in a diverse number of disciplines and fields related to transformative learning, psychology - particularly female psychology - and transition theory. I will also briefly alight upon development and evolutionary psychology to extract those aspects that appear relevant to this study.

At the outset, I will focus on the categories of my own model to deepen the reader's understanding of its structure and content and then I will go on to compare it with those of others' models in related fields. This is to show that the phenomena that emerged from the data in this research reflect, support and build upon those of other theories related to different processes. I shall then move to compare the different models in order to demonstrate the nature of the transformative process experienced by the research pool within the context of a larger frame of reference. My intention in doing this is to create a topographical map of the transformative process and to extend the relevance of this research. In weaving together the thinking of various theorists, my findings will be further substantiated and the unique aspects of my model highlighted.

According to Glaser and Strauss, theory is delimited through reduction, a means by which underlying uniformities in the original set of categories can formulate theory with a smaller set of higher level concepts. Reduction is forced by constant comparisons, some of which can be based on the literature of other professional areas. This activity allows the analyst to achieve two major requirements of theory: '(1) parsimony of variables and (2) scope in the applicability of the theory to a wide range of situations whilst keeping a close correspondence of theory and data.' (1995: 111) Glaser and Strauss acknowledge that 'some comparative analyses are made in the service of theories that are accepted as so correct and so useful that researchers wish merely to contribute to them in minor ways. The hallmark of this style of research is a language that emphasises clarification or elaboration of the received theory.' (1995: 125) Although this it is not my purpose to contribute to others' theories, I nonetheless take the spirit of this process into the comparative activity between my model and others' in order to show its robustness and value for the substantive area of this study.
For ease of reference, I will bring a copy of the figure resulting from the comparison of transformational models forward to assist the reader as the discussion proceeds. Figure (xiii) is a summary of some of the published models of transformation and my interpretation of how they map across from one to another.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unconscious coping strategies</td>
<td>A disorientating dilemma</td>
<td>Shock and immobilisation</td>
<td>First shock - excitement</td>
<td>Shock</td>
<td>Old State</td>
<td>(Disconfirmation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigor – A means of focusing attention on dysfunctional behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provisional adjustment honeymoon</td>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>Unfreezing</td>
<td>(Induction of guilt or survival anxiety)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping strategies revealed</td>
<td>Self examination with feelings of guilt or shame</td>
<td>Numbness and panic</td>
<td>Minimisation and denial</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>(Creation of psychological safety or overcoming learning anxiety)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desintegrating – Chaos, depression, ‘black hole’, fragmentation, things falling apart</td>
<td>Pining and protest</td>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Inner crisis – confusion, depression, crisis</td>
<td>Letting go, accepting</td>
<td>Letting go, accepting</td>
<td>Change (Cognitive redefinition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding voice and being heard - being witnessed and validated</td>
<td>Recognition that one’s discontent and the processes of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change</td>
<td>Letting go</td>
<td>Testing options</td>
<td>Exploring</td>
<td>Exploring</td>
<td>Change (Cognitive redefinition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning-making - creating new meaning perspectives</td>
<td>A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions</td>
<td>Testing options</td>
<td>Exploring</td>
<td>Exploring</td>
<td>Exploring</td>
<td>Change (Cognitive redefinition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling – accepting responsibility for making decisions and taking action (Reflective/transformation action (Mezirow, 1994))</td>
<td>Planning a course of action</td>
<td>Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans</td>
<td>Search for meaning</td>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>Exploring</td>
<td>Change (Cognitive redefinition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans</td>
<td>Provisional trying of new roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating – building a broader more inclusive worldview</td>
<td>A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective</td>
<td>Restabilisation and reintegration</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Reconstruction and recovery</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Refreezing (Personal and relational refreezing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distancing – dis-identifying with past personae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>New confidence, transformation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure (xiii) - Models of transformation compared to the one that emerged from this study which is shown in the first column.
Discussion on the emergent model in this study

It is generally agreed that the human condition brings with it an impetus to grow and develop. Rogers believed that all behaviour is energised and guided by a single unitary motive which he called the 'actualising tendency' – man’s tendency to actualise himself, to become his potentialities. This is defined by Rogers as: ‘the directional trend which is evident in all organic and human life – the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature – the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism or the self.’ (1961: 351) Similarly, Maslow (1971) writes that 'All the evidence that we have indicates that it is reasonable to assume in practically every human being... there is an active will towards health, an impulse toward growth or toward the actualisation of human potentialities.’ (1971: 24) Like Maslow, Jung (In Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992) uses the term self-actualisation to describe the realisation of the 'whole self'. 'That is, becoming a single, separate, and indivisible being'. (1992: 176) He acknowledges that this covers the entire life span, is a path that is unique to each being and involves the process of 'individuation'. Jung (1963) defines 'individuation' as the process of 'becoming a single, homogenous being, and, in so far as 'in-dividuality' embraces our innermost, last and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as 'come to selfhood' or 'self-realisation' (1963: 415) or merely 'becoming'. I will argue in this chapter therefore that the women in this research study were not only undertaking a healing journey but a transformative journey of 'becoming'.

This path to self-actualisation is littered with challenge and often results in a 'failure of personal growth; a falling short of what one could have been and even, one could say, of what one should have been, biologically speaking, that is, if one had grown and developed in an unimpeded way. Human and personal possibilities have been lost. The world has been narrowed, and so has consciousness. Capacities have been inhibited.' (Maslow, 1963: 32) If it is true that as humans, we are driven towards self-actualisation and if it is true that we are doing so hindered by neuroses that have been gained at moments of development which have been distorted by circumstance, then we have highlighted the tension that is to be resolved by the women seeking healing in this study and pointed towards its importance as part of the personal development process.

Stage 0 - Unrecognised coping strategies

I have used the numeric '0', not to indicate that there is no transformative process occurring, but to suggest that the process is not in the 'conscious' realm of the person experiencing it. Whatever process is taking place is subliminal, although, in retrospect, it may become apparent.
Daniel Goleman (1985) in Mezirow (1991) makes the point that 'every act of perception is an act of selection.' (1991: 18) He bases this thesis on three premises:

- The mind can protect itself against anxiety by dimming awareness
- This mechanism creates a 'blind spot', a zone of blocked attention and self-deception and
- Such blind spots occur at each major level of behaviour, from the psychological to the social. (Goleman, 1985: 24 in Mezirow, 1991: 18)

What Goleman seems to be describing here is 'denial', a coping strategy often resorted to by those who wish to avoid dealing with a distasteful event.

Further, Goleman (1997) presents the idea of a 'lacuna'; a diversionary schema or means of protection that deflects attention away from painful areas. These are commonly used as coping strategies that substitute a threatening or painful situation with one that is acceptable or benign. As these diversionary tactics fail, the full extent of what was being avoided is revealed and the descent into chaos commences. Goleman states that 'there may be some painful experience in your life which, when you start to think about, you simply decide at some level not to pursue. You’re not going to be aware of that painful event. So you avoid using your usual recall strategies. You could probably get pretty skilled at it – at not remembering what’s painful.' (1997: 109) These 'lacunae' are examples of some of the coping strategies employed by the women in the sample study. Heather described this coping mechanism unwittingly:

'When I was a child, I spent hours and hours and hours working people out and working out what was happening and, I would come to a conclusion; I’d find myself an explanation for what was happening and then something would happen that would just blow that explanation away and I’d have to find another one. And if I could find an explanation, it was OK for that period of time and I’ve done that all my life to some degree or other and I did a lot of that in counselling as well. I could keep it, I could intellectualise it, I could talk about it like it was an interesting... somebody else’s case study, it was interesting and I understood the theory and I could relate the theory to myself and, you know, that was OK and I still prefer to do that I have to say.'

Often, as adult learners, our learning is predicated upon distorted realities that need to be reassessed and re-cognised in order for transformative learning to take place. In the context of this study, the unrecognised coping strategies are arguably, such distorted realities that block learning and maintain the 'self-deception' that all is well in the world. The ability to suppress awareness of these distortions preserves the illusion that the self is in control.
However, this may not necessarily be a negative outcome; it could allow for 'latent' healing to take place; a concept described by Sharon in which healing takes place beneath a 'scab' of [apparent] denial.

Mezirow (1991) describes psychological premise distortions as 'artefacts of our earlier experience – ways we have learned to defend ourselves after childhood traumas – that have become dysfunctional in adulthood.' (1991: 138) He goes on to elaborate the source of premise distortion and cites, as an example, the commands made by significant others in childhood that become 'hard-wired' into the behaviours of that child and which endure, inappropriately, through to adulthood. These distortions are usually initiated in highly charged emotional environments that carry the threat of withdrawal of love, abandonment, frightening physical punishment, humiliation or shame – all potential outcomes of childhood sexual abuse – and result in coping strategies that allow the world to be perceived as safe and secure.

Stage 0 is the period of unrecognised coping strategies that dominates the behaviour of the abused as long as the illusion of control remains in place. However, it may only be a matter of time before awareness of this folly is raised by a crisis or trigger which enables the individual to see not only that they are unable to function in a healthy way but also that they are unable to project their 'whole self' into the world.

In conducting this research, I was concerned with transformative learning as a manifest process. I would expect that transformative processes are also occurring at a subconscious level prior to any trigger when they become visible and tangible. Coping strategies may be just one way that allows such subconscious processes to take place. Sam's concept of a 'scab' is perhaps relevant in this regard.

**Stage 1 – The Trigger**

There are many examples of triggers which range from the natural impulse for self-actualisation or individuation (Maslow, 1991 Jung, 1963) through psychosocial crises (Erikson, 1963) to evolutionary tensions (Kegan, 1982). Kübler-Ross (1969) in her studies of the dying sees the transition process being initiated by 'shock' and Maslow (1968) in his discussion on the relevance of existentialism to psychology acknowledges that 'tragedy can sometimes be therapeutic, and that therapy often seems to work best when people are driven into it by pain. It is when the shallow life doesn't work that it is questioned and that there occurs a call to fundamentals.' (1968: 19) Kegan (1982) states that when 'fate' (a universal on-going process of meaning-making) is testing us most severely it often speaks itself in the form or 'problems' or crises.' (1982: 265) However, he points out that that Chinese character for
crises comprises two forms, one meaning danger whilst the other meaning opportunity. In this sense, crisis is an opportunity for growth, a trigger that propels a seeker of health into the transformative process, an impetus which, when resisted, would cause pain. Of course, we are all free to resist the call for growth and no doubt, we have all seen examples of those who choose to ignore the call and live in pain. However, this is a study of those who embraced the opportunity for growth and who responded to the crisis or problem that shed light on their distorted meaning perspective showing it to be an inadequate foundation for their truth.

In Mezirow's study of women college returners (1975, but also reported in 1991) he found that perspective transformation began with a 'disorientating dilemma'. (The remaining 9 stages have been outlined in Chapter six of this thesis.) In the same text, Mezirow reported the study of Ross Keane's (1985) own transformation and that of five other men committed to a religious life-style, in which Keane noted that the transformative process started with disorientation; 'an inner disequilibrium in which the harmony of the self is disturbed yet the problem is neither understood nor satisfactorily named.' (1991: 177) Morgan (1987) too concurred with Mezirow's own findings after studying thirty displaced home-makers who had become separated, divorced or bereaved. The first stage of their transition she describes as 'shock and devastation', one shared by Adams et al. (1976)

We have already visited Kate's description of the trigger for her process:

'My body was rigid, literally rigid. I wandered around like a thunderbirds puppet, my whole back, my neck, was solid. All the muscles in my back were locked and my hips were locked and the pain of that, constantly, I think was probably what made me first begin [the journey to health].'

Interestingly, Loughlin (1993) records the experience of one of her interviewees that closely reflects that of Kate's. Anne described great personal tension during her transformative process and characterised herself as 'rigid and absolutistic'. During this time she developed chronic back pain which often left her incapacitated. Once she had taken control of her own health and well-being, and had successfully resolved the health issues that had so persistently resisted the intervention of her doctors, she commented: 'If someone had told me that I would be who I am today years ago, I wouldn't have believed them. I couldn't have imagined it. To think that I am now trying to help people and take risks is unbelievable. Before I was filled with fear.' (In Loughlin, 1993: 156)

We have also seen that when daughters, in particular, reach the same age or stage that their mothers were when they first experienced abuse, a trigger is experienced, the memory is
broken and the process of healing is initiated – if the mother wishes it. The trigger may also be something such as a question or the re-acquaintance with a significant (not necessarily pleasant) person, as was the case with Sue. 'That was one of the things that use to happen... my head would literally, physically, go bang inside... It just sort of happens when something has shifted in my brain.' This was one of Sue's 'wake-up calls', driving her towards further inquiry and help. Other triggers include being re-traumatised, the breakdown of a relationship or re-entry into education or training.

Mezirow (1994) stresses that there are two paths to perspective transformation, 'one cumulative; a set of progressive transformations in related meaning schemes (Habitual implicit rules for interpreting.' (Mezirow, 1990: 2)), the other, epochal, a sudden reversal in figure and ground, a profound insight into the premises or presuppositions which have distorted or limited our understanding, often triggered by a disorientating dilemma, and involving a broader view of the origin, nature and consequences of our assumptions.' (1994: 229-230) The 'epochal' trigger was experienced by Sue: (this example was also used to illustrate the sense that she felt 'split' from herself.) She illustrated this by saying:

'I had waited for him to come and get me, to come and take me away, to make it all better, to write to me, just to be the shining knight in armour and that never ever happened and, although I had looked for him, I never had the balls to go and really try and find out and then one day I went to a Private Detective and I did find him after thirty-seven and a half years and within the first half hour of meeting him he said "It did stop didn't it? I did everything I could to stop it! " And that was such a physical thing because I still carried this thing of being split, with this river of blood that went down me like this and as I sat there looking at this man with him telling me that... this thing just went 'Pochhh' inside me and it healed. [It healed because he acknowledged that the abuse was happening?] He acknowledged... Yes and he had done everything he could to stop it. [So what you saw from that was him trying to rescue you.] Yes. [But not being able to.] No. [And so that was instrumental in healing the...] Yes. This jagged river. This split inside me.'

Here we see Sue suddenly moving into a 'broader view of the origin, nature and consequences of her assumptions.' (Mezirow, 1994: 230) Her feelings of abandonment by her father, the disappointment she experienced when she realised that he was not a 'knight in shining armour' who would rescue her and then her realisation that he had tried to stop the abuse, brought about a dramatic perspective transformation.

**Stage 2 - Coping Strategies Revealed**

During this stage in the study, women reported being able to look back and identify the coping strategies that they had employed in order to maintain some semblance of normality. The themes of 'living on two levels', 'compartmentalising', 'undertaking displacement activities' and 'dissociating' were common strategies that protected the women in this study.
from facing their pain. Others included rather more obsessive/addictive behaviours such as self-harming, eating disorders, workaholism, alcoholism and drug abuse. Two of the women in the study had also attempted suicide. Once their process had been triggered, they then had to reveal to themselves the truth of these behaviours and the fact that they would not be served by perpetuating them. This stage of new awareness, or of 'consciousness', is equivalent to the two phases that Mezirow identified in his model: 'Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame and a critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions.' (1991: 168) This is also in the same spirit of Paulo Freire's (1990) concept of 'conscientizacao'; the process of developing critical consciousness and substituting naïve or fatalistic perceptions of reality with a critical awareness that enables people to manage their own destiny. As a Brazilian educator, Freire's concern was primarily one of social change. However, the concept of conscientizacao is no less relevant for the individual who seeks to deepen consciousness of their situation and engage in personal development.

Wilber (1996) makes the point that at every stage of development, the individual has the choice to fuse (to fail to differentiate from the current developmental level and thus remain 'stuck'), to differentiate (to rise above confinement at a particular level) and to dissociate (to cast particular drives out of the personality to become dissociated aspects of self). Having become aware of their dissociated selves, the individual's task is to reclaim and integrate them. (1996: 153)

**Stage 3 – Disintegration; the fall into despair**

The feeling of fragmentation, of falling into a black hole, of entering a whirlpool, of depression and despair are common themes amongst all models of transition, not least the model that has emerged from this study. Transformation demands that the individual 'lets go' of the old situation in order to embrace the new. This involves the risk of losing the current self, in order to constitute a new self; a process which may engender separation anxiety, a Freudian concept adopted by both Wilber (1996) and Erikson (1963) as they describe the hazardous movement through their personality development models which can, Wilber asserts, 'be terrifying.' (1992: 166) The qualities of courage and tenacity are undoubtedly drawn upon during this phase of the transformative process and the inability to achieve this results in the breakdown of the differentiation process and failure to complete the transformation.

As things unravel, and what was considered to be ego-control vanishes, there is a sense of confusion, disorientation and loss. This, according to Boyd and Myers (1988) and Scott (1997) propels the individual into the grieving process. Boyd and Myers outline this process as: Phase one – Numbness and Panic, Phase two – Pining and Protest, Phase three –
Disorganisation and Despair and Phase four – Restabilisation and Reintegration. (1988: 278-279) It is Boyd and Myer’s phase three, I believe, that concerns this phase of the transformative process which I have categorised as ‘disintegrating’.

Kegan (1982) states that: ‘Distress attends every qualitative decentration – which from the point of view of the developing organism, amounts to the loss of its very organisation.’ (1982: 82) He goes on to say that central to this experience are the affects of anxiety and depression. So, we see in the sample group a graphic illustration of the affective chaos that ensues when the movement of differentiation commences, resulting in the experience of loss of control and loss of self. If this transition is undertaken courageously and effectively, the individual will find their new home at the next developmental stage. Failure to do this will result in them becoming ‘stuck’ or ‘frozen’.

It is in this phase that the women described the role of anger in their process.

I repeat again part of Heather’s account of her anger in this disintegrating phase of her process.

‘I found [the] box [in which the instruments of abuse were stored]...and I just smashed it. Just was furious really. I was so bloody angry. And I was upset. I was upset as well and I smashed it and smashed it to smithereens and then I smashed the work bench.’

Mary too:

‘I had a cushion, a very thick cushion, it was very hard... I was just going at it like that and slicing through. [with a Sebbatier knife]’

We have already witnessed Emma reveal her inner fear of letting go of her anger and describes how she is led back into cognitive processing, thereby avoiding the call to move through this transformative phase:

‘I never have achieved any particularly emotional release or catharsis because the way she [the therapist] was working was cognitive analysis and, it is very psychodynamic, and to some extent, again, that just fed in to my intellectual processes which allows me to avoid a lot, but what it did very successfully, was keep me focused and kind of draw me out of the real chaotic stuff.’

Freud’s (1926) thinking about anxiety differentiated between two main types; automatic and signal anxiety. Automatic anxiety is the more primitive version relating to a traumatic experience of total disintegration and possible annihilation. Signal anxiety serves as a warning mechanism against the emergence of automatic anxiety. Signal anxiety is what seems to be holding Emma back from experiencing her anger and reaching a catharsis.
Wilber (1996) throws light on anger as a psychopathology in his discussion on translation and transformation and the part they each play in creating particular symptoms (the result of an incomplete translation) or dis-ease (the result of an unsuccessful transformation). Wilber clarifies the point that repression, arrest, fixation, dissociation (or numbing, Henderson et al, 2002: 131) or regression are all the result of a failure to transform cleanly and that should the repression of anger occur as a result of an unsuccessful transformation from the typhonic to the egoic stage (classically, when childhood sexual abuse takes place) then the anger impulse will be distorted at every stage beyond repression, manifesting as a symbol, rather than an affective sign that can be dealt with and 'exhausted' in a healthy manner. This is effectively a symbol of some aspect of the self that has become dissociated from consciousness and may be projected onto other beings, objects or back onto the self in its determination to be expressed. When it is experienced in this latter form, it is not experienced as anger, but as a symbol of anger which has lost its meaning in its repressive history. This symbol is experienced as depression, a bewildering affect because it has lost its root and its meaning. It is during the therapeutic process that the individual is taken back to the appropriate level of consciousness where he or she can reconnect with the anger and complete a healthy transformation. Kegan (1982) too sheds light on this process when he describes the conflicts within the interpersonal stage, the stage in which 'there is no self independent of the context of other people', where there is 'no self to share with another; instead the other is required to bring the self into being.' (1982: 96-97) A person in the interpersonal stage, Kegan argues, is not good with anger as it threatens the interpersonal fabric that creates the self. Instead, it is experienced as feeling sad, wounded or incomplete. It is, Kegan suggests, only as the individual transforms to the institutional stage that the self is strong enough to express anger without fear of annihilation.

Vicky graphically expresses her fear of annihilation in the movement from the interpersonal stage of her process. In this part of her interview she describes her fantasy around a relationship with an older man:

'I kind of felt really attracted to an older man or somebody with authority over me... I had to feel their 'no', not as a rejection, but a loving no. Like yes, I love you too but it wouldn't be really appropriate and that was painful for me because it was not what I wanted but what I needed... It has been a very long process to free myself of the voices in myself who betray [me] because, that's for me the annihilation. I never knew what my feelings were.'

She went on to say:

'I think it will be an ongoing process. Years ago, I was overwhelmed by the confusion, the despair, the annihilation, whatever, the destructive impact and
gradually, it grows less and less and less and I become more confident and more happy and all these things but, in the future, I would also like to acquire more like, you know, like the happiness and the confidence and the 'yes, let's go for life!' and I can be happy as well.'

In Brammer and Abrego's model\(^\text{15}\) (1981), depression is seen as the stage three successor to denial (stage two). In its extreme, the depressive may experience 'increasing pessimism, irritability and helplessness.' (1981: 21) They identify stage four as 'letting go' and state that little is known about this stage, although it does include anger. I have bracketed this under disintegration to capture the 'loss of control' which is the essence of this stage. Brammer and Abrego also note that physical symptoms or somatic illness may emerge, a phenomenon that has previously been highlighted by Kate in this research study and one that is discussed extensively by Myss and Shealy (1988), Myss (1997) and Hay (2003).

**Stage 4 - Seeking help/Validation (Later categorised as 'Finding voice and Being heard')**

After entering the disintegrative phase, seekers of health in this study sought assistance. In many instances, the interviewees described the importance of 'speaking out', 'being heard', 'being validated' and 'being witnessed' as they relayed their account to a counsellor or therapist. 'Being believed' seemed to be a breakpoint on the journey to health and one that had to be negotiated before further healing work could proceed. This is not a phase or stage in most of the transition models but it was found to be an essential step in this research study and may point to this model's uniqueness amongst its counterparts in the territory. Just to emphasise this point, I have included one 'sound-bite' from each of the interviewees on the importance of speaking out, being heard and being validated.

'Just being able to talk about how I felt about my Mum and what was happening in my life at that time helped me.' (Heather) 'What I really needed to do was just talk to another woman and find out what was normal and what wasn't.' (Emma) 'It was being heard [that] was very important, having an opportunity to explore what I wanted to explore without necessarily delving into any details.' (Kate) 'Well she listened and I think if somebody listens, and you know they're listening by their body language and everything else, you know, you feel valued.' (Mary) For one of the first few times in my life I felt listened to and heard.' (Rachel) 'I think the biggest part of that journey was connecting with somebody that would believe me and trust me.' Vicky 'Getting external knowledge, external validation [has helped].' (Sue) 'It's important to tell somebody... to have the courage to actually share that story is very difficult

---

but at the same time they’ve held that for me and witnessed it and that’s what helps to heal it, so I do think therapy’s important.’ (Claire)

Sue emphasises this point still further:

‘I needed to tell my story. I needed to hear myself telling my story and I needed to see other peoples’ reactions to it. So I went round doing that. Then after about eighteen months, I suppose, I then joined this Rape Crisis Centre and trained because by then I felt I’d really sort of cleaned myself out. I felt like an old sock, turned it all inside out and scraped it off, and that was a very physical feeling doing that. But this need to tell the story... and then that changing into thinking, well I can actually use some of this in a constructive way. Which I believe I did and still do.’

She elaborates:

‘I think getting an acknowledgement from my mother enabled me to fragment the whole thing further and that gave me an energy and strength to go and tell my story and to recognise that it wasn’t my fault, I had nothing to be ashamed about, so that was very significant, that realisation.’

These two passages of Sue’s are rich for several reasons. She explains why telling her story was important to the healing process; the removal of culpability, of bringing it out into the open and observing others’ reactions to it and the motivation behind her own desire to use her experiences in a constructive way.

Moustakas (1994) builds on this point from the perspective phenomenological psychology and the research undertaken by Van Kaam (1966) into the experience of really feeling understood. He concluded:

‘The experience of ‘really feeling understood’ is a perceptual-emotional Gestalt: A subject, perceiving that a person co-experiences what things mean to the subject and accepts him, feels, initially, relief from experiential loneliness, and, gradually, safe experiential communion with that person and with that which the subject perceives this person to represent.’ (1966: 325-326 in Moustakas, 1994: 12)

We can see from the date of Van Kaam’s research that being understood, which implies being heard and validated, is by no means a newly understood phenomenon, indeed, Rogers (1961) advocates a three pronged client-centred therapy which is characterised by transparency (in which the therapist’s feelings are evident); acceptance (of the client as a separate person with value) and a deep empathic understanding. Only when these three attributes are in place can the therapist accompany the client on their journey of discovery. ‘It is only as I understand [your] feelings and thoughts... it is only as I see them as you see them and accept them and you that you feel really free to explore all the hidden nooks and
frightening crannies of your inner and often buried experience.' (1961: 34) This reflects the sentiment and timing of Van Kaam's findings and, although Rogers work stems from the fairly distant past, his methods and approaches are still extensively used today and form the basis on which many counsellors engage with their clients.

All the above testimonies from the women contributors to the study are positive but not all interviewees' experiences of the therapeutic relationship are so inclined. Emma, in particular, was vocal in her criticism of her therapist when he allowed her to 'escape' and did not encourage her onto more challenging territory, yet she did not want to experience 'abuse' at his hand by allowing him to push her too far.

'I didn't trust him and I'd kept an awful lot bottled up but I was really really really struggling keeping myself together – and he was doing nothing to help me get any of that out – but at the end of the session when I went to leave, it was a big big heavy hospital door and I couldn’t get the door open. And, at that second, [when] I was starting to cry because I couldn’t get the sodding door open, he came and opened the door! If he'd have stayed there five seconds longer and just let me struggle with whatever that was about (not being able to open the door was just the one hurdle too many) and he didn’t, he rescued at the wrong time. And yet, he didn’t challenge at the right times.'

The importance of acceptance is illustrated in Vicky’s interview:

'I think my therapists really made a connection with me in an empathic, and in a kind of embracing, accepting [way]. Acceptance was very important.'

Mezirow (1991) states that learning always involves making a new experience explicit and 'we seek validation when, in the process of interpreting an experience, we find reason to question the truth, appropriateness or authenticity of either a newly expressed or implied idea or one acquired through prior learning. It is important to recognise how crucial the validation of knowledge is to the learning process in adults.' (1991: 11) The testimonies of the women who tell of the importance of speaking out, of being heard, witnessed or validated, certainly add weight to Mezirow’s assertion.

Mezirow (1991) primarily sees the process of transformation through the eyes of educators but believes that they should nonetheless have sufficient psychological knowledge and sensitivity to help learners deal with common psychological distortions in meaning perspectives that impede difficult life transitions. (1991: 225) He acknowledges that premise reflection usually resides in the psychotherapeutic domain but he qualifies this statement by suggesting that it is a natural form of transformative learning that often occurs in adult life, particularly during times of major life transitions. (1991: 138)
Being 'seen', 'heard' and 'validated' is a need that is often satisfied in the psychotherapeutic or counselling domain, although not exclusively. Poor counselling interventions can, at best, be blocking and unhelpful, and at worst, be abusive and damaging, whilst good 'counselling' interventions may be experienced outside the therapy room from good friends, supportive family members or fellow travellers on the healing journey.

Although I have bracketed 'seeking help and validation' together in this stage of the process, as I write, I wonder whether they should be separated. I can think of instances where 'telling the story' is not coupled with seeking help but is just gratuitously and repeatedly relayed somewhat along the lines of Caroline Myss' (1997) concept of 'woundology'. But then again, perhaps this repetitive 'telling' is preparing the ground for more reflective and transformative work later on. I will hold this concern for now.

I cannot leave this section without drawing attention to one of the unexpected but major findings in the Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) study. They point out that 'One growth metaphor in particular reverberated throughout the women's stories of their intellectual development. Again and again, women spoke of 'gaining a voice'. (1986: 16) Further, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule found that the development of a sense of voice, mind and self were intricately intertwined. (1986: 18) Nor can I avoid pointing out on behalf of Mezirow and Associates (2000) that discourse is the means by which an individual 'finds voice', thus making possible full and free participation in the search for common understanding; and the assessment, judgement and renegotiation of a meaning perspective. (2000: 11) It would seem that 'finding a voice' is essential in enabling an individual to engage in transformative learning through the disassembling and reassembling of meaning perspectives. Kegan (1994: 142) makes the point that the two greatest yearnings in human experience are 'the yearning for inclusion and the yearning for distinctness.' (1994: 142) I would argue that these apparently diametrically opposed impetuses can only be resolved by 'finding one's voice' and 'being heard, validated and accepted' by a group or community of which one wants to be a well-defined part.

In this research study, 'finding voice' with a counsellor or therapist has been both a clarifying and releasing experience. (Except in the instances where poor therapeutic interventions returned the client to the world of 'silence' and isolation from where they came. See the literature review of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) in chapter six for an understanding of the categorisation 'silence'.) Indeed, the interviewees often pointed out that hearing themselves talk during the interviewing process resulted in greater clarity about their process and resulted in the creation of links that were previously unmade.
Stage 5 – Clarifying: Meaning-making

Heather spoke of the clarifying process in metaphor: 'It’s like having a jigsaw, you’ve thrown all the pieces down, [and you need] to look at each piece to see where it fits to make the big picture; to make the picture complete.' This speaks for many other women in the sample as they try to clarify their thoughts, understand the patterns of their behaviours and seek meaning in their experiences. This is a 'productive' phase; a phase of facing the past and 'making sense' of it so that they can move forward in their lives in a positive way.

'Clarifying' is the part of the process in which the women recognise the inadequacies of their current meaning perspective; where they see it laid out in front of them so that they are able to go through the painstaking process of reconfiguring it so that they can move on.

Brammer and Abrego (1981) present 'Search for Meaning' as stage six in the seven stage transition model that they took from Adams et al (1977). Although they don’t explicitly relate this stage to transformative learning, or the transformation of a meaning perspective, they nonetheless point towards a process of review and imply the depth of cognitive processing that an individual has to plumb in order to change their values, views or behaviours. It is my belief that the process Brammer and Abrego describe may lead to a change in meaning scheme (See footnote 8, page 55) as individuals look back on their experience and ask themselves "What did I learn from this?" but I don't believe that they are necessarily talking about a transformation in meaning perspective (See footnote 2, Page 8) as defined by Mezirow (1991: 4) nor do I believe they are intimating a life-stage transformation as in the evolutionary model synthesised by Wilber. (1996)

Boyd and Myers' (1988) advocate that discernment, in contrast to critical reflectivity, is the essential attribute of the transformative process and leads to 'a contemplative insight, a personal illumination gained by putting things together and seeing them in their relational wholeness.' (1988: 274) Boyd and Myers go on to state that discernment may be described by three activities; receptivity, recognition and grieving. Grieving, itself, is further rendered to four phases: (1) Numbness and panic, (2) Pining and protest, (3) Disorganisation and despair and (4) Restabilisation and reintegration. It is interesting to note the quantum leap between phases (3) and (4) and the absence of a transformational process from one to the other. In emphasising the role of discernment, Boyd and Myers advocate that the process 'leads people to wholeness, to meaning, to a tacit knowledge of the mystery hold within their own beings.' (1988: 275) However, they point out that in order to engage in the process of discernment and be open to the experience of mystery, the ego must be silent so that it can listen to the other constituents of the Self. They maintain that Mezirow's concept of critical
reflection prevents someone from being sensitised to the extra-rational channels that are vital to effect transformative learning.

In a similar vein to Boyd and Myers' (1988) 'silent ego', Alex Nelson (1997), in his cooperative enquiry with priests who had decided to leave the cloth for marriage, stresses the importance of imagining and as a precursor to gaining critical insight and progressing the meaning-making process.

'The agency of imagining in autobiographical learning16, which leads to self-reinvention, appears to involve a sequence of events similar to those in well-known accounts of scientific discoveries. Those accounts regularly depict a researcher engaged in intense work for a long period without apparent result. Then, in a moment of relaxation, an image or insight appears within the researcher's unconsciousness, sudden and unexpected. A time of further diligent work to fathom the meaning of the insight follows this insight. The discovery which eventuated is, therefore, the outcome of an elaborate process of knowing in which insight and imagination play a part.' (1997: 192-193)

This may also be similar to Jung's concept of synchronicity; a meaningful, acausal connection between inner and outer events. McFarlane (2000) notes that 'synchronicity essentially involves the manifestation of meaning in the sense of an unconscious compensation that serves an individual's process of individuation toward wholeness.' (2000: 7) It may also resemble Sharon's concept of 'latent healing' (sometimes apparently manifest as 'denial') where mind and emotion are 'put aside' and ego is silenced leaving space for subconscious meaning-making processes to take place and for insights to occur.

Two of the women gave examples of when they experienced cognitive, somatic and emotional shut-down.

'I would sit for hours, and I must have been just sitting, looking at a wall, and not even knowing... you know, I would look at the clock, perhaps I would sit down for a coffee and then suddenly realise two or three hours had passed ... and I think I was having some sort of a break down really.'

Kate had a similar experience

'I sat in a chair for two days and didn't get up, get a drink of water or anything.'

---

16 In autobiographical learning the author's life and life story are the text for interpretation. Interpreting experience leads to self-formation or deformation and the construction of autobiography. (Nelson, 1997: 193)
Both these women placed the reason for their immobility on the fact that they had employed the intellectualisation coping strategy to excess. I asked Heather how she moved on from this phase in the process.

'How did I move on? I think simply by allowing myself to feel them [the emotions] helped me move on. The fact that I wasn't allowing myself to feel them was stopping me from moving on. You know, I'd done all this counselling and yet I still wasn't OK, at some level I wasn't OK, and it was because I hadn't allowed myself to experience the pain and all that stuff that went with it because I was too busy rationalising it. So I needed to do that in order to move on. I needed to experience it.'

By contrast, Mezirow (1991) stresses the importance of critical self-reflection as the central process in emancipatory learning. Emancipatory knowledge is gained through critical self-reflection and 'it involves a searching view of the unquestioningly accepted presuppositions that sustain our fears, inhibitions and patterns of interaction, such as our reaction to rejection, and their consequences in our relationships.' (1991: 87) Mezirow points out that:

'Dramatic personal and social changes become possible when we become aware of the way that both our psychological and our cultural assumptions have created or contributed to our dependence on outside forces that we have regarded as unchangeable... Learning to understand our individual historical and biographical situation more fully contributes to the development of autonomy and responsibility in deciding how to define our problems and the course of action that is most appropriate under particular circumstances... Psychoanalytic therapy has its most obvious relevance to self-reflective learning in studying the way we come to challenge those psychological assumptions, repressed in childhood, that influence our adult patterns of interaction.' (1991: 88-89)

Mezirow distinguishes between three types of reflection; on process, content and premises. These different forms of reflection may be applied to hypothetical-deductive or metaphorical-abductive problem solving. We use premise reflection (and we began this section with the example of an interviewee's description of premise reflection in the metaphorical-abductive mode) to achieve the transformation of meaning perspectives and thus to engage in transformative learning.

As many of the interviewees used analogy or metaphor to describe or clarify some aspect of their transformative process, I shall make a short detour into this topic below.

The use of analogy and metaphor in the clarifying process

Analog and metaphor were common features of the testimonies given by the women in this study. For example, we have already seen the analogous use of the jig-saw puzzle above (Heather); the spile in the cask (Rachel) and her use of the metaphor of the tree: 'I guess the
training has helped; having a framework that... bit like that tree really, it's a pretty shape and it's got branches but the framework is not rigid, it can bend with the wind and the leaves are fine.' (Rachel)

Rachel's interview is rich with metaphor. In this example she is talking about how she experiences the healing process:

'I like the idea of the garden. It's a wonderful spiritual metaphor for me because there's the crap in the compost heap; pretty flowers; the seasons you have to go through so it gets a bit tough and when it gets cold and everything shrivels up and dies. So it's a metaphor for change, it's a metaphor for a journey for life really. And there's pleasure in sitting in it but it's hard work.'

Heather too uses metaphor extensively to describe her experiences:

'I started to be able to let it go. It was like letting it go a bit at a time of this heavy weight. It was like letting go of this heavy weight, I suppose. Like just casting a bit off at a time. And each bit that I actually accepted and let go of, meant that I could take another step forward. It was like that really. It was lightening the load.'

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) describe imaginative and creative metaphors as the means of giving us a new understanding of our experiences. 'They give new meaning to our pasts, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe.' (1980: 139) Philosophically speaking, Lakoff and Johnson bemoan the fact that metaphors are viewed as 'mere language' and that the debate is focused on whether they are objectively or absolutely 'true' rather than on their role in promoting (self) understanding and creating culture. Lakoff and Johnson point out that a 'large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives.' Metaphors enable an understanding of one kind of experience to be gained in respect of another. 'The process of self-understanding is the continual development of new life stories for yourself.' (1980: 233) Lakoff and Johnson run counter to comparison theory which states that 'Metaphors are matters of language and not matters of thought or action' by stating their belief that 'Metaphor is primarily a matter of thought and action and only derivatively a matter of language'. (1980: 153) The point of departure, as so commonly seems to happen, sits along the objectivist/subjectivist continuum. Whereas comparison theory most often orients itself to objective similarities, Lakoff and Johnson prefer to think of metaphor as experiential similarities thus becoming a powerful interpreter and informer of actions.

Rachel spoke of the lack of language leading to her inability to express her experiences in the past.
Mezirow describes language as an internalised set of schemas or rationales that have been socially defined and which may be projected on to artefacts, behaviours and affects in order to convey an agreed upon meaning. He points out that we must name a thing in order to bring it into active consciousness; a word is representational, it is not what it describes. As Mezirow says: 'There is no direct relationship between language and the actual things of the external world.' (1991: 19) Gergen (1999), using a constructionist frame and taking his stance from Mead (1934), points out that 'Language becomes possible when people share a common set of mental symbols.' (1999: 124) He explains that meanings are developed and understood through observing and taking on the role of others. Indeed Mead goes on to say that we cannot attain a sense of self, except by virtue of taking on the role of others and, over time, we construct the 'generalised other' that helps us to know ourselves. Mead's work gave rise to symbolic interactionism, the foundation, as we have already seen, for grounded theory.

As well as the importance of language and metaphor, the power of 'telling the story' as a meaning-making activity is also apparent in the interviews. Connections were being made as the stories were being told. Indeed, we have already seen this phenomenon in the words of Kate: 'The first time I was sexually abused was about that age, about seven so it might have been that there was a trigger there. I've never really thought about it before. She was that age. The same age.' Kate made another connection during the interview when I asked her: "Do you think that disconnection from yourself as a child has been important in helping you to move onto new and healthy territory?" She replied: 'It's an interesting question because I've never thought about it before.' Rachel, who used many spontaneous metaphors to explicate her story, also had a revelation during the interview: 'I've just suddenly realised why it was so difficult for me, because, of course, that's where I was abused, in school, so being in an educational establishment was just immensely difficult.'

Nelson's (1997) study again seems apposite in this regard. In his paper he states that: 'As an outcome of transformative learning, learners compose their life as well as their story.' and qualifies this statement by saying: 'Autobiographical learning is discernable through significant changes in the learner's self-understanding, world views and ways of being in the world. As we discover and rediscover our capacity to imagine constructively our life as other than it is, we gain a sense of becoming the author of a life story that we invent and re-invent. In moments of autobiographical learning, our sense of autonomy and authority increases... Imagining, critical reflection and artistic expression call into awareness tacit and symbolic.
dimensions of our knowing. Telling and retelling life stories helps us to understand ourselves and explain our life to others... (1997: 192) and each telling offers another opportunity for re-composition [of our lives].' (1997: 196)

As the interviewees heard themselves tell their stories of healing, they were able to bring into critical light, review and reconceptualise, their thinking. This emphasises the importance of not only being heard, but also of hearing oneself tell the story. See also (Gilligan, 1979; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986) for greater emphasis on the importance to women of 'gaining voice'.

**Stage 6 – Controlling: making choices and managing boundaries**

'I stopped being a victim at that point [when I decided to divorce my husband] and that's when I started to reclaim myself.' (Heather)

During the controlling phase of the journey, interviewees talked of finally being able to make choices in their own right and not subjugate their power to another. In the language of developmental psychologists, growth leads to increasing autonomy or distinctness. The yearning to be defined by another, as in the interpersonal phase of Kegan’s constructive-development model, is replaced by an ability to define oneself in the world. Kegan (1982: 215) acknowledges that all growth is costly as it involves leaving behind obsolete behaviours and sometimes, relationships as well. In many of the instances described by the women in this study, relationships have been the casualties of their growth towards actualisation. However, this has enabled them to move away from 'victim-consciousness' and move towards 'choosing adult'; someone who creates and maintains their own boundaries and makes decisions about how they are going to act in the world.

Women in the Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) study (outlined in chapter six) exhibiting the quality of ‘subjectivism’ ‘set out on [the] developmental journey [to discover themselves] with a sense of power in their intuitive processes and a newfound energy and openness to novelty.’ (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986: 77) Indeed not only did they exhibit courage in the way that they forged a way to self knowledge but frequent recklessness as a result of being driven to action by their inner voice.

Sue demonstrates this attribute as she relates her travelling experiences:

'One other significant thing I've done is to go travelling on my own again. Since I went to Russia and [found a man with whom to have a one night stand], I now go all over the place on my own and [my interest in] photography has enabled me to do that. [Was Russia about photography primarily or was it a holiday?] No. It was an escape. It was an escape from the pressure of the kids, my own internal pot was

151
boiling and I had no idea what was going on but part of me knew I wanted to find a man. I needed that. To go through all that trauma.'

In this example, Sue describes her new-found ability to respond to an intuitive understanding of what she needs, perhaps too, she is exhibiting some recklessness as she travels to Russia in search of a one night stand.

Claire makes the point that:

'One of things about sexual abuse is it's a merging of boundaries so you have to re-make those boundaries. When the incest boundary gets broken it becomes very complicated so rebuilding that boundary [is very important.] It's not just about the abuse; it's also about the relationship with that person and getting the whole thing into perspective.'

Kate also reflects the importance of creating boundaries when describing her extra-marital affair:

'It's easy to say well it's a compulsion and I can't help it, you know, it's because of my past, and that... I really hate that. I can't do that. I am choosing to have this affair, this is what I need at the moment and I'm doing the best I can. And I've worked with it in therapy, I've worked with my compulsions and I need to keep doing that. But it's about taking responsibility for the choices I make... So existentialism in that sense of the freedom and responsibility, the aloneness, the isolation and the ultimate is, I'm going to die sooner or later but also that I do have choices of whether I sit back and believe that I can't or whether I get out there and actually prove that I can.'

Some of the women interviewees also chose to confront their abusers at this stage in their journey. In no instance was this successful as in each case, the men denied abuse or projected responsibility onto the abused. However, it was important that they stood up for themselves and heard themselves say 'no' to further abuse in their lives.

**Stage 7 - Integrating**

'The inside has joined the outside so it's more one whole than lots of different pieces.'

(Heather)

Although Maslow (1968) is unhappy defining the term 'self-actualised', due to the 'static' impression it creates, he nonetheless condones use of the term 'self-actualising' to describe people that have episodic experiences of self-actualisation such as those who have achieved great insights in psychotherapy or other important growth experiences. (1968: 107) Self-actualisation then, is 'an episode in which the powers of the person come together in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way, and in which he is more integrated and less spilt, more open for experience, more idiosyncratic, more perfectly expressive or
spontaneous, or fully functioning, more creative, more humorous, more ego-transcending, more independent of his lower needs, etc. He becomes in these episodes more truly himself, more perfectly actualising in his potentialities, closer to the core of his Being, more fully human.’ (1968: 106) A description that (all but) matches the integrative descriptions of the women interviewees in this study.

Other transition models conclude with the integrative phase of the process. Phase ten of Mezirow’s model speaks of ‘A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective. (Mezirow, 1991: 169) Brammer and Abrego’s version of the Adams and Hopson model identifies ‘integration’ as the final stage (1981: 20) and Boyd and Myers conclude their model with Phase four – Restabilisation and Reintegration. (1988: 279)

The central concepts in the models presented by Wilber (1996), Kegan (1988) and Erikson (1963) are movement from embeddedness (in the previous stage, level or state) to differentiation (from that stage) to reintegration (into a new stage). The integration phase is both the end and the beginning but signals a form of completion of one phase of the journey. However, victory is short because, no sooner has one iteration finished than another begins.

This place of integration was illustrated by some of the testimonies of the women in this study as they described where they were in their present frame.

Heather said:

‘I have a sense of myself these days, a sense of my own identity which has been lacking through a large part of my life. I feel less fragmented. More whole, complete than I have done through my entire life.’

She went on to say:

‘I feel as if what people see now is, is me. Whereas before what they were seeing was what I thought they wanted to see or what they needed to see or it was a role that I had to play. Now it feels like the inside has joined the outside so it’s one whole [rather] than lots of different pieces.’

In this piece, Heather acknowledges dropping the masks or personae that she had hidden behind to protect and defend herself.

Claire reinforces this point when she says: ‘I feel more of a piece.’

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) in their research into Women’s Ways of Knowing identify the integrative epistemological stance as ‘constructed knowledge’ – the integration of intuitive knowledge with that learned from others. As one of their interviewees
put it 'You let the inside out and the outside in.' (1986, 135) This is not a dissimilar comment to the one that opened this section from Heather: 'The inside has joined the outside.'

**Stage 8 – Distancing: dis-identifying**

Distancing is a phase in this process that was not found in the other models that were used for comparison, yet a similar process, 'dis-identification', is described in psychosynthesis. This is a process that enables us to recognise a sub-personality, step outside it and observe it. Ferrucci (1982) explains that:

> 'Because we all have a tendency to identify with – to become one with – this or that sub-personality, we come implicitly to believe that we are it. Dis-identification consists of our snapping out of this illusion and returning to our self. It is often accompanied by a sense of insight and liberation.' He goes on to say: 'At certain other times, sub-personality recognition is also accompanied by a healthy feeling of dismay or alarm, as, for instance, when a woman who had suddenly recognised her Victim sub-personality exclaimed: "If I stop complaining, what else can I do?" Still other people, after having recognised a sub-personality, especially a very deeply ingrained one, suddenly feel naked and defenceless, as if their armour had dissolved – which is exactly what has happened. In all cases, however, no matter what the initial emotional response, there is more real awareness and, therefore, more freedom.' (1982: 49)

The term 'dis-identify' has also been used by Wilber (1996) to describe the process of letting go of, and transcending, the personae associated with a former stage so as to create a higher-order identification with a later stage. (1996: 39) This may be the process that is operating for the women interviewees at this stage of the healing journey. I have already used the following statement of Heather’s above to illustrate the use of analogy in the clarifying process but it would seem to have relevance here also as she describes the process of letting go of the fact that her parents didn’t love her and that she had had an abusive childhood:

> 'I started to be able to let it go. It was like letting it go a bit at a time of this heavy weight. It was like letting go of this heavy weight, I suppose. Like just casting a bit off at a time. And each bit that I actually accepted and let go of, meant that I could take another step forward. It was like that really. It was lightening the load and, and then I found that when I eventually went back to work, that, I wasn’t as enmeshed in the whole thing, I was separate from it whereas before I’d reached the point where I wasn’t separating myself and my stuff from the client’s stuff.'

17 **Psychosynthesis** is a comprehensive approach to self-realisation first formulated by the late Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagiolo. The aim of psychosynthesis is to help people discover their true essence. 'It aims to evoke wholeness and the dawn of a new and wider frame of reference in the human psyche.' (1982: 22)
It seems as if Heather is describing the process of shedding parts of her persona, or 'dis-identifying' with the 'unloved and abused child'.

Other comments from the interviewees that indicate the notion of 'distancing' or 'dis-identification' include: 'I actually don't associate with who I was as a child.' (Kate) 'I feel almost as if it didn't happen.' (Claire) 'Well I know where I've been through stuff and worked it through and I find then when that's finished that's the cut off point. I remember it sometimes because if somebody says something on the end of the phone, I think 'Yeh, I've been there' but I'm not there now.' (Mary) and finally Rachel: 'I suppose what fascinates me now is why can I talk about it and it doesn't haunt me, because I don't lose any sleep over it now.' (Rachel) For me, I feel that I am carrying someone else's memories. I can access them but I can't identify with them; they have no power over me.

In each of these cases, there was a 'letting go'18, not in the sense that Adams and Hopson use the term, which is more like a descent into chaos, but in the sense of cutting the ties to the memory and demolishing its power to call them back into the trauma.

Before leaving the topic of 'distancing', there were some comments made by the interviewees about the abusers which were so striking that I feel bound to include them here as a component or sub-category of 'distancing'. Whilst acknowledging that this research is not about the fate of the abusers but about the healing journey of those that had been abused, I nonetheless concluded that the subsequent phenomena should form part of the 'distancing' categorisation due to their implied impact as part of the healing process. The following comments were made by the interviewees in the study, usually as an aside, but nonetheless with some sense of satisfaction; perhaps because they viewed the situation as a sign that 'rough justice' head eventually prevailed or perhaps they experienced a vicarious sense of revenge, it is difficult to say, however, I believe that these realisations may have assisted in achieving 'distance' from their memories by cutting the emotional connections to the abuser and thereby stepping away from the stimuli that resulted in dysfunctional coping strategies. These comments relate to the health of the abusers. Rachel:

'I went to see that Minister to talk to him about what had happened and he denied it, but I since... and I was really chuffed... I since learned he went senile. I thought, 'serves you right!' (laughs) He was just a gibbering... he died a gibbering wreck... I

---

18 Brammer and Abrego describe Hopson's 'Letting go' as when a 'critical point is reached in dealing with the negative emotional reactions to the transition where the person lets him or herself into the feeling to experience it deeply. This may mean tears, expression of anger or it may be largely a cognitive experience.' (1981: 21)
can't help but feel that [the] kind of senility that was [was due to] the way he behaved, and his complete and utter denial.'

Claire said: 'There was an enormous change in my father from 'before' and 'after'. He just became very haggard.'

Vicky confided that: 'My father has cancer now and he might not have to live too long any more so I'm thinking, what the heck do I do now? Justice is important.'

Kate added a comment about her sibling abuser: 'He's now 51 and he's an old man.' and of her abusing father: 'And now seeing him as an old man, he's not chronologically an old man, he's only 72, 73 next April but he is an old man.'

My own abuser developed cancer and died at the age of twenty-one.

The role of 'forgiveness'

What is classically promulgated through the Christian Church and from the mouths of worthy practitioners is the need for people who have been abused to forgive their abusers. However, what I was intrigued to note in the twelve interviews that I conducted was that the issue of forgiveness did not emerge as a dominant theme. Indeed, the contrary. Kate stated: 'I have no sense of needing to forgive.' Vicky was less emphatic: 'I've learned a lot in so many different ways from this whole experience and two things which seem to be very important at the same time are, forgiveness and justice, and I'm not there.' This comes across as a construct that has been imposed (perhaps a socially induced imperative with chauvinistic overtones) or a given set of expectations rather than a sentiment which is heartfelt. Yet forgiveness is clearly not a barrier to Vicky's sense of self. She describes herself as having arrived at a place of happiness and confidence.

Sharon expands on the concept of forgiveness:

'At the age of twenty five, he [the abuser] was still maintaining that I'd started it at six [years old] but I even see [the black hole] as quite positive because I never got angry, I didn't do all that sort of stuff and it was only when I did do that that I learned that I could be angry. It was only when I got to this point, falling into a black hole, that I [realised] part of my denial was not being angry, saying 'well, I forgive him', because it was an easy thing to do. Forgive somebody. What the books don't tell you is you can't forgive somebody that doesn't ask for forgiveness, it's pointless, so, this, to me, was really helpful. [So the helpful bit here is the black hole bit because that put you in touch with your anger?] Yeh, it's like being in a whirlpool where you can't hold on, [you can't] hold it all together. [You say to yourself] "I'm not going to feel like this because I actually forgive him and it's better if I forgive him because it makes me a happy person", well that's bollocks. So this, where you lose control, is really good.'
Kepner (1995) warns against therapists who see a lack of forgiveness as an indication that the individual has 'unfinished business' and insist that the absence of forgiveness is 'incomplete resolution' of their childhood experiences. He goes on to say that in his experience, forgiveness is not a requirement for healing. (1995: 143-144) Shohet (2001) when examining the work of Byron Katie reinforces this point and asserts that: 'The Work... takes us beyond forgiveness to a place where there is nothing and no-one to forgive.' (2001: 22) Forgiveness indicates investment; it is only when investment disappears and the need to forgive evaporates that the desired effect of 'forgiveness' may be thought to have occurred.

Refining the model

Other researchers' findings compared with my own raised a concern in me regarding the structural integrity of my own model. 'Finding voice' (telling the story) and 'being heard' (being witnessed, believed, validated) were two features of the interviews that were consistently present, both of which were found and saturated early in the analysis. However, in my determination to raise the concepts to the highest level of abstraction, and as a result of the constant comparative process, I considered them to be part of a broader category, that of 'seeking help and validation'. Nonetheless, as I proceeded with the analysis, I began to feel that the importance of 'finding voice' and 'being heard' was getting lost, in spite of the fact that I felt they 'belonged' to a category of greater abstraction. This made me question whether or not I had alighted upon the 'correct' abstraction to describe this part of the process and on reflection, I considered that 'finding voice' and 'being heard' was a better term to use for the category heading than 'seeking help and validation'. This latter term, I felt was in danger of confusing a motivator; seeking help, and an outcome; validation, rather than describing an individual's process. I also argued to myself that 'being heard' necessarily rests in a validating relationship that is characterised by high levels of respect and regard and that this consequential aspect of the data would therefore not be lost in the new categorisation. I therefore renamed the 'seeking help and validation' category 'finding voice and being heard'.

Further, I found that I was not entirely happy with the term 'clarifying' to describe the next phase of the process. The reason being that it was not just clarification that the interviewees sought but the creation of a new framework that would inform future action and behaviours.

---

19 The Work by Byron Katie is a therapeutic approach to helping victims see their part in perpetuating their own abuse. It rests on four probing questions, the answers to which inevitably lead us to an understanding and acceptance of how we judge ourselves and others. It is through holding on to our judgements, or our indignation, that we continually re-experience pain. The four questions enable us to enter a process of enquiry into our thinking and give us the choice to stop colluding in our abuse. The process is rapid and often results in a 'turnaround' in a few minutes.
On revisiting the data and drawing out the sense of this category, I realised that ‘clarifying’ is only part of the meaning-making process; perhaps the more ‘passive’ reflective part that leads to the questioning of assumptions and the creation of new meaning perspectives. It would seem that in my urgency to identify a suitably embracing term to describe the category, I ran ahead of my thinking and alighted upon a term that, no doubt, carried the sense of the data, but was not sufficiently precise to describe the full richness of the process. I have therefore also renamed the ‘clarifying’ category and have adopted the term ‘meaning-making’, with the implicit undertones of critical reflection and a change in meaning perspective; terms that have been coined by Mezirow (1991) and which are sufficiently well known to carry understanding. This, I am satisfied, legitimately precedes the following category of ‘controlling’ which is equivalent to ‘reflection-action’ (Mezirow, 1994), marking behavioural changes and a new sense of agency and autonomy.

It was this internal debate that drove me further into the analysis and forced me to think again about ‘what is really going on here?’ A question that was first raised in this thesis by Blumer (1978) who offered a metaphor for the generation of grounded theory which I will repeat again here.

‘The metaphor I like is that of lifting the veils that obscure or hide what is going on. ... The veils are lifted by getting close to the area and by digging deep in it through careful study. ... The merit of naturalistic study is that it respects and stays close to the empirical domain.’ (1978: 38 in Patton, 1990: 67)

This statement echoes the words of Strauss and Corbin (1998) who stress the importance of asking questions and making comparisons and advocate the use of ‘sensitising questions’ which include: What is going on here? (1998: 73-85) and those of Glaser (1978) who argues that grounded theory allows us ‘to discover what is going on’ (1978 in Baker et al, 1992: 1357)

In response to this question, I was driven still further to identify the core category and to name the basic social psychological process (BSPP) which will be discussed in the next section.

The refined model, which additionally illustrates the centrality of the unifying core category or BSPP, is shown in Figure (ix) below.
Continual process of healing – “I just get better and better.”

Figure (ix) - The revised model showing ‘seeking help and validation’ and ‘clarifying’ under the new category headings of ‘finding voice and being heard and meaning-making’ and showing the core category, or BSPP, driving through the process.
The Core Category - creating new meaning as the way of healing and transformation

The generation of theory occurs around a core category that accounts for most of the variation in a pattern of behaviour. A core category has the prime function of integrating the theory and rendering it dense and saturated, it also serves to delimit the theory and 'leads to theoretical completeness, accounting for as much variation in a pattern of behaviour with as few concepts as possible thereby maximising parsimony and scope.' (Glaser, 1978: 93) The core category is identified through conscious surveillance of the data during coding and it should embrace and explain the entire pattern of behaviours to be accounted for. During the coding process, the question of a core category was permanently present and was sought, tested and finally identified through the constant comparative analysis of codes, concepts and categories.

Glaser (1978) identifies the criteria against which a core category can be verified as:

1. It must be central – related to as many other categories and their properties as possible. It should account for a large portion of the variation in a pattern of behaviour.
2. It must re-occur frequently in the data. It is both stable and substantial as more and more variables are explained by its presence.
3. It will take more time to saturate the core category than other categories.
4. It relates meaningfully and easily with other categories. The connections need not be forced; rather they come quickly and richly.
5. A core category in a substantive study has clear and grabbing implications for formal theory.
6. A core category has considerable 'carry through'; it carries the analyst through to the formation of a theory.
7. It is completely variable and readily modifiable through the dependent variations. That is, BSP's are 'free of time, place and the perspective of participants making them fully generalisable as abstract processes to be found anywhere they may emerge.' (1978: 101)
8. Whilst accounting for variation in the behaviour a core category is also a dimension of the problem. In part, it explains itself and its own variation.
9. The above criteria generate such a rich core category that they tend to prevent two other sources of establishing a core (which are not grounded in the data) – sociological interest and logico-deductive elaboration.
10. The analyst begins to see the core category in all relations, whether grounded or not because it has so much grab and explanatory power.
11. The core category can be any kind of theoretical code: a process, a condition, two dimensions, a consequence and so forth. (Taken from Glaser, 1978: 95-96)

During the coding process, I bore these criteria in mind and tried several core category definitions ranging from: ‘clarifying’ (later subsumed as a sub-category); to ‘making sense’ (a term I was uncomfortable with in the context of this study for how can anyone ‘make sense’ of childhood sexual abuse); to ‘meaning-making’ (a term that does not necessarily imply the creation of a new meaning perspective – as opposed to meaning scheme – or the directional movement which characterises the testimonies of the women in the sample) and finally to ‘transformative learning as part of personal development’. Below I have shown diagrammatically how transformative learning may be linked to personal development, a path that the women in this study have undoubtedly taken. This diagram was comprised from Mezirow’s (1994) article in which he clarifies ‘some of the obscurities, implicit assumptions and incomplete ideas in [his] earlier writings’ (1994: 232) and in which he describes personal development as: ‘the progressive realisation of an adult’s capacity to fully and freely participate in rational dialogue to achieve a broader, more discriminating, permeable and integrative understanding of his/her experience as a guide to action.’ (1994: 226)

![Diagram of Transformative Learning and Personal Development](image-url)

Figure (x) A graphical representation of how Transformative learning is related to personal development. Comprised from Mezirow (1994).
From figure (x) it is clear that the defining feature that links transformative learning to personal development is 'critical self-reflection'; a component of emancipatory learning. However, even this, I feel, is not quite right to describe at a fundamental level 'what is going on here' and indicate the core category. It certainly describes something of 'what is going on' but it does not meet the above criteria of a core category. In particular, it does not capture what the entire process is. In truth, I believe that the process I have been researching is one of women engaging in personal development as a means of expressing their fullness. In other words, simply 'becoming'. My arguments led me therefore to make one final refinement and to label the core category 'transformative learning as a way of becoming'. This final one, I felt, embraced the full range of behaviours drawn from the data. In each case, the interviewee described a process of change during which, they recognised that their current meaning perspective and consequent coping strategies were not serving them well. After an initial fall into 'chaos', during which their meaning perspective was relentlessly and finally unravelled, they engaged in a process of deep and critical self-reflection during which they examined the assumptions that had formed the bedrock of their now collapsed meaning perspective and reconfigured a new meaning perspective that would carry them through their lives in a healthy and positive manner enabling them to enter the process of 'becoming' a 'fully-functioning person'; a concept conceived by Rogers (1961) and explored in depth in Chapter six.

The core category of 'transformative learning as a way of becoming' is 'processal' (i.e. it has at least two clear emergent stages - transformative learning and becoming), and, as a result, it qualifies as a Basic Social Process (BSP). BSP's are defined as 'theoretical reflections and summarisations of the patterned, systematic uniformity flows of social life which people go through and which can be conceptually 'captured' and further understood through the construction of BSP theories.' (Glaser, 1978: 100) Glaser notes that BSPs are labelled by a 'gerund' indicating a feeling or process; or change and movement over time. (1978: 97) Glaser further differentiates two kinds of BSP; a basic social psychological process (BSPP) and a basic social structural process (BSSP). The BSPP is relevant to 'a process which optimises change, fluidity, and unfreezing of behavioural patterns' whereas a BSSP refers to 'a social structure in process - usually growth or deterioration - such as bureaucratisation, routinisation, centralisation, organisational growth and so forth. (1978: 103) It is a BSPP that is sought in this study.

Diagramming or modelling is a useful way to depict the categories and their relationships. (See Glaser, 1978: 81) To orientate the reader, a diagram of how the newly identified BSPP relates to the main and sub-categories, and the relationships between them, is shown below in Figure (xi). This highlights the context and contingencies inherent in the process which is
a level of complexity beyond that demonstrated in the staged diagram presented in Figure (vi). The colours of the second and third columns below map onto the fifth and sixth columns in Figure (ix) and develop the contingent nature of the relationship between them. Although it is not shown in this diagram, it should be noted that the entire process is fuelled by an intuitive understanding of the different stages of the journey and an inner voice guiding the traveller’s passage through them. It is also apparent from the testimonies of the women in this study that the wisdom of these messages is not always accessible to the mind but expressed unconsciously through the body in the form of a physical, emotional or cognitive shutdown, implying the importance of rest or withdrawal from the process from time to time. Other channels engaged in the process of ‘becoming’ include physical activity such as running, learning a martial art or venting anger; creative activity such as painting, drawing or photography and mental activity such as writing, reading, learning and training. These channels, along with the cognitive channel that engages in critical reflection and the transformation of meaning perspectives must all work in concert if the core process of ‘becoming’ is to be experienced.

![Diagram](image)

Figure (xi) - Mapping elements of the substantive theory and highlighting the basic social psychological process (BSPP): Transformative learning as a way of becoming.
To reinforce the above point, several of the interviewees in this study said that they did not perceive their process in a staged manner; rather the stages were enacted subconsciously, instinctively or intuitively. This point was illustrated by Margaret’s comment which was made in response to my question about how the model struck her when she first saw it.

‘I remember thinking, gosh, I’d never conceptualised it in stages before and I know that you’re indicating that people can go back and forth between the stages of the process, I’m sure I did, [but] it was still quite hard for me to remember ‘where does ‘that’ belong?’ – to identify memories of the journey and be able to say ‘yes, that’s clearly that and that’s clearly this... It was quite interesting to think of it in terms of these processes both for myself on reflection and also perhaps looking at clients that I work with. Because one of the things that I’ve always had a sense of is [that] I often see them at the ‘fragmentation’ stage and I sometimes never see them in any other stage... I’m often conscious [that] I’m just sharing a part of the process with them and it’s not necessarily the ‘nice’ kind of really therapeutic part, it’s not the journey’s ending, it’s the journey’s beginning and I suppose, looking at this model, made me think, yes well I always did know that and this is like affirmation of how crucial that place is to be with people and just be where they are so they can bear to be at that time.’

This is also, apparently, a process that, once passed through, can be known. Jay described her own experience as she passed through the process a second time.

‘What I’m aware of now is that as I’m coming into this process [again]... in terms of the framework... it is very similar in essence but this time I am coming to it with my understanding and... I have ‘meaning’ already. So the first time round I didn’t, I had to find meaning through that process, this time round, it was like I had the meaning, I mean, I had still to make more meaning, but it wasn’t new to me.’

Glaser points out that ‘A person may perceive the events which make up stages of a process he is going through without perceiving the overall process or any particular stages. These events may be perceived as idiosyncratic rather than as stages of a social process which many persons go through. As I reflected this process to members of the theoretical sample, they told me that they would have valued an understanding of the process at the time that they were going through it. Once this need for prior knowledge about the process was identified and articulated, I felt encouraged to persist with the research. In this regard, Julie said:

‘[What would have helped me] would have been if somebody could have spoken to me [about the healing journey], anybody really.’

Sharon also articulated:
'It's a bit like grief, once you go through the process, it gets easier and easier because you know that you're not going to be stuck in that place for the next week, it will get better. So it's the first time through that's the critical one and then you know the ropes. You know the road don't you? You do know the road.'

She continued:

'I'm interested in your question of what would have helped [me go through the process the first time] because I hadn't thought about that but other than speaking to myself [as I am now]... and if somebody had been able to say that everything would be alright, that I would get to this place [of health]... but I don't think you'd believe them.'

As a result of Emma's interview, and drawing from some of Heather's descriptions of her process, I would have to say that there is no foregone conclusion that 'everything will be alright'. Indeed, it would seem from the data, that there are times of silence and immobility when there is no guarantee of further progress. Although I may have succeeded in creating a process map, this shouldn't imply any guarantee of arriving at a destination. Having made this caveat, I will build a picture of the set of conditions and contingencies that allow movement through the process.

Conditions and contingencies

Building a trusting relationship

In this section I will explore the nature of the relationship between the sub-categories and the core category of 'transformative learning as a way of 'becoming”.

It emerges from the interviews that a number of sub-categories are contingent upon others for their manifestation. Many of these occur in the therapeutic relationship or outside such a relationship with a well informed and trusted companion who acts in this capacity. These contingencies also serve to accentuate the vulnerability of someone attempting to move through this process without due care and support being available to them and highlights again the need for a high quality and caring therapeutic relationship, the absence of which can be devastating.

Kate described the importance of merely forming a relationship as the first step of her process of healing.

'I think the first four years I couldn't access what I needed to deal with and I think for me, at that time, it was just about forming a relationship. I couldn't even form a relationship.'
Jay reinforced this point by saying: 'The relationship for me is the core; the safety; the being 'held'.'

Emma articulates her disappointment with a therapist who was unable to recognise her needs and accompany her through part of her process:

'I once worked for a whole session... I didn't trust him and I'd kept an awful lot bottled up but I was really really really struggling to keep myself together. And he was doing nothing to help me get any of that out but at the end of the session when I went to leave, it was a big big heavy hospital door and I couldn't get the door open. And, at that second, I was starting to cry because I couldn't get the sodding door open, he came and opened the door! If he'd have stayed there five seconds longer and just let me struggle with whatever that was about... Not being able to open the door was just the one hurdle too many and he didn't... he rescued at the wrong time. And yet, he didn't challenge at the right times.'

Heather talks about the difficulty she experienced when the continuity of her counselling was broken due to her ineligibility for the service as a result of her finishing a course at college.

'I couldn't think that something that happened thirty years ago was actually affecting me in this way now but [then] I realised that it wasn't just affecting me [now], that it had actually been affecting me in lots of different ways all my life really. [However] we didn't explore all of that because once you've finished the course at college, you are no longer able to use the counselling service which actually was... I actually don't know that that's OK because I had established a relationship with that counsellor and then suddenly I couldn't go any more just because the course had ended and I found that incredibly difficult. So what I did then, which is what I had always done, was pack it away and tell myself that OK, I'd looked at it, I knew what the problem was, it was OK.'

This clearly illustrates the danger of arresting the process mid-way through when a counselling relationship is broken.

The centrality of this type of relationship is emphasised by the emergence of the category of 'finding voice and being heard' which contains the concept of being validated. If a safe environment is not provided for the client, the ability to speak out is prevented and further progress is barred. 'Finding voice' is a term coined by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) in their study of women's epistemological stance. Gilligan (1982) also emphasises the importance of voice, not only in terms of its tone, pitch and resonance but also its relationship to the psychological disposition of the speaker and its ability to reflect the 'core of the self'. She comments:

'To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act.' (1982: xvi)
Thus we have broad agreement on one of the core categories of the process of healing and transformation and the context in which it can take place, that of a caring and trustworthy therapeutic relationship of the style, perhaps, that Rogers (1951) advocates.

It is ‘in the emotional warmth of the relationship with the therapist [that] the client begins to experience a feeling of safety as he finds that whatever attitude he expresses is understood in almost the same way that he perceives it, and is accepted. He then is able to explore.’ (1951: 41)

I derived the following diagram on the contingent nature of the therapeutic relationship from the analysis of the interviews. This is shown in Figure (xii) below.

![Diagram showing the effects on the client of the degree of openness to exploration and the level of trust created by the counsellor/therapist](image_url)

In the above figure, I have tried to show that there are several different outcomes to the therapeutic relationship when placed against the levels of openness and trust. These have a direct bearing on whether or not the issue of anger can be dealt with. In some of the accounts from the women in the study, being unable to resolve the issue of anger was a serious stumbling block in their process and was often accounted for by over
intellectualisation, as may be found in the 'wheel spin' box where cognitive processing keeps the client away from tapping into her feelings.

Representing again, Emma’s comment:

'I never have achieved any particularly emotional release or catharsis because the way she was working was cognitive analysis and, it is very psychodynamic, and to some extent, again, that just fed in to my intellectual process which allows me to avoid a lot.'

Kate also chose a psychodynamic approach:

'I think [for] the first four years, I couldn’t access what I needed to deal with [because] I chose a psychodynamic therapist... [and] there is no relationship [in this approach]. There is in humanistic therapy, it’s all in the relationship... So the first four years didn’t feel helpful because there was no relationship.’

Heather:

'The fact that I wasn’t allowing myself to ‘feel’ was stopping me from moving on. You know, I’d done all this counselling and yet I still wasn’t OK, at some level I wasn’t OK, and it was because I hadn’t allowed myself to experience the pain and all of the stuff that went with it because I was too busy rationalising it. So I needed to do that [experience the feelings/pain/anger] in order to move on. I needed to experience it.’

So here we have an explicit set of contingencies. Unless the exploratory environment feels safe and secure and unless the therapist or counsellor is listening to and following the client (with the appropriate amount of challenge) the process will be delayed or arrested and anger will be denied or contained to detrimental effect. For one of the sample (only), this safe and accepting exploratory environment was provided by a friend who knew something of the territory. However, she eventually recommended that a trained person take over the therapeutic side of the relationship as she felt unable to ‘hold’ her friend in the way that she needed as she went through her process.

The area designated ‘silence’ in the above matrix is one where a perceived lack of safety and security renders the client speechless or blocked; where she is unable to find her own ‘voice’. Not only does the environment feel unsafe, but the counsellor or therapist may be so heavily invested in the direction of the therapy that she is unable to explore freely and meet the needs of the client. Sharon expresses her experience of such an environment like this:

'I was twenty-five and she [the counsellor] was a complete hippy...and I didn’t need to be validated because everybody believed me. I suppose I was in a really good
position so it wasn’t such a big thing to me having my story heard... but she made me do things like... well, you know, this inner child of yours has been deeply wounded, let’s hug some cushions. And I just felt really uncomfortable; as uncomfortable as when things had happened to me and so her idea of what would make me better, I found really [uncomfortable]. It’s almost like [she tried to] ‘infantilise’ me and I haven’t ever had that so don’t do it because I don’t know what that looks like. So don’t try and make me do that.’

This unwelcome therapeutic intervention resulted in the client leaving the counselling relationship without having her needs met. This highlights the importance of a counsellor being open to go in the direction informed by the client and being able to trust their intuition on the nature of the territory they need to explore.

A dependent relationship with a counsellor or therapist is one where the client transfers their power (or where the client’s power is taken) and responsibility for their own process is suspended.

Claire demonstrates her dependence upon first; a therapist and second; an astrologer for validation and approval. In this passage, she is seeking someone upon whom she can transfer responsibility for her memories of abuse. When her therapist failed to take this responsibility she sought another; someone who did not explore the terrain but rather rose to meet Claire’s needs for vindication.

‘I was in therapy at the time, and very good therapy, a good therapist and I said, I just said... but he wouldn’t tell me whether it had happened or not. I kept saying ‘am I imagining this?’ you know, ‘do you believe me?’ You know, all those things, but he actually wouldn’t commit himself and I also saw an astrologer around that time, or maybe slightly later, and she just told me what had happened... and also a very famous astrologer... and she told me what had happened to me and I said... I was amazed, you know... and I said, ‘how do you know this?’ and I said, you know, ‘but did it really happen?’ because for many many years there was always this question and she said ‘even if it wasn’t an actual physical fact it was a psychological fact and of course, it wouldn’t matter to her, she said it didn’t matter, but there was a time when it mattered to me... but to some people, it doesn’t matter but to me it did.’

Claire’s apparent confusion around the abuse continued throughout her interview and she returned on several occasions to the theme of validation. This was in contrast to other’s accounts where validation was not about confirming that the abuse had happened, but rather establishing that they were heard and believed.

‘I started having body memories as well so then I became more sure... I didn’t know what body memories were then but now I understand what that is and that that’s a very sure sign.’

Claire was also reassured by consulting with mediums:
'Through mediums, I've had messages from my father and he's always apologising, he's always crying, he gives me huge bouquets of white flowers, like he's giving my virginity back so I don't have doubts now that it ever happened.'

I have not selected these passages to cast doubt on Claire's experiences or memories but to point to the dependent quality of the relationship that she seeks, and is given, by helpers of various descriptions.

**A natural understanding of the process**

An intuitive understanding of the process of healing seemed to be apparent in most of the women's testimonies. They seemed to 'know' what to expect, what was necessary to move them on and what would hold them back, even if they colluded with this.

Emma describes the fine line that she exercised between colluding to avoid and genuinely seeking challenge that would move her into the territory that she feared; that of catharsis.

'I told her from the beginning that other therapeutic work I'd done, I had a sense of the therapist actually being quite frightened of me and frightened of what was opening up which, to some extent, because I'm very skilled with my defences, I was able to steer the therapy... I mean, this isn't a conscious thing, I didn't decide, 'well I'm going to get them to go my way with this' or 'I'm going to get them to avoid with me', but that is what would happen, is that I'd perceive myself as actually more powerful than them because they did, they would come along with me in avoidance and I was able to say that very clearly to her from the start before we... I agreed to engage in any therapy with her, that I was able to say that that's where things had gone wrong, I felt, in the past, and that,... although I didn't want to be bullied, or... and I knew I was walking a fine line between asking somebody to challenge me and re-abuse me, that that's what I wanted from her, I wanted her to be challenging and I wanted her not to follow me in my avoidance, that if she challenged at the 'right time', that was the key that I couldn't get hold of myself, that's the thing that I couldn't do in terms of avoiding because I would just go into a whole physical and psychological process of switching off my emotions and it's on me, I'm in it before I can be aware of it happening, although I can sit here coldly and talk about it, and I felt that if I had somebody who could pick that up and then wasn't afraid to keep going with me instead of, you know, wandering off with me and into avoidance that that would be um quite useful in a therapeutic process and she was willing to say, yes, she wasn't afraid to do that, although it might take some getting used to me to do it effectively, and she stuck by that.'

In this passage, Emma displays her understanding of the dynamics of her therapy and how she naturally responds to it. She sees that she has the power to sabotage herself yet she seeks a therapist who is strong enough to challenge her without taking her back into abuse. This excerpt demonstrates her ability to intellectualise, a place, by her own account, to which she often goes to avoid facing issues she knows need to be addressed. In her interview, it seemed that she was constantly making excuses for where she was in her process and
holding back from what she perceived to be an inevitable emotional release; a release that she saw as the gateway to her future psychological and emotional well-being. This resistance was very strong in her and she tended to project the responsibility for this onto her therapist. We have already seen her blame one of her therapists for not challenging her at the right time. 'He rescued at the wrong time. And yet, he didn't challenge at the right times.' I got the impression that she was almost proud of her ability to out-maneouvre those working with her but, whether this be the truth or not, she was sufficiently knowledgeable about the process to observe herself in it and 'manage' it according to her (subconscious) needs or (conscious) fears.

Emma may be intuitively anticipating having to pass through a process that Heather describes in her interview; an emotional overload that made her question whether she had the strength to continue her healing. Heather articulated it in this way:

'Once I'd actually started to experience all that emotion, I felt like I would never move on from that. I felt like almost like I didn't want to move on from that. I wanted to get away from the pain, what do I mean when I say I didn't...? I don't know what I mean by that. I think there was a bit of me that would have preferred it if.... It almost felt so difficult at that point that I could not see a time when I could move beyond it and I could not see a time when it could be different and I wanted it to, kind of, end there.'

Having emerged from a painful childhood, it seems harsh that the abused has to re-enter the pain in order to move beyond it. The structures and strategies that were assembled to achieve survival in the past must be deconstructed, examined and replaced in a new way. Resistance to the inevitability of this pain is at its strongest when the reward for embracing it is at its greatest. The contraction against what she anticipates will be more pain is almost palpable in Emma's testimony and it is seemingly holding her back from moving to the next stage of her healing. Emma was the only one in the sample group that was thus poised.

In a trusting therapeutic environment, the client is able to relinquish the self-protective strategies (such as intellectualisation) which ensure re-abuse (of any nature) does not occur. If such an environment is successfully achieved, the responsibility for protection is passed to the therapist who then has to achieve the delicate balance between over-nurturing and over-challenging, whilst at the same time being cognisant of the consequences of each. Walking this tightrope is frightening for both the client and the therapist, but walk it they must, with courage and care, if progress is to be made. The success of the process of healing and transformation rests on the ability to build this foundation.
Theoretical memos

Theoretical memos created as the analysis proceeds point the way to the formation of a substantive (or formal) theory. According to Glaser (1978) 'Memos are the theorising write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding.' (1978: 83) He goes on to say that: 'Without memos, there are no theoretical ideas to sort and densify with integrative richness and to write up.' (1978: 89) The centrality of the importance of theoretical memos is exemplified by the emergence of the categories, both core and dependent, in the process of analysis. This was indeed the case as themes emerged and re-emerged from the different transcripts in this study and as concepts, proven to be peripheral or irrelevant, dropped out of the analysis.

It was through the axial coding of the theoretical memos that the basic social psychological process (BSPP) was identified. This emerged as the core category to which the other categories were related and around which they were clustered. It was this, too, that provided the generative force of the theory. As Glaser (1978) notes, 'Most other categories and their properties are related to the [core category] and it is] through these relations that [the core category can function in] integrating the theory and rendering the theory dense and saturated as the relationships increase... [ultimately leading to] theoretical completeness.' (1978: 93)

A full copy of the theoretical codes for the first eight interviews showing coded data highlighted in yellow is held as Appendix V.

Comparative analysis

Glaser (1978) points out that comparative analysis can be used 'to compare conceptual units of a theory or theories, as well as data, in terms of categories and their properties and hypotheses. Such conceptual comparisons result... in generating, densifying and integrating the substantive theories into a formal theory by discovering a more parsimonious set of concepts with greater scope.' (1978: 150) Glaser and Strauss (1995) equally advocate drawing on others' data to make useful comparisons and increase sensitivity to the emergent core categories: 'Another slice of data that should be used is the 'anecdotal comparison'. Through his own experiences, general knowledge or reading, and the stories of others, the sociologist can gain data on other groups that offer useful comparisons.' (1995: 67) I have compared my model to others' models for these purposes.

What I note, as a result of this activity, is that many of the unwitting contributors to this comparative analysis focus on the cognitive, logico-deductive aspects of transformation, in

172
particularly, Edgar Schein (2004) who states that: 'I found Lewin's basic change model of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing to be a theoretical foundation upon which change theory could be built solidly. The key, of course, was to see that human change... was a profound psychological dynamic process that involved painful unlearning without loss of ego identity and difficult relearning as one cognitively attempted to restructure one's thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes.' (http://www.business.com) Indeed, the cognitive aspect of change and transformation peppers Schein's account of his elaboration of Lewin's model, betraying his predisposition and commitment to the cognitive dimension in human change. Mezirow (1991) too shows his true colours when he says that: 'Transformation theory grows out of the cognitive revolution in psychology and psychotherapy.' (1991: xiii) Indeed the central plank of his Theory of Transformation is critical reflection.

Although not a process, I reproduce the list of behaviours compiled by Baures (1994) that survivors reported they had adopted in order to 'overcome a catastrophic incident and learn to flourish.' They:

- accepted what they could not change [their fate]
- acknowledged a force greater than themselves and aligned with this force
- used denial to compartmentalise the event
- understood the integrative nature of life
- used creativity/writing to work through their grief
- many helped others as a means of helping themselves
- they went through a process of 'forgiveness'
- focused on hopeful visions of the future
- redirected and gave new meaning to their lives. (1994: 205-209)

This is a list of Baures' constructions derived from the information she gained from conducting the interviews. There are clearly marked similarities between the coded data, concepts and categories in my research and Baures' list, particularly in respect of the coping mechanism of denial and compartmentalisation; the need to work through a grief process (if not through the death of a loved one through another kind of 'loss' – a limb; a breast; the loss of dignity and choice through human rights abuse) and seeing 'life' as an integrative whole. It is also notable that in most cases, the interviewees sought a means of helping others, an impetus shared by the community of volunteers in this study. However, there are also some marked differences between my study and Baures' as well as some obvious omissions. Most clearly, Baures has not sought to identify a process of healing, merely a set of characteristics that are common to most interviewees' experiences and due to this, there is no real sense of progression conveyed by her list. Also, she does not throw any light on the
means by which her interviewees moved from one place to the next, the how of the journey rather than the what. I believe that my model is robust and helpful in addressing these issues and clarifying the full implications of the healing journey, particularly in respect of its potentially transformative effect and the means by which transformation is effected.

On the matter of forgiveness, I note that this was often a way of managing anger and not an act of forgiveness in the Christian sense. What I also notice is the absence of an emphasis on the actualising, individuating or ‘becoming’ process, although, having read through the accounts, this does seem to be in evidence. Indeed, Kushner, one of the interviewees already quoted in Sandford (1991), illustrates the growthful, but painful, process of losing his son to a rare disease and, although a religious man, he nonetheless had to question very premises on which his beliefs were based and undertake a critical review of himself and his life. (In Baures, 1994: 101-109) It is as if, in moments like these, everything is stripped away except one’s personal truth and that one finally meets one’s ‘whole self’; one’s individualised self – ‘a separate indivisible unity or whole’. (Jung, 1963: 415)

My over-riding preference is for those models that take account of the many channels that humans use to make sense of the world. These channels belong to the non-rational world of the conative, somatic, affective, intuitive and spiritual. Boyd and Myer’s (1988) model, which is considered by Dirkx (2000) to focus on the ‘deeper emotional and spiritual dimension of learning’ (2000: 1) is an example of a more inclusive model and one that reflects elements of my findings and Jung’s process of becoming a person. Boyd and Myer’s (1988) model is included in the table of comparisons that I have drawn up between some of the models explored and discussed in this thesis. I have attempted to map the various stages across each; although this exercise does disguise the richness of the categories in my model and in that of Boyd and Myer’s (1988) in respect of the different sense-making channels that are active in the transformative process. Nevertheless, I hope that this will demonstrate the broad congruity of my model with others and highlight the phases that are unique to the community of women in this study.

I reproduce Figure (xiii) again below for ease of reference.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unconscious coping strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Well being - feeling good</td>
<td></td>
<td>Old State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger – A means of focusing attention on dysfunctional behaviours</td>
<td>A disorientating dilemma</td>
<td>Shock and immobilisation</td>
<td>First shock - excitement and</td>
<td>Provisional adjustment - honeymoon</td>
<td>Shock</td>
<td>Disconfirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping strategies revealed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Numbness and panic</td>
<td>Minimisation and denial</td>
<td>Inner contradictions - uncertainty, losing confidence</td>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>Unfreezing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self examination with feelings of guilt or shame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Induction of guilt or survival anxiety)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disintegrating – Chaos, depression, 'black hole', fragmentation, things falling apart</td>
<td>Pining and protest Disorganisation and despair</td>
<td>Depression Letting go</td>
<td>Inner crisis - confusion, depression, crisis Letting go, accepting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding voice and being heard - being witnessed and validated</td>
<td>Recognition that one's discontent and the processes of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Creation of psychological safety or overcoming learning anxiety)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning-making - creating new meaning perspectives</td>
<td>A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions</td>
<td>Testing options Search for meaning</td>
<td>Exploring Testing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Cognitive redefinition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling - accepting responsibility for making decisions and taking action (Reflective/transformation action (Mezirow, 1994))</td>
<td>Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans Provisional trying of new roles Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships</td>
<td>Planning a course of action</td>
<td>Bargaining</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating - building a broader more inclusive worldview</td>
<td>A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective Restabilisation and reintegration</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Reconstruction and recovery</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Imitation and positive or defensive identification with role model)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distancing - dis-identifying with past personae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Scanning: Insight or trial and error learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Personal and relational refreezing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure (xiii) - Models of transformation compared to the one that emerged from this study which is shown in the first column.
Many interpretations of transition impose a curve on the process, the downward part of which represents the ‘decent into chaos’ or ‘falling off the edge’; the trough represents ‘the pit of despair’ or ‘the black hole’ and the upward curve represents the long climb during which new understanding is gained a meaning is re-made in order to reach a ‘higher plane’ or ‘the pinnacle of success’. Expressions such as ‘slipping back’ or ‘encountering an obstacle are frequently used to describe periods when progress is slow or blocked and does not result in the experience of change.

Likewise, the shape of the transformative journey is conveyed by the use of directional language in this study. Examples include, at the outset, ‘I was sinking lower and lower, and the self esteem was going down into my boots.’; ‘The whole thing started to go down again.’ (Emma) ‘I felt again, myself falling into the dark annihilated pit.’ and ’I have been often at the edge, very often at the edge.’ (Vicky) Rachel highlighted the shape of the transformative experience by saying: ‘And it’s been a steady ‘up’ ever since.’ And ’I don’t really want to go down there because I don’t think it would be helpful. I’ve done a lot of work on myself and what I try and do now is not rummage around in that ‘hole’. In recognition of this language, I feel I should adjust the representation of my own model by imposing a curve on the process thus:

Figure (xiv) - The healing journey showing the directional component as felt by those that travel along the path.
Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how the model of transformation emerged from the sample group using grounded theory as the research methodology and constant comparative analysis to raise concepts from the codes in the data. I have also tried to demonstrate the use of the theoretical memos in inducing meaning and orienting the data towards a fully densified and substantive theory. My purpose in doing this is to show where my model fits with others' and where it adds new insight or value. Although in many cases, the similarities between my model and others' outstrip the differences, mine nevertheless synthesises the different facets of others' models and adds to them where previously they were deficit. Whilst asserting this, I acknowledge that much richness is necessarily lost from the models by presenting them as stages without further explication. This may do them an injustice. In particular, I point towards Boyd and Myer's (1988) theoretical model which hypothesises the use of more than the cognitive channel of meaning-making, such as the spiritual and unconscious, and other processes of transformation such as discernment and grieving. They make their observations and derive their model, however, in the absence of empirical evidence, instead drawing on transformative education theory and the specific case of a woman named Mary who illustrates transformative education in process. Their purpose in doing this is to avoid 'unrestricted abstractions'. (1988:261)

I am surprised to see that there is little in Mezirow's model regarding the otherwise common phase of 'disintegration'; an absence which perhaps points to the fact that these women returners to education were 'choosers of' their process rather than 'chosen by' their process, as is arguably the case with the women in this study. In addition, although Mezirow doesn't emphasis the need for the women to be 'seen', 'heard' and 'validated' in their meaning-making process, he does signal their recognition of 'community' with those that have engaged with the transformative experience and a phase which he calls 'building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships.' Perhaps, together, these describe a similar dynamic to those in my study who sought relationship, support and validation with a counsellor or therapist with whom they were able to find voice and be heard.

I note too that the stage that I have termed 'distancing' is absent in all other models yet this was a clear message coming through the data and signalled a healthy separation from the abusive experience and the freedom to continue life on a more positive trajectory without the past tugging at their clothing, constantly reminding them that they should remain connected to their trauma.
As a result of my model being grounded in research, I suggest that it is more thorough, inclusive and robust than many of the others presented above. By mapping the journey from 'unconscious coping strategies' to 'distancing', my model covers a wider span of the process; provides more detail; gives greater insight into the different stages and is more informative in respect of the process of transformation.

As I complete this chapter, I am left with the conviction that the women who have completed (this iteration of) the healing journey have, in fact, undertaken a process of 'becoming' through transformative learning; becoming more confident, more integrated, more optimistic and more robust in the way that they engage with the world and take responsibility for the choices they make. Although there are no Cinderella endings of 'happy ever after', these women are nonetheless equipped to meet life where it is rather than cower in the dubious safety of denial and subjugation. To steal a quotation from Newman (1994), they have learned to 'see through themselves' and as a consequence are 'very difficult to fool.' (1994: 236)

As Jay comments on the second iteration of her transformative process:

'In terms of the framework, it was very similar in essence [to the time before] but this time I was coming to it with my understanding and... I had 'meaning' already. So the first time round I didn't, I had to find meaning through that process, this time round, it was like, I had the meaning. I had still to make more meaning, but it wasn't new to me.'

Although I have included many references to the literature in the foregoing chapter, I nevertheless include a fuller literature review of some of the most important texts to this study to derive understanding of the broader context in which this process sits. It has become apparent to me that there are many disciplines with links into this process but I will begin with an exploration of transformative learning and transition theory as this is the area, as we have seen, that offers the greatest number of overlaps with parts of my own model and current stage of thinking. I will continue with relevant texts taken from other research projects driven by women, for women.
CHAPTER SIX

Literature review

Introduction

The literature review serves several purposes. It provides data outside the substantive area for comparison once the basic social psychological process (BSPP) has been established and stabilised and it integrates the substantive data and the theoretical literature to create a rich and robust theory. Glaser (1978) warns that conducting a literature review before the discovered framework has emerged can cloud the perceptions of the researcher and offer tempting but distracting intellectual alleyways that lead to premature closure and a poorly fitting theory. To avoid these traps, Glaser advocates reading a 'neat' work on the problem. By this, I assume he means relevant works pertaining to the research area. However, he goes on to say that 'Going outside an area for generating formal theory is, of course, a must. It is the way it is done: comparing a wide range of diverse substantive areas to increase the level of generality.' (Glaser, 1978: 50-51) I have endeavoured to adopt this 'both/and' approach in my literature review but due to the breadth of the territory, it has been difficult to maintain the 'neatness' of the task.

Glaser reinforces the importance of withholding the temptation to read extensively in the substantive area of study by stating that: 'during data collection, coding, [writing] and sorting of memos, the analyst should read in other fields so as not to pre-empt his thought regarding the significant variables in the substantive area under research. The analyst should continue this rule throughout the initial draft if his sorting has not reached a firm integration. This maximises on another dimension, the emergence of his theory.' (Glaser, 1978: 139) Again, I have taken these sentiments to heart but find that whilst thinking I was not reading in the substantive area, I roamed into a wide range of topics that shed light, albeit obliquely, on the substantive area. It would seem impossible not to trap oneself in this way and remain completely free from external influences; although being aware of them is perhaps the best guard against deflecting the focus and point of the research.

As has already been pointed out in chapter one, the results of reading in the substantive area and seeking experiential incidents to corroborate the data have been integrated with the discussion and presentation of findings. Although not arrived at through systematic research, experiential incidents have been derived from personal experience and anecdotal evidence collected informally from others and through their written work. This approach is legitimised by Glaser as means of substantiating the emergent theory. (Glaser, 1978: 51)
In considering which literature to review, I recognised again the enormous breadth of the topic I had chosen to study and the wide choice of fields to which I could go for validation and inspiration and to identify the gaps where I could add value and locate my theory. It seemed that myriad disciplines held relevance to the study and I became overwhelmed by the choices and how to pare these down into a manageable and meaningful load. In response to this dilemma, I asked myself a number of questions; What did I set out to achieve when I conceived this research project? Where are my conclusions leading me? What are the implications of my alignment to certain theorists? and How can I add value to the work already undertaken in this area? In answering these questions for myself, I came to a strategy for my literature review; one that would help me enter the field from a place of common interest whilst remaining open to the natural unfolding of the topic and cognisant of the need to be thorough, rigorous and focused in my thinking.

The basic social psychological process (BSPP) that was revealed in the study was one of 'transformative learning as a way of becoming'. It was to transformative learning theory as outlined by Jack Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1990, 1991, 1994, 2000), therefore, that I first went in my reading. However, this proved to be primarily cognitive in focus, denying the many references to body/mind/spirit transformation that were included in the testimonies of the women in the study. The question was also raised in my mind that, because the testimonies of the women exhibited such similar characteristics, the process I was studying was one that was integral to the natural personal growth patterns that carry people through their lives. For this reason, I felt that I had to look beyond transformative learning theory and into the realms of personality development; a broad term that embraces a spectrum of human evolutionary theory from Erikson (1963, 1968, 1980, 1997) through Kegan (1982) and Rogers (1951, 1961, 1964) to Wilber (1996, 2000). However, having spent considerable time reviewing these texts, I came to the conclusion that I was veering away from the purpose of my study and diluting its impact through attempting to locate it within some of the grander theories that had been promulgated and discussed for many years. I therefore decided to omit a full review of these texts and only refer to them in the body of the thesis when I felt that it added something essential to the point I was making. Instead, I went to those studies that felt 'closer to home' such as the major piece of work conducted by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) on women's ways of knowing; the epistemological stances used by women to make sense of the world. Other 'close' studies have already been incorporated into the writing. These included: Alex Nelson's (1997) study on imagining and critical reflection in autobiography: an odd couple in adult transformative learning and Carol Gilligan's 'in a different voice' concerning psychological theory and women's development to name a few.
Although I embarked on this study with an idea that the process of transformative learning as part of personal development was an explicitly spiritual endeavour, I have not seen sufficient evidence in the data to confirm that this was perceived to be the case. I have therefore left this exploration where it belongs; in the speculative domain.
Theories of Transformative Learning

In Mezirow's (1978) early work on Perspective Transformation, he cites four different kinds of learning (How to do something; how something works; learning what others expectations are and the formation of a concept of 'self'). before introducing a fifth, that of learning about 'meaning perspectives'. He defines a 'meaning perspective' as 'a structure of cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated to, and transformed by, one's past experience. A meaning perspective is a personal paradigm for understanding ourselves and our relationships.' (1978: 101) In a later paper, Mezirow (1994) adds to the musculature of his earlier definition of perspective transformation by saying that:

'Perspective transformation involves achieving a form of meta-reflection in which, if successful, we not only see the world and ourselves more clearly, we see ourselves seeing the world. We perceive our perceptions. We are aware of awareness.' (1994: 239)

There are some situations, triggered perhaps by a sudden personal crisis, which render our 'old' meaning perspective inadequate and demand that we look for another, perhaps one that is held by somebody else. As this is critically reviewed, integrated and consciously adopted; and as one's self concept is reconceptualised as a result of the new meaning perspective, transformation occurs. This new meaning perspective has the properties of 'thought, feeling and will' (Mezirow, 1978: 105) and involves a decision to take action – or not to take action if the will to persevere against the odds is not sufficiently developed. This early paper contained one of the few instances of Mezirow broadening his definition of meaning perspective to include channels other than the cognitive. He revisited this sentiment again in Mezirow (1991) when he proclaimed:

'I want to avoid the suggestion of separation of the cognitive from the conative and affective dimensions of apperception and the psychological from the cultural in the learning process. Since all these dimensions are integrated in the concept of meaning, I have chosen the term meaning perspective to refer to the structure of assumptions within which one's past experience assimilates and transforms new experience.' (1991: 42)

However, as it is true that Mezirow does not often dwell on channels other than the cognitive for creating meaning, it can only be assumed that cognition is the mainstay of his theory. I use this latter quote heavily, therefore, on behalf of Mezirow because it goes a short way to counter the criticisms levelled against him. (See Taylor, 1998; Hart, 1990 and Collard and Law, 1989.)
Later, Jack Mezirow (1991) criticises psychological theories in general, but behaviourism and humanistic psychology in particular, for neglecting to expand on how meaning is construed, validated and reformulated and argues that there is need of a learning theory that explains how adults make sense or meaning of their experiences. Specifically, his learning theory seeks to explain the processes by which meaning perspectives are changed or transformed. Mezirow defines transformative learning in the following way: 'Transformative learning [as opposed to instrumental learning which draws on deductive logic] involves reflective assessment of premises, a process predicated upon still another logic, one of movement through cognitive structures by identifying and judging presuppositions.' (Mezirow, 1991: 6) Mezirow sees the mechanism for transformation as the differentiation and integration of meaning schemes ('specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgements and feelings that constitute interpretations of experience' (Mezirow, 1991: 5-6)) in progressively wider contexts. Transformation of a meaning scheme does not necessarily result in the transformation of a meaning perspective although a transformation in meaning perspective always involves a transformation in meaning scheme. We can change our knowledge, we can change what we believe to be true, we can even change our attitudes and feelings about something but until we place these in a new frame of reference, we have not transformed our meaning perspective. Reflection on content or process may result in a transformed meaning scheme whereas a deeper reflection on the assumptions underpinning the meaning scheme may result in the transformation of a meaning perspective. A change in meaning perspective is the 'higher order' of the two transformations according to Mezirow's viewpoint and is more likely to involve a 'sense of self' (1991: 167) (as opposed to one's beliefs, attitudes and emotional reactions which are merely expressions of the self). It can be said therefore, that transformation occurs through higher levels of awareness, the critical reflection and reappraisal of assumptions, the ability to reinterpret a previously learned experience in a new context and the ability to engage in rational, reflective discourse in order to take action.

I was interested in exploring further the distinction that Mezirow (1991) makes between the transformation of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives and sought to find other's work that would reinforce and build upon his assertions. I turned to the work of Wilber (1996) for this explication. Wilber (1996) proposes that 'each level of consciousness consists of a deep structure and a surface structure.' (1996: 46) The deep structure is like a paradigm, or in Mezirow's terms, a meaning perspective, and the surface structure is merely an outward manifestation of the deeper structure, again, in Mezirow's terms, a meaning scheme. Wilber goes on to say that movement of a surface structure is a translation whilst movement of the deep structure is a transformation. This becomes an interesting distinction when analysing the process described by the women in this study as it helps us understand whether they have transformed their meaning perspective (and engaged in a life-stage
transition as described by personality development theorists) or engaged in a series of translations (within their current life-stage). This difference, I believe, is exemplified by the experiences of Emma, a member of the research pool, who stated that she was particularly skilled in the use of intellectualisation as a defence strategy and who believed that this prevented her from achieving 'any particularly emotional release or catharsis'. At the time of the interview, she was anticipating such an emotional release and placed a great deal of significance upon this prospect as the mechanism for personal transformation and change. Her continual tendency to intellectualise, I believe, resulted in changes in her meaning schemes but not changes to the deeper emotional structures that would result in a change of meaning perspective. A passage from Heather's interview reinforces this point about the need to process on the deeper emotional level to effect a transformation of meaning perspective. Heather had just made the statement that the 'inside has joined the outside' and was reflecting on how this had occurred.

[When I started working] 'with Geraldine, I started off like that [intellectualising as a defence strategy] but I couldn't maintain it... When I was assaulted, that tapped in to stuff in a way that got beyond the intellectual, and I was quite seriously injured and even as a child I was seriously injured, a few times, and it took me straight back in to that so, although with Geraldine, I kind of was able to keep it on that intellectual level for quite a lot of the time... eventually, I couldn't.... that was a defence mechanism and I actually couldn't.... I think she was very skilled as well, and I couldn't maintain that any longer. It actually was very difficult when I couldn't maintain it any longer... When I couldn't maintain that defence mechanism it meant I had to look at, I had to look at how it had affected me emotionally, I think, or I connected with it, I didn't look at it, I connected with it. And, because I connected with it, that was extremely difficult. It was extremely painful to connect with it and I thought I would have a break down. I thought I was having a break down actually, and that's why I couldn't work. I couldn't function, in truth. I could not function... But I feel like I needed to have that break down. It was like a break down of the defences, if you see what I mean?

From Emma's and Heather's accounts amongst others, I made the observation that cognitive processing is necessary but not sufficient to effect a transformation.

Mezirow places his transformative theory in the context of constructivism and sees, as its seedbed, the cognitive developments in psychology that have found that it is not so much what happens to people that matters, but how they interpret their experiences. (1991: xiii)

Mezirow's transformation theory is summarised below:

- Meaning perspectives constitute codes that govern the activities of perceiving, comprehending and remembering

- The symbols that we project onto our sense perceptions are filtered through meaning perspectives
- The resulting 'loaded' perception is objectified through language which has no direct relationship to the objects or events of the external world.
- Meaning is an interpretation.
- Meaning is construed prelinguistically through cues and symbolic modes and through language.
- Uncritically assimilated meaning perspectives serve as perceptual and interpretive codes in the construal of meaning. These meaning perspectives constitute our 'boundary structures' in perceiving and comprehending new data.
- We allow our meaning system to diminish our awareness of how things really are in order to avoid anxiety, creating a zone of blocked attention and self-deception.
- Critical to adult development is the ability to reflect on assumptions that have formerly been accepted uncritically.
- The process of justifying or validating communicated ideas and the presuppositions of prior learning is crucial to adult learning.
- Transformative learning involves critical reflection on assumptions and the application of cognitive structures to judgement.
- Memory is an inherent function of perception and cognition, an active process of recognising again and reinterpreting a previously learned experience in a new context. This may result in a new meaning perspective.
- Age involves changes reflecting qualitatively different dimensions of context awareness and greater integration of the cognitive dimensions of learning.
- The enhanced capacity in an adult to validate prior learning through reflective discourse and to act upon the resulting insights. (Taken and adapted from Mezirow, 1991: 4-7)

As a philosopher and sociologist, Habermas has, in Mezirow's view, created a new foundation for understanding adult learning through his Theory of Communicative Action which provides the broad cultural context for transformation theory. Being able to take part in communicative action (verbal or written communication) requires a shared knowledge of language as well as a shared set of cultural values, attitudes and beliefs - or meaning perspectives. Understanding the context in which, or about which, communication takes place enables the validity of what is said to be judged, points of views to be discussed and opinions to be heard. Inseparable from the activity of validity testing is the use of rationality to weigh evidence and support (or challenge) arguments rather than taking on the voice of some authority, whether it be theoretical, social or political, that could eclipse the clarity and originality of rational thought. If validity claims are made implicitly, Habermas advocates the use of 'argumentation' to expose them to challenge and debate for the purpose of vindication. Communicative competence, therefore, is the term used to refer to someone
who has the ability to engage rational processes in validity testing of implicit or explicit claims about the world. In summary, Habermas (1981) stresses that 'the concept of reaching an understanding suggests a rationally motivated agreement among participants that is measured against criticisable validity claims. The validity claims (propositional truth, normative rightness, and subjective truthfulness) characterise different categories of a knowledge embodied in symbolic expressions.' (Habermas, 1981: 75) He goes on to say that 'Understanding is coming to a common definition of a subject.' (Habermas, 1981: 139) It is clear, whilst looking at Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action, where Mezirow's influences lie.

Mezirow states that: 'Movement in the validation process... goes from the identification of a problem, through reflection, empirical or consensual validation, and imaginative insight to making a new interpretation. Every phase of the validation process is affected by our meaning perspectives which may be transformed as a result of the premise reflection.' (Mezirow, 1991: 66) It is essential that the negotiation of meaning perspectives takes place in a context that is free from coercion or vested interests. Habermas identifies three dynamics involved in communicative action, these are 'the lifeworld' - 'a culturally transmitted and linguistically organised stock of interpretative patterns', the transformative nature of learning - through the activity of critical reflection and social interaction - 'the self-regulating system of society and social interaction that serve as the 'boundary-maintenance system' of the lifeworld.' (Mezirow, 1991: 69)

In respect of learning, Habermas identifies three fields upon which learning takes place, the technical - instrumental learning (defined by Habermas as learning to control and manipulate the environment through cause and effect analysis and task oriented problem solving employing the use of deductive reasoning); the practical - communicative learning (defined by Habermas as learning to understand others using rational discourse and critical reflection in order to arrive at developmentally advanced (more inclusive) meaning perspectives) and the emancipatory - learning through critical self-reflection (which also has implications for the former two fields). Mezirow (1991) speaks for Habermas when he places 'critical self-reflection' as the means of engaging in emancipatory learning. Through challenging the moral, ideological, social and cultural constructs within which we live and raising our meaning perspectives to the light for scrutiny, we can each achieve emancipation and overcome the feeling that we have no control over the way we live our lives and the choices we make. Using imagination and intuition to inform metaphorical abductive thought, we can move from the concrete to the abstract to find new ways of resolving distorted meaning perspectives and arrive at a new understanding. Critical self-reflection demands openness to different views and perspectives and an interest in the way our history and
biography have expressed themselves over our lifetime. It requires a ‘searching’ attitude towards our presuppositions that sustain our fears, inhibitions and behaviours and their impact on our relationships. Emancipatory learning is often transformative, as many of the women in the study have found. Through learning to understand their underpinning cultural and psychological assumptions and the way that these have forged the patterns of their behaviour that have become so debilitating, the women interviewees have been helped towards the development of greater autonomy and decision making capability.

As has already been noted, the emphasis in Habermas’s Theory of Communicative Action, and therefore, on Mezirow’s Theory of Transformation, is primarily on cognitive processes with less appreciation for other human sensing or acting mechanisms such as intuition and conation. Indeed, Habermas argues that Max Weber’s (1864-1920) ‘intuitions’ ‘point in the direction of a selective pattern of rationalisation’. My view is that transformative learning is denuded by rendering it to the cognitive processing channel and more precisely, to critical reflection. This, on its own, does not necessarily lead to perspective transformation (‘more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative perspectives’ (Mezirow, 1990: 14)), it is just as likely to lead one into a self-reinforcing cycle of confusion with no inspired means of exit.

Dirkx (2000) too, writes that dominant views of transformation theory emphasise rational, cognitive processes related to critical reflection. However, he points towards a different perspective offered by Boyd which stresses the deeper emotional and spiritual dimensions of transformative learning. This work is drawn from ‘depth psychology’ which acknowledges the role that the dynamic unconscious plays in shaping our thoughts, feelings and actions.

Mezirow acknowledges that the personal quality that accompanies the restructuring of one’s reality is courage and that it must be supported and sustained by others who share the meaning structure such as a therapist, educator or friend. Boyd and Myers (1988) agree with Mezirow when they state that ‘courage, honesty, will-power and work are demanded of oneself on such journeys.’ They elaborate by saying that: ‘the way of transformation’ (1988: 282) is not for the weak or to be travelled in isolation’. (1988: 283) This has obvious resonances with, and implications for, the research being presented here. We have already seen the importance of a client being supported by a counsellor or therapist through the identification of the category named ‘finding voice and being heard’ within which lies the need to build a trusting, supportive and validating relationship. It is as a result of such a relationship that language and mutually agreed meaning can be shared and the client can experience being heard witnessed and validated. It is through such a relationship too, that discourse and critical reflection is enabled.
Mezirow points out that contemporary existential thinkers agree with Hegel and Marx that full transformation occurs in three phases: (1) Alienation; (2) Reframing and (3) Contractual solidarity (during which one can participant again in society from a newly formed, more inclusive, meaning perspective.) This is not unlike Lewin's (1951) three phase change model that he developed for use within organisations: *un-freeze* the existing situation; instigate a *change* that moves the old situation to the new situation and *refreeze* the situation to ensure that the change becomes permanent. From these deceptively simple models, it would appear that 'change' may be rendered to three distinct stages, but what of the process that moves the individual, or the organisation in Lewin's case, from one change stage to the next?

Edgar Schein (2004) has adapted Kurt Lewin's model to enable him to move from the understanding of 'planned change' to a process of 'managed learning' in his organisational development work. Schein adds some additional details to explicate the three main levels. These are:

1. **Disconfirmation** – Schein maintains that all forms of learning and change start with some form of dissatisfaction or frustration generated by data that disconfirm expectations or hopes.

2. **Induction of Guilt or Survival Anxiety** - The disconfirmation must arouse 'survival anxiety'; the feeling that if we do not change we will fail to meet our needs.

3. **Creation of Psychological Safety or Overcoming of Learning Anxiety** - unless sufficient psychological safety is created, the disconfirming information will be denied or in other ways defended against.

4. **Cognitive Redefinition** - frame braking or reframing. It occurs by taking in new information that has one or more of the following impacts: 1) **semantic redefinition** - we learn that words can mean something different from what we had assumed; 2) **cognitive broadening** - we learn that a given concept can be much more broadly interpreted than what we had assumed and 3) **new standards of judgment or evaluation** - we learn that the anchors we used for judgment and comparison are not absolute, and if we use a different anchor our scale of judgment shifts.

5. **Imitation and Positive or Defensive Identification with a Role Model** - Cognitive re-definition occurs when the learner has become unfrozen and has opened up to new information.

6. **Scanning: Insight or Trial and Error Learning** - The learner searches or scans by reading, travelling, talking to people, hiring consultants, entering therapy, going back to school.
7. **Personal and Relational Refreezing** - The main point about refreezing is that new behaviour must be to some degree congruent with the rest of the behaviour and personality of the learner or it will simply set off new rounds of disconfirmation that often lead to unlearning the very thing one has learned.

Although Schein's model holds many similarities to my own, it nonetheless, again, almost exclusively emphasises the cognitive path and excludes other sense making mechanisms available to an individual such as intuition, instinct, inspiration and aspiration.

Before ending his paper, Mezirow (1978) introduces the idea that successive changes in meaning perspectives, named 'decentration' by Bruner (1973) and Piaget (in Kegan, 1982), are a consequence of the maturing process and that we are all bound to do this as we grow. (Decentration is the process of integrating increasingly abstract perspectives that remove us from our local perspective.) This, I believe, resonates with Boyd (1991) and Boyd and Myers’ (1988) premise that transformative learning is grounded in Jung's concept of individuation, a premise I concur with, although Mezirow does not go on to make this explicit, nor does he revisit this concept in his later work. Jung (1921, quoted in Jacoby, 1985) defines individuation as a:

>'process by which individual beings are being formed and differentiated; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a being distinct from the general, collective psychology. Individuation, therefore, is a process of differentiation having for its goal the development of the individual personality... Since individuality is a prior and physiological datum, it also expresses itself in psychological ways. Any serious check to individuality therefore, is an artificial stunting.’ (Jung, 1921, paragraphs 757-758 in Jacoby, 1985: 94)

The definition of transformative learning is not complete without reference to the impact of 'transformed' individuals on society. Paulo Freire (1983) in Loughlin (1993) cites praxis (a learning experience that may lead not only to individual freedom, but the emancipation of society) as one of the central concepts in transformative learning. A major assumption of his theory is that the individual must create and recreate society and thus ultimately participate in the shaping of society's historical process (1993: 4). Greene (1978) in her compulsion to encourage individuals to choose freedom as they seek to interpret their individuality says that 'our struggle for emancipation involves both our choice to 'transcend passivity' and to act by transforming ourselves and the world.’ (1978: 245) In her book entitled Women's Perceptions of Transformative Learning Experiences within Consciousness-raising, Loughlin (1993) describes the intended outcome of her research as 'the development of recommendations for education programs that seek to facilitate learning experiences which contribute to the development of change agents for social reconstruction.’ (1993: 5) again,
reinforcing the role of transformative learning in societal change. In his later writing, Mezirow also places emphasis not only on the individual but also the societal context in which he or she lives. 'Transformative learning has both individual and social dimensions and implications. It demands that we be aware of how we come to our knowledge and as aware as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives.' (Mezirow & Associates, 2000: 8)

Boyd and Myers (1988) believe that to understand transformative learning it is important that the ego is not seen as the sole initiator of behaviour as a large part of behaviour is governed by other components of the Self in the subconscious. They define 'Self' as a complex matrix of components, each of which plays a unique and critical role in an individual's life. These include the shadow and persona; the animus and anima. They point out that often, in order to bring about a transformation, the ego must encounter the shadow by seeking it out or by allowing it to be 'heard', perhaps through dreams, 'voices', imagination or meditation. I would add, as a result of my findings from this study, that a safe and supportive environment in which one can 'speak out' one's truth, also qualifies as the context for a transformative experience.

Theories of transition

In opposition to what Boyd and Myers (1988) call Mezirow's 'fundamental orientation which asserts the dominance of the rational and the marginality of the extrarational', they propose 'discernment' as a way of knowing that stands in contrast to critical reflectivity and which leads to personal illumination gained from seeing things according to their relational wholeness. (1988: 274) Discernment comprises receptivity (staying with discomfort), recognition (the sense that there is something to be looked at that involves the individual) and grieving (the inseparable dynamic of psycho-spiritual adjustment to loss). Boyd and Myers assert that 'it is discernment, especially occurring within the person's expression of grief, which stands as the primary condition for the possibility of personal growth... This is in sharp contrast to Mezirow's cognitive orientation.' (1988: 276) The process of grieving, is said by Boyd and Myers to occur in four phases: (1) Numbness and panic; (2) Pining and protest; (3) Disorganisation and despair and finally (4) Restabilisation and reintegration. (1988: 277-278) If this process is considered to be one of 'transition', it may be compared to Brammer and Abrego's (1981) stages of life transition which, I repeat for clarity, include: (1) Shock and immobilisation, (2) Denial, (3) Depression, (4) Letting go, (5) Testing options, (6) Searching for meaning and (7) Integration. (1991: 157) In turn, these bear a remarkable similarity to the phases leading to death that were identified by Kübler-Ross (1969) in her
studies of death and dying. Her stages include: (1) Denial and isolation, (2) Anger, (3) Bargaining, (4) Depression, (5) Acceptance.

The work that Kübler-Ross undertook on death and dying, along with the work of life-stage psychologists such as Levinson (1978), Sheehy (1976) and Hollis (1993) gave rise to the term 'transition psychology' and resulted in a greater understanding of, and provision for, those who entered crisis both in the professional (Torbert, 1976; and Bridges, 1991, 2003) and personal (Adams et al, 1976 and Williams, 1999) domains. Models of transition generally describe how an individual responds to crisis, change or loss. It was emphasised by Dai Williams (1999) in his paper presented to the British Psychological Society's Occupational Psychology Conference, January 1999 (http: //www.eoslife.co.uk/transprac.htm) that not all changes cause transitions and not all transitions are necessarily triggered by 'negative' events. In some instances, the most challenging transitions are those that are considered to be positive, such as the arrival of a new child, moving house, getting married or graduating from University. However, any transition offers an opportunity for growth. At the Conference, Williams presented his model of the transition cycle which he adapted from Adams et al. (1976). This is shown below in Fig. (xv)

Figure (xv) - Phases and features of the transition cycle (adapted from Adams et al by Williams)

Not only are the phased models of Williams (1999), Boyd and Myers (1988), Brammer and Abrego (1981) and Kübler-Ross (1969) similar to that of Mezirow's (1991) perspective transformation but also they show marked similarity to the process identified in the transformative healing journey of the sample of volunteers in this research study. This is further explored in Chapter five and reinforces the notion that the group of women in this study were indeed moving through a transitional process that satisfied the characteristics of
transformative learning as well as showing a sharp resemblance to the transition, grief or loss curve, which embrace many of the channels of meaning-making beyond the cognitive.

Boyd and Myers (1988) point out that the grieving process is cyclical, not linear, rather it involves small fluctuating movements to and from the various stages through which the individual slowly finds meaning based upon their expanding consciousness. Indeed, they resemble it to ‘climbing a mountain by following a path which circles the mountain’s four sides. Whilst climbing, the person arrives at the north side again and again. But each time, the field of vision is broader.’ (1988: 279) This ‘back and forth’ motion was also identified by the research group and contributed to the development of the conical spiral model that was used to describe the process of transformative learning as a way of ‘becoming’.

Re-alighting, for the moment upon the cognitive channel, still further validation of aspects of the transitional models discussed above were found in Mezirow’s (1975) study of women returning to study. Using structured interviews with eighty-three women on twelve programmes along with fifty alumnae of the programmes and the facilitators on these and other programmes, Mezirow identified ten phases of perspective transformation which show similarity to the group of women who volunteered to be interviewed in this study. The ten phases were:

1. A disorientating dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationship and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships and
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective. (Mezirow, 1991: 168-169)

Morgan (1987) verified these phases after studying thirty women who had been through life changing crises but distilled them down to: (1) Shock and devastation, (2) Pain and rejection, (3) Immobilisation and depression, (4) Gaining confidence, (5) Exploring options (6) Decision-making and finally, (7) The establishment of independence. (In Mezirow, 1991: 169)
Mezirow (1991) cites the reinforcing works of two further researchers into the realm of perspective transformation; Williams (1986) and Hunter (1980) and in each case, similar phases emerged. He acknowledges that transformation processes are 'difficult' for the learner and create points during which the learner may be tempted to forego the benefits of the process. The first is at the outset when the learner must engage in critical self-reflection and the second is the point at which one requires conative strength to act on one's insights.

Taylor (1989), reported in Mezirow (1991) developed a six-step model of transformative learning that begins with 'trigger' events that force the learner to confront reality. In her terms, this results in the 'Generation of Consciousness'; phase one in her model. This is followed by the 'Transformation of Consciousness' which embraces the decision to change and sudden or slow revelation – an insight or a gradual dawning of awareness. Finally, phase three, the 'Integration of Consciousness' which comprises making a personal commitment to follow through on the change and a grounding of that commitment through the development of new skills, understandings and behaviours. (Mezirow, 1991: 172-174)

Other studies of perspective transformation reported in Mezirow include: Preciphs (1989), Young (1988), Hough (1990), Dudley (1987) and Daniels (1990), all of which, like Morgan (1987), Taylor (1989), Williams (1986) and Hunter (1980), are contained within unpublished doctoral or Masters dissertations. The fact that Mezirow has drawn so heavily upon these unpublished empirical studies to validate his theoretical tapestry of transformative learning is concerning. In my view, although these researchers have collectively prepared the ground on which an understanding of transformative learning sits, most of them have focused on the individual transformative experience in a variety of different settings without due regard to the role of emotions or other channels of meaning-making thereby placing an overemphasis upon critical reflection. This relegates transformation theory to more or less one-dimension, denying the richness and colour that such a life-changing phenomenon undoubtedly contains.

Taylor (1998), in his critical review of The Theory and Practice of Transformative Learning, has undertaken a review of forty of the unpublished works that furnish Mezirow's arguments (some of which are referred to above) and concludes that: 'From this recent review emerges a supportive, but critical, picture of transformative learning theory. It reveals a learning process that needs to recognise to a greater degree the significant influence of context, the varying nature of the catalyst of the process, the minimisation of the role of critical reflection and increased role of other ways of knowing and relationships, and an overall broadening of the definitional outcome of a perspective transformation.' (1998: 1) I would like to share his words and align with his findings to reinforce their significance to my own.
In spite of the wide range of empirical studies reviewed by Taylor (1998: 69-74) there seem to be none that are of the same nature as my own. It would seem that research into the aftermath of primal wounding is confined to outcomes, offering therapies and counselling as a panacea, and not processes which might lead to an understanding of healing and its potentially transformative effects. Such studies include those by: Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans and Herbison (1993), Ganje-Fling and McCarthy (1996), Perrott, Morris, Martin and Romans, (1998) and Reinert and Smith (1997).

To add to his coterie of critics, Hart (1990) accuses Mezirow of losing Habermas’ radical impetus whilst employing his concept of communicative action in the development of his theory of emancipatory learning. The political ‘social action’ dimension is inherent in Habermas’ overall body of work and his concept of communicative action intrinsically points to radical social action. (As indeed does the concept of ‘praxis’ in the work of Paulo Freire (1983) reported by Loughlin, 1993.) This tension, Hart argues, is lost in Mezirow’s uncoupling of ‘communicative and instrumental-strategic action where the issues of power... are located.’ (1990: 127) Hart adds her agreement to the statement by Collard and Law (1989) that: ‘Mezirow is unsure about where to locate his emancipatory theory.’ (1989: 105) She goes on to say that: ‘Because he does not place the issue of power and its relationships of dominance at the centre of such a theory, Mezirow’s treatment of the issue is uneven as well as somewhat non-committal.’ (1990: 127) Whilst I agree that a healthy emancipatory learning environment is distinguished by dominance free forms of human interaction, in his determination to place educators outside the power-bound relationship where indoctrination can cloud the meaning perspectives of the learners (a dubious possibility unless the educator is politically or ideologically colourless) Mezirow runs the danger of shrivelling the ground upon which critical self-reflection leading to personal development and/or social action can take place.

Although I have alighted upon the theory of transformative learning as espoused by Jack Mezirow (1991), I would like to point out that I do not ‘swallow it whole’. As already highlighted, the fulcrum of theory is critical reflection\textsuperscript{20}, a purely cognitive activity that apparently diminishes the use of other sense-making channels. Also, as has already been highlighted, I have some reservations about the paradigm within which his transformation theory sits and the subtle implications it may carry in respect of the perceived authenticity of

\textsuperscript{20} Critical reflection is defined by Mezirow (1990) as an: ‘Assessment of the validity of the presuppositions of one’s meaning perspectives and examination of their sources and consequences.’ A meaning perspective is also defined by Mezirow. He terms it as: ‘The structure of assumptions that constitutes a frame of reference for interpreting the meaning of an experience.’ (1990: xvi)
the women's childhood experiences which I feel it is important to accept and honour without question.

A brief perspective on personality theory

Although I have indicated the exclusion of personality theory from my literature review, I nevertheless thought it would be beneficial to reproduce some of the 'high spots' in respect of their relevance to my research.

The 'invitation' by society to move through life stages is named by Erikson as a 'psychosocial crisis'. 'Each successive stage and crisis has a special relation to one of the basic elements of society and this, for the simple reason that the human life-cycle and man's institutes have evolved together.' (Erikson, 1963: 224) The term crisis may be understood as a 'tension' or a 'turning point' which must be resolved before the next stage can be reached. Each stage builds upon the resolution and integration of the previous one. They appear at specific life stages, not specific chronological ages, although there are age ranges in which crises may be expected. The resolution of a crisis leads the individual to the next psychological task to be mastered and draws together the somatic, intrapsychic and social realities of the person. (Loughlin, 1993: 13)

Kegan (1982), in a similar manner to Erikson, is of the belief that human development proceeds according to a predetermined set of tensions that move an individual from one 'evolutionary truce' to another. Drawing on the work of Piaget, Kegan distils two points. Firstly, that each of the Piagetian stages is the consequence of a subject-object balance and secondly, that the evolutionary motion is characterised by differentiation or emergence from embeddedness (decentration – the loss of an old centre) and reintegration (recentration – the creation of a new centre) otherwise termed, assimilation and accommodation. He suggests that 'human development involves a succession of renegotiated balances... which come to organise the experience of the individual in qualitatively different ways.' (1982: 81) Although this organising activity is essentially cognitive, Kegan asserts that it is no less affective as it brings with it a 'felt experience' of movement as new meaning is made. He suggests therefore that the source of our emotions is the phenomenological experience of evolving – 'of defending, surrendering and reconstructing a centre.' (1982: 81) The rhythm created by the perpetual impetus to achieve a subject-object balance demands that meaning is 'let go' and 're-created' at each stage. This 'letting go' brings with it the concomitant affects of loss, anxiety and depression as separation from the subject, from which the individual has not yet fully disembedded, is experienced as separation from and loss of the self. Together, these descriptions of an individual's movement through their life stages, lead me to suspect that the
women who have shared their stories in this study, are, in fact, describing a life-stage transition, the specificity of which may be illuminated by Kegan’s (1982) model.

In Kegan’s (1982) five stage model, each stage is only a temporary solution to the tension between inclusion and distinctness; one ‘resolution’ or relaxation of the tension, leading to a proportionately increased tension in the other direction. I will not outline Stages 0, 1, 2 and 5 in order to streamline this review, however, the transition from Stage 3; the interpersonal balance, to Stage 4; the institutional balance, may indicate the transition that the women in this study are experiencing, or have experienced.

Stage 3 is characterised by the statement: ‘the feelings that the self gives rise to are shared. Somebody else is there from the beginning... Its strength lies in its capacity to be conversational... But its limit lies in its inability to consult itself about that shared reality... It is that shared reality. (1982: 96) ‘There is no self to share with another; instead the other is required to bring the self into being.’ (1982: 97) The behavioural outcomes of this balance are reticence to ‘stick up for oneself’, an apparent lack of self-confidence and an inability to demonstrate, or even feel, anger. It would appear that people in the interpersonal balance may not feel anger ‘because they cannot know themselves separate from the interpersonal context; instead they are more likely to feel sad, wounded or incomplete.’ (1982: 97) Instinctively, I feel that no emotion is barred from anyone, whatever abstract construction they appear to be aligned with. Can it really be that ‘anger’ is denied to someone who resides in the interpersonal balance? Surely, in the same way that we can be angry at ourselves, we can be angry with those with whom we perceive that we are indivisibly connected. I believe there is more to unravel in respect of anger, however, there are some data from the women in the study that do support some aspects of Kegan’s assertion. In this passage, Emma recognises her anger. She doesn’t articulate her emotions as ‘sad, wounded or incomplete’ but she does acknowledge her inability to express them.

‘I’m a very angry person. Um, but ... and I don’t outwardly express that a great deal it’s always.... the danger is that it’s always there bubbling under the surface and sometimes, well rarely, does it come out inappropriately but I suppose that’s a fear that keeps me looped into this emotional control, is that I would unleash a lot of anger.’ (Emma)

In moving from the interpersonal balance, an individual arrives at Stage 4, the institutional balance, when she becomes self-authoring or achieves a sense of identity. It is defined by the movement from ‘I am my relationships’ to ‘I have relationships’ and the change in this emphasis demonstrates that the individual can maintain her self definition across a shared psychological space. The strength of this stage is the person’s capacity for independence.
Instead of losing oneself to others, the self is identified with the self-system; the organisation it is running. Indeed, it is the organisation.

Kegan briefly discusses relationships between interpersonal and institutional adults and points out that these alliances 'bear a strong resemblance to the relationship of parent and child, especially father and daughter.' (1982: 252) Although he doesn't elaborate further, this type of relationship could also resemble that of victim and perpetrator, a familiar relationship to the women in this study and one that would echo their childhood experience. I believe that many of the women in this study have provided evidence to suggest that they have successfully made the transition from the interpersonal to the institutional by defining their own boundaries and developing the ability for self-authorship. If this is indeed so, it would perhaps explain why their primary, long standing relationships floundered and had to be jettisoned in all cases but one.

Rogers' (1951) takes a phenomenological approach to his Theory of Personality and Behaviour and claims that: 'The organism reacts to the field as it is experienced and perceived. This perceptual field is, for the individual, 'reality.' (Rogers, 1951: 484) He names this phenomenon, psychological reality, and it was to an individual's psychological reality that he went to analyse and understand them.

Unlike Erikson (1963) and Kegan (1982), Rogers did not advocate a staged model of personality development; rather he focused on exploring the personal qualities that enabled a person to become a 'fully functioning person' with a positive self image. Although he concurs that each person starts at the same undifferentiated point as a neonate, convergence with other personologists' theories ceases there. I would like to point out that my model is not staged in the same sense as the Erikson and Kegan models but reflects more closely, that of Roger's model. Although the women in this study report progressive steps as they move through the model, they nonetheless claim to revisit previous positions in the model from time to time before continuing again in an overall progressive direction.

I have borrowed the term 'fully functioning person' to describe the characteristics of the women who have made a complete pass through the model. This, according to Rogers (1961), describes a person that is living the 'good life'. The good life is not a static place, nor is it a place where the individual may be described as 'happy, contented or actualised', (1961: 186) rather it is a process, a direction 'selected by the total organism when there is psychological freedom to move in any direction... [and this direction would have] general qualities which appear to be the same in a wide variety of unique individuals.' (1961: 187)
It is important, I believe, to outline Roger's (1961) seven stages of the process of 'becoming a [fully functioning] person' in order to bring this frame to the discussion. This, he contends, illustrates the 'process by which the individual changes from fixity to flowingness' and, if he is correct in his observations, would enable diagnosis of the stage at which someone finds themselves by 'dipping in and sampling the qualities of their experiencing and expressing.' (1961: 132)

- First stage: Fixity or stasis and remoteness of experiencing – There is an unwillingness to communicate self. Communication is only about externals. There is little recognition or ownership of feelings or personal meanings. When the person feels fully received, they progress to the second stage.

- Second stage: A slight loosening and flowing of symbolic expression – An ability to express non-self topics but all problems are perceived to be external to the self and there is no sense of personal responsibility in respect of these. Feelings may be demonstrated but again, these are not recognised as such or owned. Personal constructs may be thought of as facts. When the person feels fully received in their loosened state, they progress to the third stage.

- Third stage: Perception of self as an object – a freer flow of expression about self-related experiences as objects and as the self as a reflected object in others. The expression of feelings and personal meanings is a characteristic of this stage of the process but these are still not owned, rather thought of as remote from the self. When the person feels fully received, understood and validated, they progress to the fourth stage.

- Fourth stage: An experience, and some acceptance of, feelings in the immediate present. There can be a realisation of concern about contradictions and incongruence between the experience and the self. Recognition of personal constructs and an ability to step back and question these. When the person feels received in her expressions, behaviours and experiences, movement to the fifth stage takes place.

- Fifth stage: Feelings are fully experienced in the moment and are more often owned. The ability to examine critically personal constructs and to take responsibility for problems and their contribution to them is apparent. A desire to project the 'real me' into the world emerges. 'A person in the fifth stage is much closer to the flow of his or her feelings. Constructions of experience are decidedly loosened and repeatedly being tested against referents and evidence within and without. Experience is much more highly differentiated and thus, internal communication, already flowing, can be much more exact.' (1961: 143)

- Sixth stage: Integrative. Rogers perceives this stage as crucial as it can sometimes be very distinctive and dramatic. Feelings are experienced fully in the moment and are fully accepted. Self as an object begins to disappear and is replaced by the ability to live subjectively in the experience. A new psychological opening occurs. New meaning perspectives can be made in this stage as 'the relevant personal construct is dissolved... and the client feels cut loose from her previously stabilised framework'. (1961: 148)

- Seventh stage: There is no longer a need to be fully received by an external relationship and progress to the seventh stage often occurs without this
support structure. New feelings are experienced with immediacy and richness of detail and may be used as a clear referent to know the self. ‘Personal constructs are tentatively reformulated to be validated against further experience, but even then, to be held loosely.’ (1961: 153) At the seventh stage:

‘the client has... incorporated the quality of motion, of flow, of changingness, into every aspect of her psychological life, and this becomes its outstanding characteristic. She lives in her feelings, knowingly and with basic trust in them and acceptance of them. The ways in which she construes experience are continually changing as her personal constructs are modified by each new living event. Her experiencing is process in nature, feeling the new in each situation and interpreting it anew, interpreting in terms of the past only to the extent that the now is identical with the past. She experiences with a quality of immediacy, knowing at the same time that she experiences. She values exactness in differentiation of his feelings and of the personal meanings of her experience. Her internal communication between various aspects of herself is free and unblocked. She communicates herself freely in relationships with others, and these relationships are not stereotyped, but person to person. She is aware of herself but not as an object. Rather it is a reflexive awareness, a subjective living in herself in motion. She perceives herself as responsibly related to her problems. Indeed, she feels a fully responsible relationship to her life in all its fluid aspects. She lives fully in herself as a constantly changing flow of process.’ (1961: 154-155)

I have changed all references to the male gender to the female in order to make the quotation relevant to this study. I also replicate it in full as it contains the spirit of the women in this study in their process of becoming.

Although this process is presented as stages, the differentiation between one stage and the next is not well defined with some blurring between the two. Indeed, as the ‘loosening’ of the self progresses, the definitions of the stages becomes increasingly ambiguous and are rooted in the quality of personal experience as subjectively interpreted. Rogers posits that it is unlikely that a person in the process of becoming would jump a stage.

Roger’s process of becoming a person is not dissimilar to the one that has emerged from this study. As in Roger’s process, the women in this study did not employ the purely psychological sense making channel as they underwent their process, drawing as well on affects and experience to inform their thinking and being. However, in response to Roger’s concern that he may have omitted important elements, my findings additionally emphasised the importance of action and intention; setting boundaries, building knowledge, undertaking training courses and acting upon the world in ways to help themselves and others. Rogers also acknowledges that there may be many other means by which personality changes over time and, perhaps, other kinds of changes. Roger’s model is derived from and primarily pertains to the psychotherapeutic context. Although he does acknowledge that ‘this process is not one that occurs only in therapy.’ (1961: 123) he goes on to say that ‘the client often
seems to go on into the seventh and final stage without much need of the therapist's help' (1961: 151) implying that he does, in fact, see this process being assisted by the interventions of a therapist. The women in this study, I believe, have used many different sounding boards, supporters and teachers throughout their process leaving control and choice to them.

However, he makes the point that the process of becoming is one that is set in motion when an individual experiences himself as being fully received.' (1961: 155) This is a condition that occurs later in my own model when 'finding voice and being heard' are pivotal to further progress. Perhaps this suggests that Roger's process of becoming is just part of the experience of the women in this study, one that doesn't describe the context in which the process takes place; a suggestion also made by Taylor (1998). I would contend, therefore, that my study expands the scope of Roger's process but that the continua of increasing fluidity of feelings and openness to experience, higher levels of congruence with the self, greater ease of communication about the self and a relaxing of rigidity of thought are all helpful. Rogers also speculates that a model based upon cognitive processes only would be likely to be very different to his own; thus pointing a finger at Mezirow (1991, 2000) from the past.

I would like to bring back Jung's concept of individuation and the definition he ascribes to it as: 'the process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality... Any serious check to individuality... is an artificial stunting.' (Jung, 1921, paragraphs 757-758 in Jacoby, 1985) Jacoby makes clear, on behalf of Jung, that this pronouncement on the process of individuation does not preclude the expression of innumerable individual variations. Indeed, 'it is specifically a respect for the multifariousness of individual nature that characterises Jung's attitude... This is why the 'artificial stunting' inflicted by a blocked self-development is almost always tantamount to psychic disturbance.' (1985, 94); a pre-condition that the women in this study reported most graphically. Although Jung has proposed an infinitely variable interpretation of the process of individuation, the fundamental principles, he contends, hold true for all. I would consider that my study is successful in contextualising and mapping the process of individuation in respect of those that received a specific kind of primal wounding in childhood.

Erikson and Kegan, through their models, apparently put boundaries around the organism's capacity to grow and change, which is contrary to the laws of nature, cosmology and universal physics. Rogers' model, being phenomenological, imposes no such boundaries for development other than the natural capacity of the individual to actualise. The conditions for growth are created without expectation or investment on the part of the therapist thus
leaving the client free to explore their self-concept without inhibition or hindrance. Although, like Kegan, Rogers sees the process of development as one of differentiating from embeddedness (or objectifying the subjective), in a similar way to Wilber (1996), he puts no limits on this process. Both Erikson and Kegan subscribe to a directional model of distinct stages and broad (age related) timings – even to the end. Indeed, as Erikson entered his nineties, he felt that his model was deficit and made a last minute addition by creating a ninth stage which included loss of autonomy and imminent death. He proposed that this ninth stage be called 'gerotranscendence'.

As Sheldrake (1990) and Lovelock (1979) argue, we inhabit a living world. All creativity is rooted in the ongoing processes of nature which occurs within the framework of higher systems of order. Creativity occurs not just upwards from the bottom... it also proceeds downwards from the top. These same principles apply to human creativity. (Sheldrake, 1990: 164) Wilber has something to say on this subject too: 'Evolution can continue. It has already brought forth humans from amoebas – why on earth should we think that after that prodigious feat lasting billions of years, evolution just petered out and wound down?' (Wilber, 2000: 76)

My intention in incorporating a small amount of the relevant works of personality theorists' Erikson (1963), Kegan (1982) and Rogers (1951) in this literature review was to illustrate some of the fundamental mechanisms that may be driving the women in this study towards healing. However, I will now move on to outline the state of research in female models of psychological development before presenting the Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) study which has contributed significantly to my thinking.

**Female models of psychological development**

It has been noted by a number of feminist researchers (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1979, 1982; Tannen 1990, Chodorow, 1989 and Caffarella and Olson, 1993) that the models of psychological or evolutionary development have been created by men who have studied males or who have taken the 'male' model to be definitive with any female differences being regarded as exceptional, aberrant or retarded. (Examples of such models include those created by Kegan, 1982 (drawing heavily from the work of Piaget, 1932); Erikson, 1963; Kohlberg, 1958 and 1981 and Freud, 1930, reported by Gilligan, 1982.)

Gilligan (1979) documents the way in which male orientated theories of the life cycle value the qualities of autonomy and achievement over and above those of attachment and intimacy, thereby relegating women to the 'lower levels' of development as they find their
natural place on this continuum. This, she suggests, is due to the fact that 'for boys and men, separation and individuation are critically tied to gender identity since separation from the mother is essential for the development of masculinity.' (1979: 434) Gilligan draws from the work of Chodorow (1974) to conclude that: 'For girls and women issues of femininity or feminine identity are not problematic in the same way' (1974: 44) because they do not depend on the achievement of separation from the mother or on the progress of individuation.' (1979: 434) If Chodorow's conviction that masculinity is defined by separation and femininity is defined by intimacy is correct, then, she deduces, males will tend to have difficulty with intimacy whilst females will tend to have difficulty with separation. Gilligan concludes: 'The quality of embeddedness in social interaction and personal relationships that characterises women's lives in contrast to men's becomes not only a descriptive difference but also a developmental liability when the milestones of childhood and adolescent development are described by markers of increasing separation. Then women's failure to separate becomes, by definition, a failure to develop.' (1979: 434)

Although I have largely drawn upon the personality development theories of those that Gilligan and others accuse of demeaning the development of women, I nonetheless observed the group of women in this study striving for separation and autonomy and seeking choice and control in their lives. Whether this is 'better' or 'worse', runs ahead or lags behind the developmental trajectory of males, is not the point in this instance, rather these new behaviours manifestly signal a quantum shift in the way that these women project themselves onto the world; one that brings with it a new expression of 'becoming' and 'being' and one that is distinctly progressive. However, any hope of creating a formal theory is dashed by Gilligan's observations and those of her colleagues in the field. Although I feel that my findings may be relevant beyond the substantive area, they can only be considered to be so in a limited way. If, the developmental path of women is different to that of men, it follows that the way they problematise their issues must equally be different to those of men leading to different process steps and remedies. For this reason, any theory that emerges from this research cannot be considered a formal theory (developed for a formal or conceptual area of sociological inquiry which is generalisable) because credible doubt is being thrown upon the likelihood of an equivalent male starting from the same point or following the same process as women. However, as a result of undertaking a comparative study, it would seem that my findings are generalisable to an extent, particularly to groups of women who have experienced one of the range of possible primal wounds in childhood between the ages of seven to sixteen.
Women's Ways of Knowing

As I reflect on the 'masculine' frameworks that permeate society from political, educational, organisational and religious perspectives, I am no longer surprised that women find it hard to find their voice in a credible and acceptable manner. Because of the impact that this realisation had upon me, I have outlined below the important work that was undertaken by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) in which they seek to identify the range of epistemological perspectives that women use to learn and make sense of their worlds.

The findings from the research undertaken by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) on Women's Ways of Knowing resonate strongly with my observations of the women's journeys that I have been studying. (I will refer to Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) in full to respect their intention that they speak in one voice. They present their names in alphabetical order, not with the lead researcher listed first as academic tradition would have it because there was no lead researcher in this study.)

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) undertook the study because they were concerned that women frequently voiced doubt about their intellectual competence and they had become aware that for many women, valued learning was not derived from academic interventions but in relationship with significant others, through life crises and in community involvements. (This was also a finding arrived at by Loughlin, 1993.) They point out that, the models and modes of learning existent in education environments have been created by and for men. They also place an accent on the point made above by reporting Gilligan's finding that women have been missing even as research subjects in the early stages of the development of psychological theories (Gilligan, 1979: 6 in Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986) and that education does not therefore adequately serve the needs of women.

The project was conceived as a result of the researchers' wish to explore women's experience and problems as learners and knowers as well as review their past histories for changing concepts of the self and their relationships with others. Using a grounded theory approach they interviewed 135 women from different walks of life and from different kinds of learning establishments to collect the data. Through these interviews they collected accounts of personal change and growth as well as the perceived catalysts for that change and growth. This is where their research overlaps with my own. Although primarily retrospective, and therefore subject to the same possibility of 'noise' or 'reframing' as my own study, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) nevertheless succeeded in grouping women's perspectives on knowing into five major epistemological categories. These are described briefly below:
Silence - A denial of the self and dependence upon external authority for direction. People in the 'silent' category have a feeling of being 'deaf and dumb' and of existing by virtue of someone else's indulgence. In order for reflection to occur, and new ways of knowing to emerge, a verbal or written exchange needs to take place, something that does not occur with the 'silent' individual who then remains isolated from others and from the self. It is in eventual reaction to a childhood wound that a change in epistemology and a move out of silence can occur.

Received knowledge - Individuals in this category are recipients of knowledge from authoritative figures or works. Intolerant of ambiguity or contradiction, they believe that there is a 'correct' answer or stance on a subject; everything is black or white, right or wrong, true or false. They are dualistic in their thinking. They are also literal beings; they can't read between the lines. As the women in this category believe that all knowledge resides outside the self, they can only know themselves through others.

Subjective knowledge - Subjectivists no longer adhere to a given truth but rely on gut instinct, intuition, a felt sense of what is right and wrong. The subjective knower sees truth as subjective and personal, it is experienced, not thought out, and it depends on affect, not on cognition. Subjectivism is still dualistic in that there is the conception that there are right and wrong answers, however the reference point is now internal, with the self, not external, with an 'authority'. With subjectivism comes an acknowledgement that there is a multiplicity of views. Women's growing reliance on their intuition, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule believe, is important for self-protection, self-assertion and self-definition. This is the epistemological stance of the autonomous being, however, in becoming their own authority, they negate the need for external validation and can become quite alienated. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule noted that many subjectivists emerged in reaction to a loss of trust in male authority through having experienced sexual harassment and abuse. Although not an explicit part of the study, they were surprised to find high prevalence rates in the sample group that they were working with. This style of self-assertion, I must say, was not uncommon in the group that I studied. It was a protective, isolating and separating stance that could bring on its own demise if taken to the limits. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule noted that the new subjectivist stance could be characterised by courage in some, recklessness in others. Indeed, over half of the group of subjectivists that Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule studied had ended their relationships which husbands or lovers. Again, this finding has resonances with the findings in my own study. Gilligan (1982) also points out that separation and individuation can leave women feeling vulnerable and unconnected, particularly as their 'sense of integrity appears to be entwined with an ethic of
care so that to see themselves as women is to see themselves in a relationship of connection'. (1982: 171) Along with the discovery of personal authority arises a 'sense of voice', a hallmark, according to Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, of the woman's emergent sense of self and sense of agency and control. (1986:68)

**Procedural knowledge** – the voice of reason. In this epistemological stance, women begin to engage in 'reasoned reflection', they think systemically, from within the system. Procedural knowledge is more often objective than subjective and involves different ways of looking at a problem or situation. Procedural knowers are practical, pragmatic problem solvers using their critical faculties to arrive at a position or decision. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule further divide procedural knowers into two categories; 'separate' and 'connected' knowers. Separate knowers are tough-minded. When they are presented with a problem they look for dissonance or a difference, conflict or contradiction. In being objective, separate knowers avoid projection by suppressing the self. On the other hand, connected knowers learn through empathy with others. They are able to suspend their own values and beliefs and see things through others' eyes. They look for common ground; they stand 'close' to the other and find it easy to enter perspectives different to their own. Connected knowing involves both feeling and thought.

**Constructed knowledge** – Constructed knowers endeavour to claim the self by integrating knowledge that they have learned from others; 'the weaving together of strands of rational and emotive thought and of integrating objective and subjective knowing.' (1986: 134) Women in Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's study who exhibited constructed knowledge had been through an intense period of self-reflection and self-analysis. As one of the contributors to the research said: 'You let the inside out and the outside in.' (1986: 135) This is not so very different from Heather's comment on how she feels at the currant stage of her process: 'The inside has joined the outside.'

Women moving into the category of constructed knowing frequently ask 'Who am I?', 'What is my life to be about?' During the process of self-examination, women feel a heightened consciousness and sense of choice about 'how I want to think' and 'how I want to be'. Women constructivists show a high tolerance for internal contradiction and ambiguity; they are not caught in dualism. 'It is the process of sorting out the pieces of the self and of searching for a unique and authentic voice that women come to the basic insights of constructivist thought: all knowledge is constructed and the knower is an intimate part of the known.' (1986: 137) This point of integration and the acceptance of dichotomy equally defines the position that some women in my study reached. Heather again: '[I am] more one whole than lots of different pieces.' This integrative sentiment is reflected in one of Kate's
Taking account of Women’s Ways of Knowing has suggested the epistemological positions that the women in my study occupy and offers another means of interpreting their process. Although not presented as a hierarchical or stage model, I can see resonances with the women in my group and the ‘silent knowers’ at the outset of their healing journey, the move into received knowledge when they subjugate themselves to their husbands as a means of legitimacy and existence and the eventual move into subjective knowing with the characteristic courage or recklessness as they disassemble their lives in the quest to find themselves. Perhaps they move through the position of procedural knowing in the company of their counsellor and therapist, finally to emerge as an integrated, authentic being demonstrating the qualities of a constructive knower. I do not wish to suggest an orderliness or smoothness to the passage from silent to constructed knower. No doubt, the various positions can be discarded and revisited frequently, but perhaps the sweep and frequency of the pendulum diminishes as the knower finds themselves and settles into their own authority.
Summary

In this chapter, I have tried to show that there are many theoretical frameworks that have a bearing on, or underpin the healing journey. It may be seen as a natural, organic, stage in the development of an individual's personality and that it is bound to unfold as soon as the environmental triggers are in place for it to do so - a view that Erikson (1963) has subscribed to through the epigenetic principle. However, Tod Sloan (1986) challenges the 'natural force' model as a result of listening to the stories of adults who have made life transitions. He concludes that: 'The person left to rely on natural, inner growth processes will often take the turn towards addiction, masochism or suicide in the midst of transition periods.' (1986: 107) This implies that a healthy conative force needs to be part of the individual's psychological make-up as it will be drawn upon to propel the healing, or learning journey.

The view that human growth is a product of natural process is also counter to that of the existential-phenomenological fraternity who believe that we create our own reality, moment to moment, and must take responsibility for our actions and their outcomes. This stance, one of self-definition and self-determination, is strongly aligned to the views of Kegan (1982) in his discussion of the 'institutional self', which bears the characteristics of self-dependence and self-ownership (1982: 100), and Rogers (1951) in his respect of his insistence that each individual has 'the capacity and right for self-direction' (1951: 20). In accepting the views of Kegan and Rogers, we must also accept that some individuals do not choose a growthful path but languish in 'victim-consciousness' throughout their adult years.

In this literature review, I have attempted to draw parallels between the healing journey and the transformative learning journey. The link between personal development and transformative learning has previously been made by Tennant and Pogson (1995) and Rogers (1951). However, the characteristics of specific developmental transitions such as 'victim' to 'choosing adult' have not been detailed in any of their works and it is this gap that I am attempting to plug in my research.

As a result of the analysis and literature review, I am increasingly veering towards the conclusion that the journey of healing from childhood sexual abuse is more akin to a life-stage transformation such as the interpersonal to the institutional (Kegan, 1982), self-actualisation, (Maslow, 1968) or individuation, (Jung in Jacoby, 1985). In short, it is a journey of becoming 'whole', 'complete'; or just 'becoming'. The mechanism may well involve transformative learning but although this may be a necessary condition for a life-stage transition, it may not be sufficient. Transformative learning, particularly a change in meaning scheme as opposed to a meaning perspective, may result in what Wilber calls a 'translation';
a movement within the same paradigm rather than a 'transformation'; the creation of a new paradigm.

In the final chapter, I aim to bring all the threads of this thesis together, recapitulate and summarise the model that has emerged from this study in respect of its early aims. I will also reflect upon the implications that these findings have for those seeking transformative healing from primal wounding and their carers and guides.
CHAPTER SEVEN
Writing the theory

Introduction

'Since the stars have fallen from heaven and our highest symbols have paled, a secret life holds sway in the unconscious... Our unconscious... hides living water, spirit that has become nature, and that is why it is disturbed. Heaven has become for us the cosmic space of the physicists, and the divine empyrean a fair memory of things that once were. But "the heart glows," and a secret unrest gnaws at the roots of our being.' Jung (1970: 25)

In this final chapter, I will attempt to bring all the threads together and sum up my findings. This piece of research landed heavily on my shoulders and I was concerned to carry it with honesty, dignity and accuracy. However, I stumbled, became confused and lost my way on many occasions. If this work proves useful at all, it will be because the women’s voices finally triumphed, made themselves heard and led the way. I hope that in these final words, clarity and purpose will emerge.

A Metaphor

When I was an engineer, I worked on a project to devise a means of holding nozzle guide vanes so securely that they could be machined to within less than a thousandth of an inch. The method I adopted was to place the guide van in a jig, which positioned it at the correct angle for presentation to the grinding machine; surround the guide vane with a low melting point metallic substance, so that as it cooled and solidified, the guide vane became embedded and held rigid in the substrate; place the entire block on the machine bed and finally present the grinding surface to the machine tool for the operation to take place. Once this process had been completed, the substrate would be re-melted and the guide vane released. In theory, this would be a fast and extremely accurate way of meeting the severe tolerances set by the precise configuration of the jet engine. However, this did not happen, instead, the nozzle guide vane twisted in the solidified metallic block and, as a result, the machining was completely inaccurate. After a great deal of thought and experimentation an explanation was found. It transpired that the nozzle guide vane was being forced into the jig, somewhat against its natural shape, in order to meet the three dimensional specification (its orientation in space) in readiness for the machining process. Once the process had taken place and the substrate removed, the nozzle guide vane did not remain in its imposed position but returned to its natural shape, thereby, throwing all the dimensions madly out of
specification. As I muse upon this research study, this memory comes to mind and I see it as a metaphor for the process of transformation that I have been studying.

I see the volunteers as people who were originally conceived and born with their potentialities in place, waiting for the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature... and activate all the capacities of the organism or the self. (Rogers 1961: 351) During their childhood, distorting forces were imposed upon them and life literally ground them into an incorrect shape; one that was not 'who they were' but what others 'wanted them to be'. (Firman and Gila, 1997) As adults, and as they reached a point of dissonance so great that they could no longer contain themselves, they literally 'burst out of their restrictive behaviours' in an attempt to find themselves; their separate, indivisible, authentic self. This is the process of becoming a person (Rogers, 1961), the way of individuation (Jung, 1921); of self-actualisation (Maslow, 1999) or transformative learning as a way of 'becoming'.

A Woman's Becoming

My research indicates that the women in this research study were undertaking a process of 'becoming'; a process that enabled them to answer the question 'Who am I really? (Rogers, 1961: 108) and, in pursuing the answer to that question, eventually meeting their 'authentic' self or 'integrated' self. Rogers (1961) describes the process of becoming as an exploration in which the individual 'drops the false fronts, or the masks, or the roles with which he has faced life' on the way to becoming more and more himself.' (1961: 109) We see the tendency to don roles reflected in Heather's comments 'There was a bit of me that never came out. I could almost put roles on.' Roger's acknowledges that to remove a mask which you had previously thought reflected your real self can be deeply disturbing. Many believe that if the mask is not maintained, 'everything will be swept away in the violence of the feelings that he discovers pent-up in his private world.' (1961: 111) This fear is graphically illustrated the following passage in Emma's interview: (which has already been referred to several times in the text.)

'I'm in a position now where the possibility of any sort of catharsis or release is slightly less intimidating, less potentially catastrophic than I would have said it was a year ago. The therapist was clear about her boundaries so there was nothing hidden in that relationship at all and that allowed me to start trusting her. And because she held her boundaries firmly, it also allowed me to get over my fears about damaging other people. [I had] a real lifelong fear of being a bit of Pandora's box, that nobody knew what they were getting in to if they started opening things up with me and also maternal messages about being 'bad' and 'evil' and 'wicked'. [I had] a fear that I would overwhelm them and if I had laid myself open to need their support and I then overwhelmed them so that they weren't there available to support, it was like nobody would be 'anchored' any more, they would be adrift with me and if I let go of my defences, then I would be adrift as well.'
Engaging with, and experiencing the feelings around these fears enables an individual to
discover the unknown elements of the self. However, the threat of doing this unaided often
seems too dangerous and potentially damaging to the individual but, in the safety and
freedom of a ‘good’ therapeutic relationship, these feelings can be experienced to the limit
and, in that moment, the individual can experience being ‘who they are’ in their richness.

By dropping the masks that have hidden the authentic being, as the women in this study
have done, they are emerging as people willing to engage fully with the world and prepared
to make autonomous choices and take responsibility for their destinations. No longer do they
define themselves through others, or take on the alien attitudes and behaviours of the
significant beings in their lives, rather they become ‘who they are’ and stand in their own
truth.

But this is not the extent of the process, dropping the masks subjects the individual to
experiences that need to be sifted and integrated to create the ‘whole person’. Kegan
(1982), Wilber (1996) and Erikson (1963) are three amongst many who concur that
development is characterised by a progressive, reciprocating movement of disembedding and
disassociating from the subjective, embracing the objective and embedding the objective as
subjective before returning to the disembedding impetus at the beginning of the next and
‘higher’ iteration of the process. As each stage is passed, the former stage is integrated into
the new way of being with the desired outcome of achieving increasing levels of integration
as one progresses through life. As Werner puts it (1957) ‘Wherever development occurs, it
proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing
differentiation, articulation and hierarchical integration.’ (in Wilber, 1996: 1) Bateson too
points out (1992) that: ‘even learning itself is hierarchical, involving several major levels, each
of which is ‘meta’ to its predecessors.’ (in Wilber, 1996: 1) Mezirow (1991) also concurs with

21 I use the word ‘good’ here to suggest that there is such a thing as a ‘bad’ or re-abusing
therapeutic relationship where the experiences and/or fears of the therapist are projected onto
the client and effectively block progress into the more challenging realms where the ‘authentic
self’ may be found.

22 Giving oneself over to others’ definitions occur in Kegan’s interpersonal self (1982); the
over-identification with another and the subsequent loss of identity in Erikson’s identity versus
role confusion stage (1963); Wilber’s (1996) over-identification with personae in the early and
middle egoic stage and taking the epistemological stance of ‘received knowledge’ in Belenky,
Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) taxonomy of Women’s Ways of Knowing. Wilber
emphasises that ‘There can be no higher identifications unless the lower-order identities are
broken in their exclusivity. Once the self dis-identifies with the lower-order structures, it can
then integrate them with the newly emergent higher-order structures.’ (1996: 40) (See
‘Distancing’ page 148 and footnote 13 for a definition of ‘dis-identifies.’)
this dynamic. ‘A developmentally progressive meaning perspective is more inclusive, discriminating, integrative and permeable (open) than less developed ones.’ (1991: 193)

That the being is an organised, integrated, whole, is the premise upon which Maslow bases his theory of motivation (1987). He maintains that the whole being is motivated, not just a part. To clarify this point, Maslow states that: ‘In good theory, there is no such entity as a need of the stomach or mouth, or a genital need. There is only a need of the individual. It is John Smith who wants food, not John Smith's stomach. Furthermore satisfaction comes to the whole individual and not just to a part of him.’ (1987: 3) In this study, the woman’s sense of an integrated self aligns the conative, cognitive, affect, visceral, somatic and mystical and any model that does not address all aspects of her being is inadequate to describe the process she has been through. Although many theorists play lip service to the recognition of a being as a (potentially) fully integrated whole, many by-pass all but the cognitive process that enables them to arrive at this place of integrated wholeness.

It is my belief, as a result of this research study, that all the channels of 'becoming' must be used if the individual is going to manifest integration as a 'property' or 'quality' of being. As Sharon says when discussing her preferred approach to one of her clients in her practice:

‘If I'd have had carte blanche with what I thought she needed...she was coming to me and saying I'm not effective in the world, I can't get heard... I would have sent her for singing lessons, she would have had to go for a massage twice a week and done belly dancing...’ She went on to say: 'If I could choose the therapies I’d want for [her] it would be an osteopath, a massage therapist... This woman so needs to get into her body it would be no good me talking to her because she isn’t there.’ [Sufficiently present to benefit from counselling.]

Vicky talked about using the body as a mean of healing:

‘I've done body therapy with a male therapist [and having] him touch my body demanded an enormous amount of trust.’

And Mary drew from her creative side to enable her to release anger:

‘I did a lot of drawing, and I don't draw, I mean most of it was a lot of anger that came out. I was just getting a pen and just slashing the paper with it and things like that. There was so much anger there; in fact my therapist called it 'murderous rage'.

23 Again we see the importance of 'gaining a voice', a necessity revealed in the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986)
We have already seen the affective power of tapping into and releasing anger and we are now familiar with the cognitive processes involved in perspective transformation. (Mezirow, 1991) I also believe that there are other extra-rational channels that need to be exploited in order for transformation to be experienced. Boyd and Myers (1988) suggest that effective transformative learning is facilitated by tapping into the individual’s spiritual power; the truth and knowledge that resides within them that transcends the socio-economic and political influences. ‘The outcome of transformative education’ Boyd and Myers (1998) go on to say ‘is not primarily rational clarity but a commitment to an altered way of being with one’s Self in the world. From the sifting through of information stemming from [the unconscious], a person comes into an expanded consciousness that illuminates directions for actions which best fit the person’s deepest yearnings and felt beliefs.’ (1988: 276) They advocate ‘discernment’ as the process that taps into and enables people to dialogue with their inner truth. It is a complex and difficult process but it enriches ‘knowing’ beyond ‘reason’. (1988: 282) Boyd and Myers (1988) go on to say that ‘the exercise of discernment leads to new configurations of meaning which generate in the person an enthusiasm for new choices and even the courage to pursue them.’ (1988: 276)

If it is the combination of the rational and extra-rational that drive an individual through the process of ‘becoming’, why then does the therapeutic environment, in most cases, confine itself to the cognitive channel, neglecting the need for emotional release, creative expression and body work? This process of ‘becoming’ demands all of this for it to be fully effective and I would advocate the expansion of the therapeutic menu to include some of these avenues of exploration. Dirkx advocates ‘nurturing soul’ in adult education; a concept that could well be transferred to the therapeutic environment. He says: ‘Learning through soul calls for a more central role of imagination and fantasy in our instructional methods and content. Stories, narratives, myths, tales and ritual capture aspects of this world in ways not readily available through more traditional instructional methods. Unlike the ego which prefers logic, predictability and order, the soul thrives on open spaces... Denial of the soul within the learning environment is denial of a life force and makes itself felt through an absence of energy, enthusiasm or vigour.’ (1997: 85) Nelson (1997) would, no doubt, concur with this statement after completing his work on imagining and critical reflection as the way of transformation.

24 Dirkx argues for an expansion of the definition of transformative learning as critical reflection as it understates the affective, emotional, spiritual and transpersonal elements in the transformative process. Although he doesn’t expressly define the term ‘soul’ he describes it as the place where one experiences mystery; birth and death, incomprehensible tragedies, love and separation. The realm of being that is barely visible to our waking ego consciousness is the domain of the soul.
In each instance, the process of healing, evolving, ‘becoming’, described by the women in this study was started by a trigger, a ‘wake-up’ call. I have alluded to the fact that this may be a uniquely female aspect of the process, but perhaps not. Further research may verify or deny this point. It may also be the case that these triggers were fired regularly until they were heard or felt in the moment that change was possible. Referring to Sharon again: ‘I recognise the importance of standing back and letting the scars heal themselves, the scabs scab over, and not thinking that I can cure them.’ She was intent on biding her time, allowing the natural processes to strengthen and prepare her clients for their journey. This may be the function of the period of coping, where unrecognised strategies are employed to enable a semblance of adult life to exist. One of these coping strategies may be to ‘do nothing’ and allow the scab to form and healing to take place beneath the surface before the exploratory journey begins, or, in Boyd and Myers’ (1988) terms, to dwell in discernment, to let the ego be silent in order to listen to the other constitutions of the Self and be led towards wholeness and meaning. (1988: 275)

The ‘becoming’ process is distinguished by a fall into despair, a black hole, a sense that everything is falling apart. This is the point at which those that describe their journey speak of depression, a sense of loss, of things coming undone. One of Heather’s triggers was the death of her mother.

‘Things started to come undone. It was as if I’d been holding on to everything, all these threads, very tightly, and juggling everything and managing to function. I probably was managing quite well on the surface. I think I probably functioned on two levels. There was a bit of me that was always separate from the self that people saw. When my Mum died it was like I couldn’t do that anymore. Couldn’t kind of keep up this... what was it? It was not a pretence, but I couldn’t keep functioning in that way anymore. Everything started to come undone. I had to have some counselling because of the impact of my Mum’s death. I’d been struggling along thinking that I would be able to do what I’d always done and ‘put it away’; compartmentalise everything, which is what I’d always done and, I wasn’t able to do that. I wasn’t even able to compartmentalise my Mum’s death and at the same time all these other boxes were opening and so it was all beginning to come unhinged and I couldn’t hold it and, then the behaviours that I had had before which enabled me to cope, the strategies, were no longer working. Nothing was working. I needed to [go to counselling] because I couldn’t get a hold. I think everything was falling apart to such... it was disintegrating really because my strategies for coping were no longer working.’

Brammer and Abrego (1981) take the concept of ‘letting go’ from Adams et al (1977) and place it at the next stage of their process of transition. They acknowledge that there is little known about this stage but define it, nevertheless, as ‘some critical point in dealing with the negative emotional reaction to the transition where the person lets him or herself into the feeling to experience it deeply.’ (1981: 21) I would not separate ‘letting go’ from the descent
into chaos and despair that the women in this study described as it is the 'letting go' that allows them to experience this phase fully.

The next phase that emerged from this study was one of 'finding voice and being heard'. Interestingly, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) also identify this necessity; articulating it as 'gaining voice' – literally as well as metaphorically speaking. They see this as 'the hallmark of women's emergent sense of self and sense of agency and control.' (1986: 68) The fact that other researchers have alighted upon this phenomenon gives me greater assurance in my own findings and enables me to stand firm on the ground from which this category was derived. Although the Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) study was not explicitly with women who had been sexually abused as children, they nonetheless found that there was a high incidence of women who shared this history and that 'gaining voice' was critical to the development of knowing. Women at this stage of the process tended to resort to counselling or therapy, thereby, creating the space in which they could be seen, validated, witnessed and have access to someone with whom they could engage in discourse. Discourse being the means by which they hear the truths they are articulating from which they can learn to know themselves. As we have already seen, Mezirow and Associates (2000) state that discourse is the means by which an individual 'finds voice', thus making possible full and free participation in the search for common understanding; and the assessment, judgement and renegotiation of a meaning perspective. (2000: 11)

The implication is that the successful counselling relationship creates the context in which the client is witnessed, their 'voice' is heard, and their faculties for critical review are stimulated. Sue makes this point when she says:

'I think having someone reflecting back [is useful], mirroring and asking the right questions. I think doing a lot of physical stuff to overcome physical trauma, we haven't touched on sex at all, I think there's a lot of stuff around sex in terms of being touched and how that feels and shifting all that around, getting external knowledge, external validation, finding out as much stuff about your family history as possible and going and asking and saying and not being afraid to say."

As we have seen, Rogers (1951) is prescriptive in his advice on how this context should be created in his client-centred therapy. This approach is predicated on the belief that the client holds within him or herself, answers to the questions and dilemmas that he or she is experiencing. The counsellor facilitates the externalisation of these answers through listening attentively to the client, offering them unconditional positive regard and demonstrating an empathic connection. When the client is not honoured in this way, the damage to their progress is profound. One of my volunteers called me after the interview to discuss the fact that she had lost regard for her counsellor and was feeling betrayed and abandoned.
Apparently, the counsellor had decided that the client should report her abusers to the Police – some thirty years after the event – and threatened to do so herself if the client didn’t take the initiative. Whatever the circumstances of this interaction, the effect was devastating for the client. She immediately felt that she couldn’t confide in anyone else and risk such a betrayal of confidence again. She was also too emotionally weary to go through the process of reporting the counsellor to her Professional Body and having to reiterate her story again to those with whom she had no relationship and in whom she had no confidence. Her sense of isolation and despair at these eventualities was palpable. This experience underscores the importance of an integral, self-aware and non-invested counsellor or therapist.

The process of ‘meaning-making’ was an important aspect of the healing journey. ‘Getting one’s head around the situation’ or engaging in critical enquiry and reflective thinking where one tested assumptions and beliefs, was critical in moving the process forward. This stage was primarily driven by cognitive processes and involved what Mezirow (1991) called premise reflection; an activity that can lead to perspective transformation. ‘We can reassess and negate previously unexamined assumptions regarding the consequences of behaving in a particular way (sexually, assertively, competitively and so on) that was prohibited by parents in a traumatic childhood encounter and repressed from consciousness but enforced in adulthood through anxiety and guilt.’ (1991: 110) He goes on to say that: ‘premise reflection leads to more fully developed meaning perspectives, that is, meaning perspectives that are more inclusive, discriminating, permeable (open) and integrative of experience.’ (1991: 111)

However, it is not just cognition that is employed in this phase of the process, indeed, we have heard from the women in the study that cognition, or intellectualisation, was a coping strategy that they adopted to protect themselves from facing their trauma. Emma tells of her continued inclination to intellectualise and her resultant inability to tap into her affects and express her anger. As her mind continues to punish her with its constant rationalisation, I would argue that any access to the extra-rational channels that effect the transformative process is denied to her thereby holding her in one of the most challenging phases of the process.

Symbolism, metaphor and dreams were used by the women in the study to access wisdom that was unavailable to them through the cognitive change. We have already seen that both Rachel and Heather use many metaphors to describe their process. In this excerpt, Heather uses the metaphor of the jigsaw puzzle to express her experience of premise reflection:
'During this last lot of counselling, I managed to get rid of that feeling [of fragmentation]. Possibly because I'd seen it all laid out in front of me like having a jigsaw. I needed to look at each piece to see where it fitted to make the big picture, to make the picture complete, so I knew where it fitted. I needed to look at each piece and put it back together. I know that some of the pieces still don't fit very well and I know that there's probably still work there that I could do but it's not creating problems at the moment so I'll leave it until it is.'

Langer (1989) makes the point that 'mindfulness' is a reflective orientation that allows for change through the continual creation of new categories whereas 'mindlessness' is 'the rigid reliance on old categories. Mindfulness requires that one pays attention to the situation and the context (meaning perspective) and that one remains open to new information and to different points of view. In this way, mindfulness can usher in the transformation of meaning perspectives and enable individuals to leave behind the disabling mindsets that may have been uncritically accepted and perpetuated during their adult lives. Langer makes the point that people are more likely to be mindful if they are 'an outsider' in a situation or if they are categorised according to a generally accepted stereotype or deviant label. (1989: 166) The women in this study have been propelled into a state of mindfulness as a result of their dysfunctional behaviours being brought to their attention. The resultant scrutiny of their mindsets in the light of this new recognition has led them to dismantle and rebuild their meaning perspectives and experience transformation.

Although I have stressed the importance of the extra-rational channels to effect the transformative experience, this is most effective when they are balanced by critical (self-) reflection. The rational and extra-rational channels need to act in concert if the full extent of the process is to be experienced and a change in meaning perspective achieved. Many of the women in this study are familiar with cognition being professional, well-educated and having resorted to intellectualisation as a defence mechanism in the past. Mary used a journal to help her reflect cognitively on her experiences recognising that journaling often accesses the 'hidden' thoughts and feelings that conditions a person's behaviour. She also learned the art of water colour. These two approaches 'allow learners to become aware of and give voice to the images and unconscious dynamics that may be animating their psychic lives.' (Dirkx, 2000: 2)

Sue's experience of critical-reflection was assisted by the interventions of a therapist:

'The therapist asked very pertinent questions which brought the whole shit thing out and without that, somebody actually stopping and saying, you know, 'What's this and what's that and what happened?' I don't think we would have got anywhere with it.'
Many members of the sample group went through a phase where they endeavoured to set boundaries for themselves and 'control' their relationships, apparently, in order to achieve increasing autonomy or distinctiveness. This manifested in leaving partners, engaging in intimate relationships outside marriage, confronting abusers, travelling or moving house. In Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1986) taxonomy of epistemological stances, this may be considered to map onto 'subjectivism'; a newly won belief and trust in one's own critical faculties and power. As they say in their book, 'At the position of subjective knowledge, quest for self, or at least protection of a space [boundaries] for growth of self, is primary. For women, this often means a turning away from others and a denial of external authority.' (1986: 134)

We have seen the work of many theorists concluding with 'integration' as the final destination on the evolutionary or developmental path. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that 'integrating' is the continual process that enables an individual to reach 'higher' developmental levels during their life, or many lifetimes, journey. Brammer and Abrego (1981) define 'integration' as:

'This is the stage where renewal takes place. Reframing assumptions, changing values and risking new behaviours often result in a changed life style. This is the point of readjustment when new behaviours become part of one's response repertoire. It usually is not a return to pre-transitional living conditions since both the person and the conditions have changed. An issue faced in counselling and group work is how the person now can generalise coping skills and attitudes to new transitions as they emerge in the normal course of living.' (1981: 22)

Integration is a key component of a new meaning perspective which is defined by Mezirow (1994) as a 'broader, more discriminating, permeable and integrative understanding of his/her experience as a guide to action.' (1994: 226) In fact researchers that describe movement from one life-stage to another, whatever the propellant for that movement, concur that it involves the integration of a previously held paradigm with a new one. This is characterised by the accumulation of knowledge and experience and the ability to hold previously dichotomous concepts within the mind without a sense of contradiction or dissonance. This phenomenon has already been described in this thesis, for example with reference to the works of Kegan (1982) who sees it as process of passing the baton of perception and identification between subject and object with an ever present intention to resolve the imbalance; Erikson (1997) too sees the process as one of resolving the conflict between two opposing forces that define particular life stages (for instance, trust vs mistrust) and, if the conflict is resolved satisfactorily, the positive element will be integrated, or absorbed, into the emerging ego. Boyd and Myers (1988) posit that 'a positive transformation is experienced as a clearly demarcated event which moves the person to
psychic integration and active realisation of their true being.' (1988: 262) Wilber’s notions of evolution and involution may also be helpful in providing a framework for thinking about this integrative stage. He defines evolution as consisting ‘of a series of hierarchical transformations of the deep structures out of the ground-unconscious, starting with the lowest and ending with the highest.’ (1996: 98) and involution as a movement which ‘enfolds’ and ‘involves;’ the higher levels of being with the lower. (1996: 185) In all cases, the concepts of integration and absorption are central to the process of transformation.

It is apparent from these foci that ‘integration’ is not a final resting place, rather a foundation for the next phase of growth. Many of the women in this study have ruled a line under their former lives and have changed the way they engage with the world. In every case, the members of the group either left their husbands or partners, acquired new professional skills, embarked on a new career, changed their sexual orientation or became passionate about helping others who may be encountering the challenges of personal growth and the emergence from ‘victim-consciousness’. As I sat with the women in this study whilst they related their experiences, their surety and confidence as they perused their journey was remarkable. There was no apology; there was no demurring, indeed, the belief that each of them had in their ‘authentic self’ felt robust and bold and their ‘self’ discovery felt energetic and joyous. Although they often acknowledged that ‘there was more to do’, they also added that they thought, having forged the initial path through the transformative process, they would be able to do so again knowing the milestones, the signposts and having clear expectations of the challenges and rewards.

Beyond the ‘integrative’, the final stage that emerged from the study was ‘distancing’ – a shedding of the persona that had previously been projected into the world with which the individual identified and had been identified. This is a stage where old masks are no longer used to define the self; where the individual is liberated from personal unconscious content that blocks the way of ‘becoming’ a fully functioning being. This, however, is not a resting place, and each interviewee articulated their belief, and in some cases their experience, that the journey has no end. In the ‘distancing’ phase, it is almost as if the agony and ecstasy of the journey has become unremarkable, the emotion is spent and all that is left is information; the result of past learning that now becomes the baseline for new growth. This may be the phenomenon that is being described by Vicky when she says: ‘In truth, we are always protected and guided if we stay in touch with our own source of inner knowing, guidance and wisdom.’

The ‘ongoingness’ of this process is depicted by the reciprocating, conical spiral illustrated in Figure (viii) on page 126. One moves back and forth, learning, unlearning, discarding and
integrating. It is perpetual motion; a life project. In Kate's words: 'I'm not sure that I will ever complete the journey.' The inevitability of the process too is a consideration that was raised by some members of the sample group. Heather said: 'I think had I not been assaulted, something would have happened anyway. There would have been a crisis of some sort that would have taken me to counselling and I would have had to do the work whatever.' Kate reflected: 'I have great belief that there's no such thing as an accident and I have a belief in synchronicity that that's how things happen.' I reiterate again a statement made by Kegan (1982) that when 'fate' (a universal on-going process of meaning-making) is testing us most severely it often speaks itself in the form or 'problems' or crises.' (1982: 265) Although each of us enjoys the option of not responding to the call of fate, if we do not, perhaps the coping strategies become so strained that we are ultimately compelled to do so. Perhaps this is what drives the process of 'becoming'.

The nature, shape and progressive quality of the transformative process are elicited from the language used by the women in the study. As we have already seen, many use the metaphor of the journey to interpret their process. Metaphor conveys shared meaning and understanding and is helpful in viewing the process as having purpose. Rachel made the point: 'It was a long journey and it begins... you know, a thousand miles, you've still got to make that [first] step.' Vicky said: 'My children were definitely the trigger to go on the healing journey.' Sue added: 'I think it's part of the journey (becoming a rape counsellor) and I've watched other women going through that and I now think it's part of the process.' and 'I don't want to get bogged down in people who are just starting their journey.' Sue also saw the journey as progressive with markers along the way: 'Those were huge milestones in that process... I do see the whole thing as moving forward. I do see myself having a lot of strength and being able to move forward.' She used the analogy of a road also: 'The vulnerability... has sent me scootering off down the self-destructive road.' Claire illustrates that she shares this conception when she says: 'I do feel that I'm a lot further down the line.'

Further, as we have also seen, the shape of the transformative journey is conveyed by the use of directional language. Examples included: 'I was sinking lower and lower'; '[my] self esteem was going down into my boots'; 'The whole thing started to go down again', 'I felt myself falling into the dark annihilated pit'; 'I have been often at the edge, very often at the edge.'; 'I don't really want to go down there' and 'I try not to rummage around in that 'hole'. More positively, 'It's been a steady 'up' ever since.' Heather implied both the shape and ongoingness of the process when she said: 'I would actually pretend I wasn't in and finding that I could do that, and the world didn't fall down around me ... there was definitely one day when there was a turning point and I realised why I was having all these difficulties. Because I had that space to look at it all and that moved me on a lot but I needed to go back and
explore it again at another level.' The directional movement of the journey was conveyed by language such as: 'I started to take small steps forward... going out with the girls from work was a major step for me... it was no easy step because Chris was so difficult... but it was taking little steps like that that gradually built my self-confidence, each step I took made me feel different about myself.' (Heather) 'I've certainly moved on a long way.' said Kate 'Taking distance from my family was important it was creating distance on an outer level, but also on an inner level.' (Vicky) Finally, Claire said 'I can hold my head up I suppose.' A triumphant place to be as one moves forward and continues the journey of 'becoming'.

Apart from the metaphor of the journey, other metaphors were used as a way of conveying meaning and engaging with symbolism to deepen understanding of the process.

Rachel used an interesting metaphor to describe the realisation she had that her abuse was 'containable':

'I had this image, this kind of vision, of wine in goblets and they were everywhere. They were on trays... they... if you had this room, it would be littered, they would be all over everywhere, but they were in goblets and I knew I had to drink it all but I didn't have to do it all at once, I could do it over a period. And that for me gave me the clue that actually, what had happened to me was containable, it wasn't spilling everywhere. Because actually, when I first discovered my abuse, it was in my head all the time. I couldn't do a thing, breath, dream, wake up, go to bed with it. All day. I couldn't do anything. It was all everywhere and it was just terrible.'

We have also seen use of the metaphor such as the 'jig-saw' (Heather and Claire), the 'spile' (Rachel), the 'garden' (Rachel), the heavy load (Heather), and the 'tree' (Rachel).

Several contingent processes emerged from the analysis. Healing does not appear to be contingent upon forgiveness. This has been illustrated by Sharon, amongst others, who presented her feelings on the subject by saying: 'What the books don't tell you is [that] you can't forgive somebody that doesn't ask for forgiveness, it's pointless.' Yet healing does appear to be contingent upon 'finding voice and being heard' ('Gaining voice' - Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986)) and, at the same time, being witnessed by someone the client trusts and believes in. This trust is predicated upon the quality of the client/counsellor or therapist relationship which must be managed within the boundaries of expectation agreed between the two parties at the outset. (Both Rogers and Wilber would expect the therapist or counsellor to have familiarised themselves with the healing process as seekers of health before engaging in their work with clients.) That the process is contingent upon having a 'good' counsellor or therapist is somewhat worrying. Most of the women in this study had one or two alarming tales to relate about their negative therapeutic
experiences, some of which, arguably, delayed the healing process by many years. Of course, if one has an innate understanding of the process, as I have suggested may be the case, then it could equally be argued that it is up to the individual to embrace this additional challenge and move beyond it. However, there may be moments of irresolution where the tension becomes unbearable, or moments of fatigue where the impetus to move forward fades.

Healing also appears to be contingent upon having resolved anger. This may not be manifest in any dramatic way but it does need to be ‘exhausted’ somehow. Anger that remains in place always calls a client back to where they are and results in a loss of control and agency. We saw in Emma’s interview, the intuitive understanding of the blockage that unresolved anger causes in respect of her healing process.

‘I never have achieved any particularly emotional release or catharsis because the way [the therapist] was working was cognitive analysis, it is very psychodynamic and to some extent that just fed in to my intellectual processes which allows me to avoid a lot, but what it did very successfully, was keep me focused and kind of draw me out of the real chaotic stuff that was continually going on for me and what it’s really achieved is leaving me in a position where maybe I’m grounded enough now to actually deal with some of the big emotional stuff whereas before, maybe, to some extent, I was a little bit too fragile to actually put it all together. Maybe I would have realised my worst fears and become totally fragmented whereas now, I think I’m in a much better position to deal with that.’

It seems to be clear from this excerpt that the approach of Emma’s therapist has enabled her to retreat into her cognitive functioning as a protective mechanism. She also makes it clear that she expects a ‘release’ as part of the process of healing and that she is teetering on the edge of this and holding herself back in her fear. She acknowledges that her healing process is still in transit when she says: ‘I’m feeling very much still in a transition.’ Indeed, Emma is the only member of the sample group that appears to be ‘stuck’ as a result of not having allowed the process to take her where she needs to be.

So, these women, in my view, have undertaken a heroic journey from one of ‘self-less’ to ‘self-hood’. It has scoured every aspect of their being; mind, body and spirit, and has led them, through transformative learning to healing and personal development. This is, indeed, a journey of ‘becoming’; a spiritual journey, in my view.

Implications for the future

I began this research project by hoping that its impact would be felt in the counselling arena where knowledge about the process of healing would inform the way a counsellor or therapist
accompanied a client as they undertook their healing journey. I hoped too that this would enable them to suspend their own fears of the unknown and trust the naturalness of the process as it unfolded and carried their client towards healing. I believe these hopes have been satisfied. Too often we have heard of the damage a counsellor can reap when they misjudge their interventions and block the way to learning. However, it should be emphasised that it is not the purpose of grounded theory to create an interventionist strategy, but to understand 'what is going on here'. In spite of the retrospective desire for a process map articulated by the contributors to this study, it cannot be seen as a formulaic solution. It can, as I have suggested, act as a valuable set of reference points for both counsellor and client and perhaps give permission for both to rest awhile when the going gets tough, knowing that the momentum of the process will reassert itself and carry the traveller to the next stage when she is ready. There are many instances where processes are explained in order to assist a person pass through them more efficiently, elegantly and boldly, but usually, there is no substitute for direct experience. Although the volunteers suggested that their transformative process would have been helped by an understanding of what was in store for them, in fact, foreknowledge of the process may not have proven to be helpful at all as it would be hard to conceive of, or act upon, the stages that required an experiential input. An analogy can be drawn with writing up a thesis. Although much is written about the process, there is no way of short-circuiting the experience and reaching an early and painless conclusion based upon informed advice from others. The process must be experienced first hand in order for the writer to arrive at a point where she can concur with others' interpretation and analysis of the process. Childbirth is another example that springs to mind as well as learning to drive, falling in love and losing a parent. Although the old adage, 'forewarned is forearmed' may not apply, in this case, some comfort, may be gained, by knowing that the process is transitory, has its own wisdom and will take you where you need to go.

This research is limited by the gender of the research group but it would be interesting to note if the identified features of the process were uniquely attributable to women or whether men would experience the same phenomena as they engage in their healing process. A similar research study amongst a community of men for comparison therefore would be both interesting and illuminating.

I have endeavoured to compare and link my model to those that exist in the fields of adult learning and personal, life-stage and spiritual development. By thus positioning this substantive theory, 'the man in the know can start transcending his finite grasp of things' (Glaser, 1978: 13) and transfer this newly organised knowledge to other well known areas
thereby allowing for breakthroughs in the breadth and depth of knowing and understanding which can then be used purposefully to pursue new possibilities and opportunities.

Reflections on the research process

When following the grounded research method for this project, it quickly became apparent that there are significant epistemological and methodological differences between Glaser and Strauss, the original conceptualisers for this research methodology. Glaser’s approach reveals his commitment to the principles and practices of the qualitative paradigm which he interprets as inherently flexible and guided by the participants in the research pool and their personally constructed realities. He advocates an organic approach to the research and is much less directive about the procedures and processes that should be adopted. Strauss, on the other hand, seems to more prescriptive in his approach; advocating the adherence to rules which could, I believe, get in the way of the imaginative and creative application of the methodology, rendering it frustratingly complex and dry. In his concern to be academically credible and rigorous, Strauss may have moved closer to the quantitative rather than the qualitative paradigm. As a neophyte in the field of qualitative research, I found myself referring to and responding more enthusiastically to Glaser’s approach whilst equally being concerned about rigor, reliability, repeatability, precision and verification. In outlining the specifics of my research approach, I hope that I have managed to negotiate a sensible path between the two theorists’ preferences and arrive at a substantive theory that contributes credibly to work in the field.

In addition, I see the close resemblance between phenomenology and grounded theory and the ease with which the distinction between the two can become blurred. Skodol-Wilson and Ambler-Hutchinson (1996) in their review of methodological mistakes in grounded theory refer to ‘the frank violation of the grounded theory philosophy and methodology’ (1996: 224) and Baker et al (1992) assert that it is ‘not uncommon for an investigator to purport to use one or the other while in fact combining elements of each.’ (1992: 1355) They go on to clarify the difference in outcome between the two approaches: The goal of empirical phenomenological research... is to describe the ‘world-as-experienced’ by the participants of the inquiry in order to discover the common meanings underlying empirical variations of a given phenomenon.’ (1992: 1356) whereas the goal of grounded theory is: ‘to understand what is going on’ (Glaser, 1978: 3) by identifying the core and subsidiary processes operating within it. ‘The grounded theory method generates inductively based theoretical explanations of social and psychosocial processes.’ (1992: 1357) Taking a simplistic view, I see phenomenology as a highly specific, deductive approach which converges on an individual’s interpretation of the world and which results in rich description which is not generalisable.
Whilst I see grounded theory as a means of identifying common themes in social process amongst a diverse group, which results in an induced theory that is, at least, substantially generalisable. Although this makes the distinction between the two approaches clear, I nonetheless broke some of the ‘rules’ as espoused by Baker et al (1992) as I undertook this research project.

- I did not observe behaviour in context nor were meanings derived from social interaction, indeed, I was concerned to access clean data by minimising social interaction during data collection.

- I was using retrospective descriptions of the ‘world-as-experienced’ (1992: 1356) by participants to identify the codes, concepts and categories on the way to inducing theory. This, along with my personal identification with the research, led to the temptation to think about the data descriptively, rather than abstractly or theoretically.

- I decided, in my research, not to return to the purposive sample to present my initial interpretation to them for validation, indeed, I hoped to engage with them as lightly as possible to avoid encouraging them to dwell in the past. This is counter to the recommendation made by Riley (1996) to engage in ‘member checking’ where participants are given the opportunity to assess the accuracy of the early analysis.

Having appreciated some method slurring and rule breaking in my approach, I call upon Glaser’s (1978) more flexible line to justify this.

As I think about the grounded theory process that I adopted, there is no doubt in my mind that it was the ‘right’ approach for this project and it has, I believe, succeeded in enabling me to reach the objectives I set myself at the outset of this research study. However, in the course of revisiting the transcripts of the interviews many times during the analysis and writing-up phase, I still feel that the richness of each interview has not been fully extrapolated. (Perhaps this signifies a future phenomenological study.) There may still be valuable nuances that I have missed, the omission of which does not do justice to the contributors. The focus on the codes and the process of constant comparative analysis may well have raised my attention to a level that neglected some interesting, and perhaps contradictory, aspects of the data. Nevertheless, in as much as I have done so, I do believe that I have represented the views and experiences of the research group accurately and that

25 Goulding (1999) points towards the risk of confusing inductive research with grounded theory and refers to Strauss and Corbin (1994) who acknowledge over emphasis on induction and its potential to play down the role of theoretical sensitivity. Goulding also refers to Katz (1983) who challenges the nature of induction:

‘What field researchers actually do when they use analytical induction would be described more properly by philosophers of science as ‘retroduction’ than as induction. A double fitting or alternative shaping of both observation and explanation, rather than an ex post facto discover of explanatory ideas...’ (Katz, 1983: 133-4)
what has emerged is indeed a valuable contribution to the field of psychotherapy, learning and personal development. The intended process map has been created and acknowledgement of the complexity – and simplicity – of this wise process has been articulated. None of this would have been possible without an ordered and structured approach such as grounded theory.

Another time, I would, I believe, dwell longer in the words of the women at the outset, steeping myself in the data, the patterns it created and the conditions and contingencies that emerged from them. This I would do purely to make the process more streamlined and to prevent the necessity of revisiting the transcripts again and again which was a feature of my process during this research project. Notwithstanding this inefficiency, the approach I adopted, was I believe, effective in drawing me into the worlds of the women I was studying and left little of importance unsaid.

Although the process advocates neutrality, or as much of it as possible, at the outset, it would render the researcher 'mindless' if this were truly the case. Actually, this is an area where I have invested personal and professional interest so complete neutrality was almost impossible to achieve, although I made every attempt to do so by not reading learned texts whilst undertaking the analysis. However, having consciously put aside the need to read such texts, I succeeded in 'back loading' the study and massively increasing my workload as time pressures for completing the project were coming to bear. This surely affected the quality and breadth of my literature review and exposed me to the dangers of honeycomb knowledge in the area of transformative learning and its related fields. Although I accept the rationale behind Glaser's (1978) injunction not to read in the substantive area, I do question the practicality and wisdom of this as the research accelerates towards the finishing line.

At the outset of the research, I had aspirations for identifying a process map that would assist travellers in making their journey knowledgeably, effectively and swiftly having been forewarned of its idiosyncrasies, challenges and pitfalls. However, I later came to appreciate that, although it is possible to build such a map, it is not possible to short-circuit the route and protect people from the necessity of their own experiences. I had to conclude, therefore, that rather than being able to use the map in an active, interventionist way, I would have to settle for something more passive. Accepting that it is not possible to live people's experiences for them, perhaps it is possible to reassure them that they are not 'off track' and that they will arrive at their destination, albeit having been through their own version of the stages on the journey. Indeed, Baker et al (1992), stress that 'in the case of a grounded theory study, the important question is the usefulness of the theory that has been generated'.
It is my hope that this will be the case in the same way that an understanding of bereavement stemmed from the work of Kübler-Ross (1969).

Due to the ethical considerations involved in doing this research, it became difficult to extend the net to recruit volunteers beyond those that originally responded to the advertisement. For this reason, the theoretical sample was not one that was distinguished by different knowledge, circumstances or experiences to the purposive sample. Ideally, I would have liked to have extended the boundaries of the research to those who felt that they had been through a transformative process of any nature, and to have included males and ethnic minorities in the catchment area. In spite of finding resonant features in other's models of transformation during the comparative analysis, I am nonetheless unable to claim full generalisability and therefore a formal theory from my research, rather, I have formed a substantive theory that describes the specific attributes of the transformative process in the journey of 'becoming' for those that had experienced primal wounding as children.

Some personal observations about the process of undertaking this research

I find, as I am nearing the end of this thesis, that I am reflecting more deeply on the research process and how it has affected me. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I feel that I have experienced a transformative process as a result of taking this research project from conception to closure. At the outset, I looked at the project objectively, believing that I would proceed according to the grounded theory framework and emerge with a neatly packaged theory that would inform both my, and others', understanding. I did not anticipate the personal depths that I would plumb nor did I anticipate the process changing me in any way.

Sitting with the women volunteers as they related their experiences; listening to the tape recordings of the interviews; transcribing them and then reading the transcripts many times over has brought me close to a group of people with whom I can identify strongly and who I find I wish to honour by representing them accurately in speaking their truths. Through their stories, metaphors and words, I have taken them inside my consciousness and feel a connection that I hadn't expected. I find myself wanting to re-acquaint myself with them and take some sisterly steps alongside them to see where they are now in their journeys. At the same time, I need to distance myself from them so that I can hear their words and understand their meanings without the warm cloak of friendship damping clear and non-invested thinking. This reciprocating process of close involvement with the volunteers (embeddedness) and stepping back to take an objective or distant view (disassociation) is,
ironically, not unlike the growthful movement described by the developmental psychologists in their various age, stage, crisis driven or chronologically controlled models.

I also found that I was reluctant to be critical of the theorists' work that I reviewed in the course of developing a deeper understanding of the terrain I was traversing. In Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1986) terms, I was developing my knowing through 'received knowledge', that which is taken on as being 'correct' from an authority who shall remain unquestioned. I was looking for the 'right' answer through the wisdom of others, covering my eyes, ears and senses as I took on board the voices of 'knowers'. In my literature review, I was looking for validation through similarity, not a unique finding through difference. Indeed, I was fearful of difference because it would force me to stand alone and be disconnected from others; a troublesome place for a woman. (See Gilligan, 1982) It was only when I read Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1986) study and received a challenge from my supervisor that I realised what I had been doing. I had given my intellectual power away through distrust in my own critical faculties or familiarity with the topic I was researching. This resulted in a great upheaval, a reorientation, a change in meaning perspective and drove me back into my words with a critical eye. It also gave me a new facet of understanding of the women in the study. I realised too that I was struggling to mould a thesis using others' structures, techniques and styles and that I was not being reflected by my words but was hidden somewhere beneath the surface, which I hoped would appear polished, elegant, thoughtful – and 'correct'. Although my ambitions for the finished product remain unaltered, I nonetheless had to return to the text to reintroduce myself to the words and to weave my own thread through the writing. I had, at the point at which I had this realisation, written over 70,000 words and, I reasoned, it was impossible that anyone else could have written these words in exactly the same way or reached exactly the same conclusions that I had. Although I felt vulnerable at the thought that my words and conclusions could never be considered absolutely 'correct'; a nonsense in the light of the infinite variability of thoughts and styles between all researchers; I nevertheless developed a boldness, or confidence, that my unique offering was indeed valid and that I must have the courage of my convictions. This was not a piece of work that I could hide behind; I was neither indivisible from my work nor could I be invisible in presenting it. And so it was that I became authoritative and developed the capacity for what Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) call 'constructed knowledge'; defined as 'an effort to reclaim the self by attempting to integrate knowledge that was intuitively and personally important with knowledge learned from others... the weaving together of strands of rational and emotive thought and of integrating objective and subjective knowing.' (1986: 134) This epistemological stance allows for the holding of paradox, dichotomy, contradiction and conflicting thought. Again, quoting Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986): 'Women
constructivists show a high tolerance for internal contradiction and ambiguity. They abandon completely the either/or thinking so common to the previous positions described. They recognise the inevitability of conflict and stress.’ (1986, 137) ‘Opening the mind and the heart to embrace the world was characteristic only of the women at the position of constructed knowledge.’ Constructivists seek to stretch the outer boundaries of their consciousness... They become passionate knowers; knowers who enter into a union with that which is to be known.’ (1986: 141) In the spirit of constructivism and ‘constructed knowing’, and in recognition of the passionate pursuit of knowing displayed by the volunteers in this study, it has become my intention that this thesis will stand in its own right, my right and the contributors’ right to bring illumination to a messy, conflicting and contradictory process that is undergone by many to varying degrees of success.

Mezirow (1991) states that symbols play a crucial role in construing meaning when higher-order mental processes are in play. His early favoured mythical symbol was that of Sysyphus, damned to push a boulder to the top of a mountain only to have it come cashing down again and again. This, to illustrate the futility of living our lives without challenging the roles we play. (Mezirow, 1978: 101) Geertz (1973) observes that a poem, which can serve as a symbolic model of the emotional impact of, say, premature death, can similarly transform physical sensations into sentiments and attitudes that enable us to react to such a tragedy, not blindly but intelligently. (in Mezirow, 1991: 23)

For me, the quotation at the beginning of this chapter says it all. I believe that the women in this study are responding to the call to find their truth; a truth that lies in the deepest recesses of their being and one that bubbles up from the primordial soup, or the ‘unus mundus’, where mind and matter are united and undifferentiated. They are truly in the process of ‘becoming’.

It seems fitting, in the light of Gerrtz’s comments, to end this writing with a poem that was significant for Jay, one of the interviewees in the theoretical sample. The poem is The Second Coming by W. B. Yeats. The term ‘widening gyre’ at the end of the first line is reflective of the conical spiral that became the model for the process that Jay and others described. The third line; ‘Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold’ represents, for her, the fall into chaos and the futility of trying to hold on and remain in control whilst things fall apart, yet it is in the letting go, that strength and freedom can be found. Another interpretation of the poem sees the falcon as the ‘head’ or ‘intellect’ containing logic and cognition and the falconer as the ‘body’ or ‘heart’ containing sensations and feelings. Metaphorically speaking, perhaps the head and the heart have to express themselves
separately in order to know themselves before they can re-connect and re-integrate in the image of the Sphinx, which brings these two components together again.

I reproduce the poem as a mark of respect for her, her work and the contribution she made to this thesis and I offer it to the other women who gave me their time and considered thoughts.

The Second Coming - W. B. Yeats

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all convictions, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Finally

I set out on this research project to undertake a grounded theory study of adults' experiences of transformative learning as part of personal development. My hoped for outcome was a process map, one that was of relevance to those that had experienced primal wounding in childhood, and one that would help illuminate the transformative healing journey to promote understanding amongst the community of travellers and their guides. Not only do I believe I have succeeded in doing this but also, I believe I have identified the basic social psychological process (BSPP), the unifying theme pertaining to the process, that of transformative learning as a way of 'becoming'; a process resonant of Maslow's (1999) self-actualising, Jung's (1921) concept of individuation and Roger's (1961) process of becoming a
[fully functioning] person, the attributes, which I believe are demonstrated by the women who contributed this study, are listed below:

- An increasing openness to experience – being open to feelings of fear, discouragement and pain but also open to feelings of courage, tenderness and awe. This person is free to live her feelings subjectively and free to be aware of these feelings. (1961: 187-188)

- Increasingly existential living – 'To open one's spirit to what is going on now, and to discover in that present process whatever structure it appears to have.' (1961: 189)

- An increasing trust in her organism 'as a means of arriving at the most satisfying behaviour in each existential situation.' (1961: 189) These people are able to represent themselves authentically; they are intuitive and free to express their feelings as they arise.

- The process of functioning more fully – This brings with it a sense of personal power; of self reliance and self directedness which gives the person a feeling of being able to do anything they may wish to do.

- Creativity as an element of the good life – She would live expressing her own creative truth, interpreting life according to her uniqueness. Such a person would 'fit a vanguard of human evolution.' (1961: 194)

I had hoped, that in creating an understanding of the process, it could be used as a tool to assist people move through it more effectively and efficiently. However, grounded theory merely seeks to answer the question 'what is going on here?', it is not designed to create a tool that can be used for developmental interventions. If informed intervention is desired, it must, therefore, be the focus of a further study, although, with the caveat that experiential processes cannot be replaced by tools or techniques.

It is with relief and joy that I release the findings of this study into the academic domain, perhaps they will find a life of their own as they are burnished by intellectual scrutiny and debate.

**Note to the reader**

Having undertaken this research in the spirit of feminist research (Reinharz and Davidman, 1992) where the researcher puts herself into the study, you will now know who I am. This has been a transformative experience that has brought me to a new place of self-knowledge. It has been unexpectedly difficult and the trials have been many but I rest in gratitude that these processes are part of human experience and trust that they will continue to play out in my life as I move on from this research project.
BLANK IN ORIGINAL
REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY


Barber, Paul. (1999) Theoretical Orientations: Action research & Phenomenology. Published for the Research Methods Programme at the University of Surrey: UK


Ferrucci, Piero (1982) What We May Be: the vision and techniques of psychosynthesis. Thorsons Publishing Group


Gregory, J. (1994) *A Grounded Theory Study of the Education of Hospital Nurses: how education for interpersonal relating influences the way nurses relate to each other in the college and on the ward.* University of Surrey: UK


Hollos, James (1993) *The Middle Passage: from misery to meaning in midlife*. Inner City Books: Toronto


237


Kohlberg, L. (1958) *The Development of Modes of Thinking and Choices in Years 10 to 16*. PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago


Lakoff, George, and Johnson, Mark. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. The University of Chicago Press


Peck, Scott M. (1987) The Different Drum, the creation of true community – the first step to world peace. Rider


Tennant, Mark and Pogson, Philip. (1995) *Learning and Change in the Adult Years: a developmental perspective.* John Wiley and Sons Inc: San Francisco


Usher, Kim., and Holmes, Colin. (1997) *Ethical Aspects of Phenomenological Research with Mentally Ill People.* Nursing Ethics, Volume 4, Issue 1, pp 49-56


Werner, H. (1957) *The Concept of Development from a Comparative and Organismic Point of View.* In Harris, Ed. The Concept of Development. University of Minnesota: Minneapolis


Williams, David D. (Ed) (1986) *Naturalistic Evaluation.* (New directions for program evaluation, Number 30.) Jossey-Bass: San Francisco


APPENDICES
BLANK IN ORIGINAL
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. The process that you have volunteered to take part in involves a meeting to explore your understanding and perceptions of the transformative journey you have undertaken. The meeting is likely to last between one and two hours and it will be recorded and transcribed. Full confidentiality and anonymity of all material is assured.

PARTICIPANT RELEASE AGREEMENT

I agree to participate in this research study. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. As a research participant I accept responsibility for my thoughts, feelings and behaviour. I grant permission for the data to be used in the process of completing a PhD degree, including a written thesis. I understand that although the thesis is confidential, in the event of any future publications any information that might identify me will be disguised. I also understand that all material will be used in a respectful and ethical manner.

I give permission for the interviews to be recorded and I am aware that all tapes will be destroyed on completion of the PhD study.

Name

Address

Telephone Number

E-mail

Signed

Research Participant:

Primary Researcher:

Date
BLANK IN ORIGINAL
Appendix II

Transcript for the advertisement placed in the Journal of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy in the July 2000 edition:

I am a PhD student undertaking research into the transformative processes that enable someone to overcome childhood sexual abuse. In order to understand how a person comes to term with this kind of trauma and goes on to live a fulfilling life, I am looking for people to interview. If you feel able to talk about your own journey to health, would you be interviewed by me? Total discretion is guaranteed.

Please respond to:

Dena Michelli
Box 180
80 High Street
Winchester
SO23 9AT
Appendix III

NB I have used yellow to identify concepts and themes and blue to illustrate recurring themes in all interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Theoretical Memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heather's interview. Conducted at her home on 4\textsuperscript{th} August 2001</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well, what I'll do is, just for the sake of the tape, just go through what I've just said to you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *Which is to say that this is only going to be used for the thesis and all names and references to places will be removed so that there's no means of identifying who you are, that everything that you say will be kept entirely confidential, I won't be discussing your interview with anybody and that we have a tape recorder here recording the entire interview and if at any time you want to stop the process, there's the stop button here which you can... or you can just say to me that you'd like it to stop and I'll press the button and stop the recording. What I'll do is I'll transcribe the tape, probably won't be for a few weeks, and send you the transcription. I'll keep the tape and once I've been through the PhD process I will either return the tape to you or destroy it whichever you prefer, but I have to keep it for the PhD as evidence but it won't survive longer than that. So, is there anything you need to ask or any concerns about this process before we start?*
| | |
| I don't think so. | | |
| **OK. If there are any, just raise them as we go along. That's absolutely fine. OK. So, we'll start the process then. And you very kindly answered an advertisement asking for people who had experiences of sexual abuse in childhood and have now got to the point of feeling healthy. I think** | | |
that was the wording I used in the advertisement, and I wonder if you could tell me first about how it is you feel now.

1h. How I feel now? Um. Well I feel that, er, I'm quite successful in my life. I've raised two children, not without difficulty but I have raised them. Um, I have a successful career which I'm developing all the time and I feel as if I have a sense of myself these days, a sense of my own identity which has been lacking through a large part of my life really which now seems not to be the case. It seems like it's different now.

Right.

I feel less um, fragmented really. More sort of whole, complete than I have done through my entire life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1h</th>
<th>2h</th>
<th>3h</th>
<th>4h</th>
<th>5h</th>
<th>6h</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listing achievements - successful, raised two children, career — equating these to feelings.</td>
<td>Having a sense of self.</td>
<td>Feeling different now.</td>
<td>Feeling less fragmented.</td>
<td>Feeling 'whole', complete.</td>
<td>Recognising that she was repeating the patterns in her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1h-5h. Definition of 'health' compared to the beginning of the journey of healing — integrated with a sense of self. This is not an 'absolute' point, (use of words like 'less' or 'more' implying that there may be further to go) rather this is another step along the way with many interviewees anticipating further work and further healing. Perhaps this is a description of a stage, or resting place, on the journey that creates the foundation for the next phase.</td>
<td>1h. When asked how she was feeling now compared to the beginning of her journey she offered a list of her achievements, not feelings.</td>
<td>1h-5h. Being a successful parent and managing a career contribute to feeling well. These are outward, measurable qualities; the other qualities (whole, complete, less fragmented) are more internal and abstract.</td>
<td>3h. Feeling different now to how it was before. However difficult it is to grapple with what that means, it indicates that a transition has occurred.</td>
<td>6h. Making connections between her father and her husband and recognising similar patterns of behaviour. It seems she couldn't</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What triggered it?

*Or was there a trigger? Perhaps I should ask.*

6h. Um, gosh I’d have to think. I think... I reached a point, being married to my ex-husband, he was quite abusive um, and I think I reached a point where I realised that a lot of what was happening in our relationship was happening because of what had happened to me before.

*Mmm.*

I was kind of like repeating patterns and... I probably married Chris because he was very like my Dad and when I realised that, that seemed to be the turning point because until I’d realised that, I was trapped in that relationship and it was when I realised that I no longer wanted to be, even though I couldn't do anything about it at that time, I think that *kick started something* and I’m trying to think if there was anything particular that did that. I think, something that might have done it was um Chris's attitude to Maddie, that’s our youngest. Maddie had a lot of health problems when she was young and has minor learning difficulties — nothing major, but minor learning difficulties and Chris was never very um comfortable with her, to say the least, because she wasn’t what he perceived to be perfect.

*Mmm.*

And, whilst that didn’t matter so much when she was smaller, because he was hardly here anyway and I did a lot of the caring, as she got older, I realised that she was picking that up and I *could see her behaving in ways that I had behaved and I think that was the trigger* and I thought I don’t want this, this is not OK anymore. He wasn’t abusive.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7h</td>
<td>Making connections between her husband and her father — reaching a point of realisation.</td>
<td>make these connections until she observed the dynamic between her husband and her daughter. Was this because she could observe the dynamic more objectively? Subjectively, it didn’t have the same impact. Perhaps because she was so used to being treated in a certain way that she didn’t see anything wrong with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8h</td>
<td>Feeling trapped in her marriage once she realised that she was repeating patterns.</td>
<td>7h, 8h, 9h. (Moustakas, C., Phenomenological Research Methods, Sage Publications, 1994, pp127 – taken from Palmieri’s Study of Childhood Abuse, 1990 – The Experience of Adults Abused as Children. Taken from his interview with ‘Geraldine’. “I know what scared me the most was mainly with my oldest daughter...she’s going to be ten and starting to develop. That’s a strong fear of the same thing happening to her that happened to me.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9h</td>
<td>Seeing behaviours in her daughter that she recognised in herself.</td>
<td>7h, 8h. Seeing her own dysfunctional behaviours reflected in her daughter’s behaviours led to fear of the same history unfolding for her daughter. As a parent, this was unacceptable and it stimulated action on Heather’s part that began her own journey of healing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10h</td>
<td>Wanting to protect her daughter.</td>
<td>11h. When Heather made a choice to protect her daughter it occurred to her that the situation wasn’t OK for her or her other daughter either. It was at this point that she started seeking help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11h</td>
<td>Fearing her daughter would experience abuse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12h</td>
<td>Recognising that what was causing her younger daughter to behave in a certain way was not OK for Heather and her other daughter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mmm.

It was abusive but he wasn't actually physically or sexually abusive um and I could see that that was going to have a detrimental effect on her and I didn't want that so I suppose in some ways, it was really..... it started because I wanted to protect Maddie from anything like that which could have bordered on emotional abuse in a way, and I didn't want that to happen and I think maybe that then started making me realise what had gone before and that maybe this wasn't OK for any of us really. And that started..... and I think at that point, perhaps I started to realise as well that I needed some help with a lot of the things that were going on because I was struggling to parent the girls at that stage.

Mmm.

15h. And, I was sort of succeeding but I wasn't..... I was aware that I wasn't doing it in a way that I was happy with and I felt like, ah what... there was something missing almost. Everything had been fine up until the girls reached a certain age I think. When the girls reached a certain age, things changed and I think, I don't know whether that was linked with stuff from my past, I don't know, but when they reached a certain age it somehow became more difficult for me. I couldn't give them the same kind of physical contact and, you know, the affection that they needed and... I think that naturally happens when children reach a certain age, that they don't want you to kiss them at the school gate and that kind of stuff but it was more than that...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14h</td>
<td>Struggling to parent the girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15h</td>
<td>Succeeding on one level but not on another. Something was missing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16h</td>
<td>Making possible links between the girls at a certain age and own experiences as a child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17h</td>
<td>Withholding affection from children as they reached a certain age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18h</td>
<td>Sensing that 'something was wrong' in her parenting skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15h-18h. Being able to parent the girls on one level (practical) but withdrawing affection and physical comfort from them (emotional) when they reached a certain age. Compartmentalising? Coping in one domain but not in another. Intuitively recognising that something was wrong but not being able to determine what it was. The act of withholding triggered concern and brought the situation into focus. Wilber, In the Atman Project credits Gardner, (and indirectly, Piaget) with the insight that development is composed of a variety of domains (developmental lines) and that a human can be competent in one domain whereas this competence would not be identical to that in other domains. This may explain why Heather was a practically competent as a mother but emotionally withheld.
Mmm.

19h. ...and I was aware of that. I was also aware that they had become more aware of the difficulties I was having and that were....the things that were going on between Chris and I. I'd been able to protect them from that up to that point. And in protecting them, I suppose I was in a sort of denial. We were ticking over, just about ticking over, but when things no longer were ticking over and the cracks were beginning to show, I think I realised at that point.....when they started to say... when children start to say things like 'why', why do you do that, why are you like that, I started to question that myself.

Mmm.

And then I realised that it was obvious to everybody else, or to other people, it was obvious these things that I used to do, these compulsive things or whatever, the odd little behaviours that I had were apparent to other people and once I realised that, I didn't like that, I realised that I perhaps needed to do something about it.

Mmm.

So it was all of those things seemed to come together at the same time. Just... I suppose it was.... I'd reached a stage where I had become more self-aware maybe and it was only those combination of factors that triggered that awareness really.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19h</td>
<td>Being questioned by children about her behaviours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20h</td>
<td>Recognising strategy of denial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21h</td>
<td>'Ticking over' in her role as a parent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22h</td>
<td>Starting to question herself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23h</td>
<td>Feeling exposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24h</td>
<td>Combination of triggers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19h. Children were observing Heather's behaviours and asking 'why' she did certain things which made her question herself. Had the children reached a certain stage in their development that mirrored Heather's when it was arrested by abuse? Not having experienced 'normal' development herself, she may not have known how to fulfil her role as mother.

20h. Fulfilling her role as a protector of her children meant that she could deny the dysfunction in herself and her family but it reached a point where the enormity of the denial was revealed by her daughters' questioning and the strategy was no longer effective. At this stage, there was nothing else for it but to do something about it.
Right. And what... you said when they got to that age, what age was that?

25h. Um, Bethany would have been, what would she have been?, probably ten or eleven and Maddie would have been a few years younger than that. So, the difficulties probably initially started with Bethany, I think, yes they did, and that had a knock-on effect for Maddie. It was easier, in some ways, for me to continue the kind of contact, physical contact, with Maddie because she was ill and needed me to do those things for her and things like that but with Bethany, I found I was drifting...

Mmm.

...further and further away from her. And I gave myself lots of excuses for that um but there reached a point when I realised that really there was no excuse, it was something that was going on inside of me that was responsible for that. I'm not sure what it was, but something was happening.

25h. Something felt wrong but Heather was unable to determine what it was. Withholding affection from your children must feel wrong at some level. How do we know how to parent our children? Who teaches us? Is it innate in us? Was affection withheld from Heather when she was the same age as her daughter? Some people see abuse as the only 'soft touch' a child may receive; the only demonstration of love or affection. Perhaps this is an indication of the brutality of Heather's abuse?

Mmm. So what happened... the question!!... what did you do next in order to move forward from that?

28h. Um. I think, once I started to become aware of those things, of and of course, the other thing that happened around that ... actually, I don't know why I forgot to say that ... The important thing, probably, that happened at that point was that my Mum died.

Mmm.

And I think that ... it not only brought up a lot of the stuff from the past,

28h Death of her mother – trigger.

29h Things started to come undone.

30h Coping strategies falling.

31h Coping on two levels. Managing quite well on the social level, not the

31h-30h. When her mother died, all that she had 'held on to' escaped her grasp and things 'started to come undone'. Had she colluded with her mother to keep things under wraps and her departure triggered the questioning process? – Use of metaphor very strong. Ref: Metaphors we live by. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.
but it also ... I think that was a contributing factor in me not being able to function in the way that I had been doing and things almost started to come undone. You know, it was as if I’d been holding on to everything, all these threads, as it were, very tightly, and juggling everything and managing to ... managing to function, I mean, I think, I probably was managing quite well on the surface. I think I probably functioned on two levels. There was a bit of me that was always separate from the self that people saw, the person that people saw. When my Mum died, and it was around that time, um, it was like I couldn’t do that anymore.

Mmm.

33h. Couldn’t kind of keep up this, what was it? It was not a pretence, but I couldn’t keep functioning in that way anymore. Everything started to come undone and I started... Eventually, I had to have some counselling because of the impact of my Mum’s death I think. I think that was... but it was a good way after, it was a good, I don’t know, probably getting on for twelve months after my Mum’s death. I’d been struggling along thinking that I would be able to do what I’d always done and sort it and put it away, you know, compartmentalise everything, which is what I’d always done and, I wasn’t able to do that. I wasn’t even able to compartmentalise my Mum’s death and at the same time all these other boxes were opening, you know, and so it was all beginning to come unhinged and I couldn’t hold it and, then the behaviours that I had had before which enabled me to cope, the strategies, were no longer working. Nothing was working really, it was all just... So I had some counselling which was helpful in a way because it helped me kind of... I didn’t talk about the abuse or anything like that, but it helped me kind of, I don’t know, just being able to talk about how I felt about my Mum and what was happening in my life at that time helped me. Because I used to go week after week, talking about what had happened during that week and I could... when I think back now, I needed to do that because I couldn’t get a hold, I couldn’t kind of... I think everything was falling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological level</th>
<th>32h Withholding self from others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33h Losing the ability to function as before</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34h Counselling due to the impact of her mother’s death - but 12 months afterwards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35h Resorting to ‘old’ coping strategies – compartmentalising things – but they didn’t work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36h Nothing working</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37h Everything was disintegrating; falling apart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38h Unable to ‘get a hold’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39h Talking about things each week enabled her</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33h. Strong use of metaphor – boxes becoming unhinged, juggling. Many interviewees pepper their accounts with metaphors to describe their process. Perhaps because they just don’t have the words. In Rachel’s interview, she reported that she couldn’t talk about her abuse until she became educated and had the language to convey what had happened.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35h. Resorting to old coping strategies as a means of staving off the inevitable and returning to the ‘safe place’ of denial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39h. Going to a counsellor every week and just talking about what had happened during the week was a new coping strategy. It enabled Heather to get a picture of her life through externalising her thoughts and hearing herself. Is there something about this externalisation process that helps create clarity about what is going on? ?The therapeutic effects of talking and being heard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

257
apart to such... it was disintegrating really, um, because my strategies for coping were no longer working, and so, going every week to the counsellor meant that I was able to, kind of, um, it enabled me to cope. It kind of gave me a different coping strategy and I began to realise through talking about what was happening through the week - that was the only thing I could do, I couldn't go there and talk about what was really bothering me - but by talking about the things that were happening through the week I began to get a picture of my life as it was then.

Mmm.

40h. Um, and a much clearer picture of what it was like for the girls, what my relationship was like with Chris, although I never explored any of those things, just talking about my week helped me to, sort of, begin to see in a way I'd never been able to see before, like... it was like, previously I'd been moving through this fog and not been able to see anything, you know, in front of my face, and now I began to see things in front of my face and that's when I began to realise, very very gradually, I mean it sounds... it didn't happen overnight, it took a long time... that that couldn't continue.

Because it was affecting the girls and I suppose that was my impetus for change, really, that it was affecting the girls more than that it was affecting me. I needed to protect them. It was always very important to me that they were OK, um, more so than myself. It was as if I didn't count but they did. They were important.

So you were talking about coping strategies prior to this um or this period. What sort of coping strategies are you talking about? You talked about compartmentalising, is that what you mean by a coping strategy?

to get a picture of her life.

40h. Clearing the fog.
41h. Being able to see things in a new way.
42h. Putting the girls' well-being before her own.
43h. Recognising that the situation was affecting the girls and she needed to protect them.
44h. Low self-esteem. 'I didn't count.' 'They were important.'
45h. Coping strategy: disassociation.
46h. Living life in a

40h. Using the metaphor of not being able to see in front of her face because of the fog and, through talking, she was able to see a much clearer picture of what it was like for the girls and what her relationship was like with her husband.

45h. Disassociation. Splitting oneself and living on two levels as a means of getting through life. Hiding a part of herself away and never letting it out. The hurt child?
45h. I think that’s probably one. I think... I didn’t know then what my coping strategies were. I know now by looking back but I think I probably... What had happened to me, I think, as a child, I had... In order to cope with that, I had disassociated from the experiences and I think that continued. I think I lived my life like that, disassociated from any kind of real contact with life, if you see what I mean? I know what it means, I can’t explain it! So that I was, um... it’s this business of splitting, almost, again, living on two levels. There was a bit of me that never came out. It was only just... I could almost put roles on, you know, I was a mother and I did that bit, I would go to work and I’d do that bit and nobody would ever know. In fact people commented as I got to know them that they never really knew me because they didn’t... there was no way they were going to get to know anything about me because that was risky. It made me feel vulnerable. And I think that was a level of disassociation that I lived on and I think denial as well. Although I never forgot. I never um, what’s the word? I always had the memories, although I think what I’d done with the memories was put them on hold. They were always there but I’d put them on hold and if anything ever threatened to... if anything was triggered or anything threatened to come through, I would probably disassociate even more or I would do things like... cleaning was one of my things. You know, I would clean frantically, um. All sorts of sort of practical things I would do. I had to distract myself, um, probably did a lot of that with the girls really. Throw myself into that. I was exhausted a lot of the time because of all the things that I was doing to avoid anything coming through.

Mmm.

So it was like the life that had gone before had been put on hold. It was there and it wasn’t part of my... I didn’t bring that with me into my adult life somehow and therefore didn’t live a complete adult life I was only living that on the surface, if you see?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47h</td>
<td>Living on two levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48h</td>
<td>Putting on roles as a coping strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49h</td>
<td>Hiding part of herself – Withholding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50h</td>
<td>Disassociating/denying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51h</td>
<td>Never forgot, put memories of abuse on hold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52h</td>
<td>Busying herself with tasks to offset the risk of memories coming through – obsessive cleaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53h</td>
<td>Exhausting herself trying to avoid memories from emerging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54h</td>
<td>Life that had gone before was put on hold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55h</td>
<td>Living on the surface.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbing herself to life.

52h. Displacement activities – obsessive cleaning – so that memories couldn’t seep out.

45h-55h. A great deal of effort was put into containing the situation so that it didn’t have to be addressed. It was as if Heather knew that to face the memories and deal with their significance would be extremely challenging and she tried everything to veer away from having to do that.
I do see.

If that explains it.

Yes.

Complicated but that's the only way I can explain it really.

No. I understand that.

Mmm.

It's incredibly well articulated if that doesn't sound patronising. It's... I understand what you're saying. Um, so, so, at that point, you went into counselling and you were just relating your weekly experiences?

Mmm.

Um, so how did you move on from that period?

56h. Um. That actually helped me a lot because, I think, even though then I didn't... I wasn't actually in a position to make any changes, you know, I didn't have any choices... I don't think I was working at that time. Yes I was, I was working part time at that time, but I was very dependent on Chris. I was emotionally dependent upon Chris, he'd made sure of that. Um, but also, financially I was dependent on him and Maddie was ill all the time so it was very difficult to actually extricate from that... myself from that situation... although I knew that I no longer wanted to be in it. That was the start. It was... So I think what I actually did, I started to take small steps forward, you know, things...
like... I didn’t have a lot of confidence and I didn’t have any self-esteem really. Um, so even, you know, going out with the girls from work was a major step for me, major hurdle and a lot of the time I used to cry off but gradually, I started doing small things like that and it was no easy step because Chris was so difficult and I, you know, to sort of um, go against Chris was going against everything that had gone before, if you see what I mean? So I think that... but it was taking little steps like that that actually, gradually, built my self-confidence a little bit, and I needed to do that because I couldn’t actually have made any major changes in my life without building those small steps and I was very fortunate in having, I don’t know, some friends who... work colleagues who were very good, very supportive because they knew, they could see what Chris was like. They used to help me out with the girls because Maddie was ill in hospital a lot and, um, and that helped because I’d never had any of that and being able... and I found it difficult initially to actually accept any support or anything, I felt like I had to do everything on my own...

Mmm.

60h. ...so it was a big step forward when I stopped doing that and when I say ‘stopped doing that’ I still struggle with that but I’m aware of it.

Yes.

You know, and it’s different but... And each step I took made me feel different about myself I think, although I wasn’t aware of it at the time but that was obviously what was happening. I was gradually being able to trust people to help me if I needed help or... I don’t think I trusted that they wouldn’t actually abuse me in some way or... I was always very careful not to get involved but I was getting better at receiving the help that... and support that was offered in small ways and, I think each... it was building on itself very gradually over a... probably a long period

| 60h | Feeling different about herself as she took successive small steps. |
| 61h | Being validated by her manager. |
| 63h | Finding out about the ‘real world’. |
| 64h | Becoming less isolated. |
| 65h | Making herself |

60h. Gradually building self-esteem and being able to trust people. This process was piecemeal and took a long time. The process of breaking down old paradigms and replacing them with new ones.

62h. Many interviewees have talked of the role of academic study in their healing journey. Perhaps it’s because it deals with situations in the abstract which can then be related back to their own experiences. It is a less threatening environment. One in which like-minded people congregate and personal agendas are not at the forefront. This might be the first experience an abused person has of a supportive environment and a real
of time. Probably over about five years I think. Yeh. Probably over about five years and then eventually, I was working in a nursing home at the time, and I injured my back and I wasn't able to work there any more and I was devastated and my manager was very good and actually said ... suggested I went and trained for the Social Work Diploma and I was very very hesitant because I didn't have the confidence to do that and ... but she pushed and pushed and got all the information and kept putting it in front of me and eventually I did apply and I did go and I didn't get on it straight away because I needed to broaden my experience, which was a good thing because then I had to do... I'd actually got a taste for it and then I had to take the next step which was to build some experience towards doing it so that I could go on... they gave me a place but for twelve months hence, um, and that helped. And then I actually... doing that, helped me to see what was out in the 'real world' if you see what I mean. I had lived this very isolated experience and isolated within any kind of setting. I was isolated at work because, always, I had isolated myself inside and, gradually, by going out there and having to take a step forward each time, I was breaking that isolation, but in doing that, I was also making myself vulnerable.

Yes.

66h. And that was creating other problems, because I was making myself vulnerable, but nevertheless, I had this need to keep doing it. I don't know where that was coming from, but I think it was the, sort of, steps that I'd been taking before that had done it. And it was a struggle because Chris was really not helpful. But then the thing that made a huge difference, because Chris and my Dad were very close and very friendly and particularly after my Mum had died, so I felt like I was up against two of them, and, to a lot of extent, I was, but Chris started to work away and that was the best thing that could have ever happened because then I could actually not have anything to do with my Dad if I chose not to. Although it was very difficult because I found it very vulnerable.

education in how healthy relationships are formed and maintained. Is this a process that healthy children go through when they go to school and start becoming individualised? Refs: Eric Erikson's Childhood and Society. Robert Kegan, The Evolving Self.

66h. In spite of the downside of making herself more vulnerable, Heather had this impetus to continue doing it — an internal driver that she didn't understand. Is this what Ken Wilber describes in the Atman Project as a compulsion to actualise (or something like that)?

68h-72h. This was a scary but freeing stage in the process as Heather learned to control her space and find freedom within it. She was challenging her own behaviours and assumptions and being rewarded for doing...
difficult to, sort of, say no to my Dad. If he came to the house then I found it difficult not to let him in or whatever, but I got better at that. When Chris wasn't here... because Chris was actually abusive as well so when Chris wasn't here, gradually I got more and more confidence and would, you know, put the answer machine on and not listen... answer his call or, or if he was knocking at the door, if I saw the car pull up or... I would actually pretend I wasn't in and finding that I could do that, and the world didn't fall down around me, was a huge learning for me but it was very scary at the time.

Yes.

But it was a big turning point, Chris working away. And when he came home, it was very very hard, um, but that breathing space while he was away was really, sort of, freedom... from him and from my Dad. But it also freed me from some of the isolation because my friends would actually call, when Chris and my Dad weren't here, because Chris and my Dad made it very uncomfortable for other people to be here, um, and so people didn't call. So, that actually made a difference too and it was all just, sort of, beginning to branch out. *I was beginning to branch out in very small ways* but each step I took was actually... they were building on each other.

*Mmm.*

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69h</td>
<td>Learning how to control her environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70h</td>
<td>Finding freedom for the first time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71h</td>
<td>Building a supportive network.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72h</td>
<td>Beginning to ‘branch out’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75h. And it did take a long time. It was over a long period of time and it was at... while he was away that I actually started the Social Work course because he didn't want me to do it, he wanted to keep me here obviously and dependent on him and, and that gave me another perspective on life as well.

Yes.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73h</td>
<td>Feeling physically ill after the course content triggered ‘stuff’ from the past.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74h</td>
<td>Feeling confused about why she was unsettled by the course content.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75h</td>
<td>Falling apart; couldn't hold it together any</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

73h. The course content resonated with Heather’s childhood experiences and, although she was unsettled, she didn’t think it was having any effect, yet she was feeling tired and physically ill.
But it was hard and I nearly gave up. And it was while I was on that course that... In fact I nearly gave up, partly because Chris was making life so difficult, and it was difficult, you know, trying to juggle the girls because he wasn't helping, you know, and I had all the assignments to do and the placements and stuff like that, but part of it was the theory that we were covering on the course suddenly started to trigger all this stuff that I'd always known, but had always felt that it was in the past and it was 'done and dusted' and that was OK. But I didn't know what was wrong with me. I just knew that I had reached the point where everyday going into college was a struggle, going into placement was a struggle, I was tired, I thought I was ill, it felt like I was ill. You know, all sort of things, all seemed to be falling apart like I couldn't hold it together anymore and I still couldn't identify what was wrong and I wondered if... because I would listen to the theory slots and think, I know it, you know, I know this, this is not news to me and all of this, but never... and being aware that it disturbed me and I was unsettled but not thinking it was having any effect.

77h. So I decided that maybe the course wasn't for me and I went to see the counsellor that they had at college and was sitting talking to her and never ever mentioned it, never did mention it... and it wasn't that I was avoiding mentioning it, I just didn't think it was significant. I just felt that maybe I wasn't cut out to do this academic course and maybe I needed to change direction so I was kind of trying to explore that and it was whilst I was exploring that, that all this stuff, it just kept popping up and, um, eventually, you know, I don't know how, but it came into the counselling relationship and I brought it into the arena and it was like, um...

This was with your supervisor was it?

No. Counsellor at college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76h</td>
<td>Identified with the theoretical input on the course – triggered 'stuff'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77h</td>
<td>Reaching a point of realisation through talking to the College counsellor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78h</td>
<td>Making connections between course content and past experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79h</td>
<td>Finding clarity – like a light being switched on.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

77h, 79h. Heather was confused that the course was causing her distress because she held the belief that her past experiences had nothing to do with her present feelings – even though it was making her feel ill. The process she is describing is one of clarifying, which I begin to think is the basic social psychological process that defines the healing journey; bringing light to the dysfunctional patterns so that they can be seen and understood.
**Right.**

They had. They have a counselling service at college...

**Right.**

... that you can access and I thought... I didn’t know who else I could talk to about the difficulties really. Because I thought it was *my* difficulty with the course. Maybe it just wasn’t for me.

**Mmm.**

And, I kind of needed to speak to somebody who would be... who wouldn’t be giving me advice, who would just let me, kind of, um, put it all out there so that I could see what was going on and it was whilst that was happening that I gradually came to realise... It was one day I was... I don’t know, it was... there was definitely one day when there was a turning point and I realised that, it was like somebody had, sort of, put the light on, and I realised why I was having all these difficulties. Because I’d had that space to, to look at it all and it kept coming up, not...I didn’t always bring it in to the arena, but it was coming up and I kept thinking why am I harping back on this stuff, what’s the matter with me? And at the same time, of course, it was all erupting anyway. It was all just coming up in all sorts of ways, um, and I still kept thinking, it’s nothing to do with that, it’s the fact that I’m no good at this, or, whatever, but when I actually put it out there, and I suddenly realised, my God, you know, that is why. That’s what the problem is. That’s why I can’t, you know, why all these things, all these memories are coming back, all these things are happening to me and, you know, I couldn’t understand what the flashbacks were and... and when I started to talk about it, I’d put it there and then, of course, she picked that up and then we started to talk about it and it was just like somebody had put a light
on and I realised that, you know, all this time, that all these things that I had been struggling with and... it was to do... it was all related back to that.

Mmm.

And yet I still resisted that because I didn’t think that that could be possible. I felt that that was all in the past and therefore, why was that affecting me there and then. I couldn’t understand that... I’d done... I’d dealt with that, well, I hadn’t dealt with it, it was all in the past and I didn’t think... It took me a long time to, kind of, accept, really, that the difficulties that I was experiencing were actually all related to that.

Yes.

80h. I couldn’t think that something that happened thirty years ago was actually affecting me in this way now.

Yeh.

But when I realised, when we really looked at it, I realised that it wasn’t just affecting me there and then, that it had actually been affecting me in lots of different ways all my life really. We didn’t explore all of that because, you know, once you’ve finished the course at college, you are no longer able to use the counselling service which actually was... that was um... I actually don’t know that that’s OK that they do that with people because I had established a relationship with that counsellor and then suddenly I couldn’t go any more just because the course had ended.

Yes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>80h</th>
<th>Making connections between today’s behaviours and what happened thirty years ago.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81h</td>
<td>Having to break a trusting relationship with the counsellor because the course had ended.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>82h</th>
<th>Having made initial progress, tried</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82h.</td>
<td>Being denied the counsellor that she had worked with during her Diploma course,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
82h. And I found that incredibly difficult. So what I did then, which is what I had always done, was pack it away and tell myself that OK, I'd looked at it, I knew what the problem was, it was OK, I can... I could do this now, I knew what the problem was.

Mmm.

When in actual fact, just knowing what the problem was wasn't enough, I needed to work through it although I didn't realise that either. So then I started work as a Social Worker and life with Chris was becoming unbearable because he couldn't bear the fact that I had actually completed the training. But the very fact that I had completed the training meant that I could be financially independent. And of course that was his problem, he wanted me to be financially dependent on him. And life just got worse and worse and I knew that the girls were being affected by it and yet didn't have the courage to actually do anything about it. And then once... he was working away, he'd had quite a long spell, and suddenly, I just decided when he was away that I was going to divorce him and I went and did it... went and saw the Solicitor and, of course, he got the letter while he was away and when he came there was all hell to pay but, I'd done it, I'd started the ball rolling. I couldn't do it face to face. He had to have that information to know what my decision was and I couldn't say that to him so that was the only way I could do it and he resisted and it took four years to get the divorce through, but eventually he did, and then he just walked away but, anyway... and the girls never saw him afterwards, they never... he's never bothered with them since but I actually don't care that he doesn't have any contact but they do, but, you know, we've had to deal with that but, the very fact that I made that decision was like a huge weight being lifted and I felt like... I knew things would never be the same again and I knew he would make life very very difficult. My Dad made life difficult. My other concern was that, what would happen, if Chris wasn't here and yet my adopting old survival strategies again.

83h Knowing what the problem was wasn't enough.

84h Needing to work through problems.

85h Started working as a Social Worker.

86h Becoming financially independent.

87h Experiencing deteriorating marriage due to Heather's newfound empowerment.

88h Recognising that the girls were being affected by her behaviours.

89h Instigating divorce proceedings.

90h Anxiety about not being able to protect the girls whilst at work.

Heather tried to put the memories back into a box again. It didn't work. There was still an impetus to seek resolution. Where does this come from? It seems that once the box is open, it cannot be closed again – to draw from one of Heather's metaphors.

86h. As Heather emerged in her own right and became financially independent she changed the dynamic of her relationship with her husband and he could no longer control her through money.

89h. Heather knew that she couldn't deliver her decision to her husband face to face so she created a situation where there was no way back. She deliberately cornered herself so that all she had to deal with was the fallout from her decision. She knew there was no way back once this had been done. The decision and the repercussions were asynchronous which gave Heather the space she needed to plan and prepare.

91h. At college, Heather was presented with her past through her studies and as a Field Social Worker, she was presented with her past through the content of her work. It's like, if she didn't do it for herself, something would drive her to do it. Does this process always take over? It's like it has a life of its own. Does it naturally seek resolution – whatever that means.
Dad still kept coming round. Because I was at work and sometimes the girls would be in for an hour or two before I actually got in from work, so all of that anxiety started building again then, whereas it had kind of been dormant for a while. It was a different anxiety then because I wasn't actually at home protecting them and I became really anxious then and, at the same time, I was doing a lot of child protection work. I was a field Social Worker. And suddenly realised that I couldn't do that any more. I think, I was finding... It had happened the same way it had happened at college. It was almost like the process was the same. I was worried about the girls all the time and I wanted to be at home so that I could protect them all the time, and yet I needed to do the work to do the... you know, to earn this living, as it were, and yet I found that I couldn't do the work and then I started to question, am I able to do this work? In actual fact, I wasn't able to do the work, not because I didn't have the ability, but because of the actual content of the work, the material I was working with.

Yes.

92h. Um, and I knew that we were leaving children in vulnerable positions really, because of lack of resources, and I couldn't do it any more. So, I went in to residential work instead, because I knew, at least, then, there would be people there after I was there. So that actually helped. And I thought, that by doing that, I wouldn't be faced with the child protection stuff, you know, I don't know how my mind was working, but, what I actually found then, I was not... I wasn't doing as much child protection work, taking it to court and stuff like that... but I actually was working with people who were living those experiences, or the aftermath of those experiences, and a lot of their behaviours I could identify with and I found that incredibly unsettling and yet kept telling myself this was OK, I could do this and, after all I knew it, so therefore, I could do it. And after a period of time I found that I couldn't do it and I became increasingly... I think, residential work is difficult anyway because I think,
whether you’ve had abusive experiences yourself or not, the children you’re working with have been traumatised by their experiences and that can traumatisate the staff who are working with them because of some of their behaviours um... so I told myself that I would be immune to that effect because I knew it, but in actual fact, it wasn’t, it was tapping in all the time to stuff and it reached a point where I was struggling ... but then I was assaulted by... seriously assaulted by one of the young people and that just blew me out the water. All the stuff just came flooding back and I couldn’t work. I mean work thought I was off after the assault, which I was, but it was actually more than that and I couldn’t get my act together at all. I think I’d reached a crisis at that point and ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96h</td>
<td>I went to see my GP who suggested I had some counselling and the counsellors with the GP were not really much good, you know, they didn’t seem to... I don’t know whether it was me, that I couldn’t trust them or... they didn’t seem to have enough knowledge or experience, you know, and a few of them were actually saying things like... when I was hesitant and couldn’t talk about the things that I needed to talk about, they would say, well maybe you don’t want to do it really, which gave me the message that maybe it’s not OK to do that, you know, and... and I know that I was interpreting things from where I was at but, nevertheless, that’s what they were doing. So I didn’t go. But then a friend of mine, who was a Social Worker in another area, actually said to me that she knew somebody who had worked with an agency specifically for adults who had been abused and suggested, that maybe I might contact her. And it took me ages to do it, but eventually did and she was brilliant, really, because she knew... I didn’t have to keep explaining and justifying myself, she knew what was around and so that really was the best chunk of counselling that I’d had. And that moved me on a lot. I was able to go back to work. I saw her for a long time. I saw her for two years I think, maybe more. Um, but that enabled me, eventually, to go back to work and so when I was back at work, when things were coming up, because I was still seeing her, I was able to work the two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96h</td>
<td>Working with counsellor who specialised in working with adults who had been abused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97h</td>
<td>Moving on a lot. Able to return to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98h</td>
<td>Taking issues raised at work to counsellor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99h</td>
<td>Integrating healing process with work experiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

96h. It is amazing how many people have ‘false starts’ with counsellors who apparently don’t understand what the needs of the client are or who don’t understand the process they are going through. Ref: Survey of CACREP-Accredited Programs: Training Counselors to Provide Treatment for Sexual Abuse.; By: Kitzrow, Martha Anne., Counselor Education & Supervision, Dec2002, Vol. 42 Issue 2, p107, 12p Argues that lack of training can re-traumatise victims of childhood sexual abuse and that a high proportion of counsellors do not receive adequate training in this area. The quality of the counsellor seems to be of tremendous importance in these cases.
**things alongside, if you see what I mean?**

Yes.

100h. So, in some ways, it was quite good, although it was difficult and I questioned lots of times, whether I needed a change of client group.

**Mmm.**

Um, but in a lot of ways, what was happening was... it was giving me material. It was triggering my material and it was... and it was stuff that we could work with.

Yes.

And so, whilst it was very intense, it actually helped me to move on from it all really... and I don't think you ever leave it behind. I don't think you ever do really. I think it does keep coming up, and I'm sure that's probably true for everybody. So, I was able to, sort of, leave it at that point.

103h. Started counselling course, and of course we had the same situation as I had on the Social Work course, where I was fine until we hit.... believe or not, the module that was difficult for me was the Human Growth and Development, because, we looked at ourselves across the life-span and what had affected our development and how we'd reached the point where we are now and I found that incredibly difficult because then, for the first time, it was like my life had been laid out in front of me and I had to look at the impact on each of the stages of my life that had brought me to this and that took me... that eventually took me back in to more counselling because I just.... I found that.... I thought I would be able to manage it on my own, having done all that work, but I couldn't and I needed somebody else to, sort of, to go through that next stage, if

| 100h | Processing being triggered by client group but able to work through this with counsellor. | 100h. This seems to have been a powerful phase in Heather's healing journey where she was able to address issues raised through her work immediately with her counsellor – a kind of parallel processing perhaps. This enabled her to move rapidly along the healing path. |
| 101h | Intense but helped to move Heather on. | 102h. No longer separating her past experiences from her present. She used to try and compartmentalise her abusive past but now acknowledges that it has an impact in her present life and will probably continue to do so. Perhaps this begs a different coping strategy? Is this a critical realisation? |
| 102h | Recognising that you don’t ever leave it behind. | |
| 103h | Started counselling course. Material raised issues for Heather. | 103h. For the fourth time, Heather puts herself in the line of fire and the pattern repeats. Starting the counselling course raised numerous issues. |
| 104h | Taking a perspective view. Looking at her life laid out in front of her. Had to look at the stages that had brought her to this point. | 105h. Recognition that taking an holistic view was another phase in the process and she needed to seek help to deal with the losses and continued impact of the abuse. Seeing this as another stage in the process. Are there discrete phases in the process? Is there a natural ordering of these stages that |
you see what I mean? That cleared a lot of the stuff up I think, because all the work I had done with the previous counsellor... it was actually her I went back to but the previous lot of counselling that I had had, had dealt with things like where I was at today, you know, and, sort of, how I felt about what had happened. You know, I'd dealt with it at one level I suppose, but when I actually saw this stuff laid out in front of me and I realised all the losses, really, I suppose, er, and the impact, not just on me but on the girls and... you know, and on everything really, and how that continues, although I didn't go on to abuse. I know people do but nevertheless, the girls had been affected by that, you know, and, in some way, and that will actually go on in their lives, if you see what I mean? And that was huge for me, to realise that. So I needed to go back and explore it again at another level and I did another twelve months, really, with that. But that kind of cleared a lot of it away.

108h. I think it cleared a lot of the stuff away. Whereas as before I think.... and it helped me to feel less fragmented because what... all the different bits of counselling that I'd had before had addressed it at the level I could manage at that time, but it hadn't got ... I hadn't got rid of that feeling of, um, being fragmented in some way, and I think, this last time, when I was on this course and I had this last lot of counselling, I managed to get rid of that feeling somehow. Possibly because I'd seen it all laid out in front of me and what I was actually doing was ... It's like having a jigsaw, you've thrown all the pieces down, and I needed to look at each piece to see where it fitted to make the big picture, to make the picture complete, if you see what I mean? So I knew where they fitted, er, but I needed to look at each piece and that's what I did this last lot of counselling really and... and sort of put it back together. And I know that some of the pieces still don't fit very well and I know that there's probably still work there that I could do but it's not creating problems at the moment so I'll leave it until it is probably, or until... maybe I won't leave it this time until it creates a problem, maybe I'll actually go back and do it before it does...

| 105h | Back into counselling. Needed someone to go through that next stage. |
| 106h | Realising the losses. |
| 107h | Further exploration at a deeper level. This cleared a lot of it away. |

108h. Feeling less fragmented – perhaps because she could see it all laid out like a jigsaw and she was able to fit the pieces together to make the picture complete. |

109h. The concept of layers is referred to again and the idea that processing becomes deeper and deeper as it progresses. To begin with, Heather just talked of what was happening to her during the week and this was what comprised her counselling. No abuse was addressed at this stage. Now, her life is being laid out in front of her with all the patterns and implications coming into focus. 

113h. Recognising that some pieces of the jigsaw still don’t fit and that they will need to be addressed sometime in the future. In
| 112h | Integrating the whole. |
| 113h | Anticipating needing to look at the pieces that still don't fit. May do this proactively, before the problem arises. |

**Yeh.**

114h. ...but I need to get the course finished and then maybe I'll go back then. But I think that's, that's gone a long way to ease the feeling of fragmentation that I've always felt. I still do feel it occasionally, but it's not the same as it was. I feel as if what people see now is, is me. Whereas before what they were seeing was what I thought they wanted to see or what they needed to see or it was a role that I had to play. Now it feels like the inside has joined the outside more, so it's more, more, um, one whole than lots of different pieces. I think.

**Mmm.**

It doesn't sound very... That's how it feels though.

**No.** That makes complete sense. Um, you talk about it quite calmly as if it was, you know, a cerebral process that you went through, is that how it was for you, was it, um, an exercise in rationalising or, or was it... did it throw up stuff that needed to be dealt with or... how was it for you in

| 114h | Feeling that now, what people see is 'me' not what I thought they wanted to see. |
| 115h | 'Inside' has joined the 'outside'. - Integration. |
| 115. Feeling of integration, wholeness. This stage has been hard won and it is graphically described by Heather. Although this isn't the end, it is certainly a stage that has been reached. |

| 116h | Observing people's behaviours as a child and finding explanations for their |
| 116h. As a child, Heather spent hours and hours working people out. This is something that other interviewees have spoken about. (eg Emma) I wonder if it has something to
"terms of the way the process affected you?"

| 116h. Um, I think that a lot of the, let's think, when I was a child, a lot of what I did was, *I spent hours and hours and hours working people out and working out what was happening and, I would, sort of, come to a conclusion, I'd find myself an explanation for what was happening and then something would happen that would just blow that explanation away and I'd have to find another one. So I spent, Oh God, I don't know... and I feel like I did that all my life really. And if I could find an explanation, it was OK for that period of time and I've done that all my life to some degree or other and I did a lot of that in counselling as well. I could keep it, I could intellectualise it, I could talk about it like it was an interesting... somebody else's case study, it was interesting and I understood the theory and I could relate the theory to myself and, you know, that was OK, um, and I still prefer to do that I have to say but with... not the last lot of counselling but the stuff I had before, with my counsellor, the two year block or perhaps a bit longer, I started off like that but I couldn't maintain it at that level and, because I think... when I was assaulted, that, that um, that tapped in to stuff in a way that got beyond the intellectual, you know, and I was quite seriously injured and even as a child I was seriously injured, a few times, and I think it went... it took me straight back in to that so, although with my counsellor, I kind of was able to keep it on that intellectual level for quite a lot of the time, especially in the beginning, eventually, I couldn't... that was a defence mechanism and I actually couldn't... I think she was very skilled as well, and I couldn't maintain that any longer. It actually was very difficult when I couldn't maintain it any longer. |
| 117h Used the intellectualising process to remain detached from the experience in the early stages of counselling. |
| 118h Dealing with the assault and working with an experienced counsellor prevented Heather from continuing to use intellectualisation as a distancing mechanism. |
| 119h Dealing with the assault tapped into something beyond the intellectual. |
| 120h Making the transition from intellectual processing to emotional processing. |
| 120h. Making the transition from intellectual processing to emotional processing was extremely challenging because Heather couldn't understand the process. She thought she was having a breakdown. |

"Yeh."

| 120h. I think, having to, I don't know, what is it? *When I couldn't maintain that defence mechanism it meant I had to look at, I had to look* |
at how it had affected me emotionally, I think, or I connected with it, I didn't look at it, I connected with it. And, because I connected with it, that was extremely difficult. It was extremely painful to connect with it and I thought I would have a break down. I thought I was having a break down actually, and that's why I couldn't work. I couldn't function, in truth. I could not function. I would sit. I'd forgotten all this. I would sit for hours, and I must have been just sitting, looking at a wall, and not even knowing... you know, I would look at the clock, perhaps I would sit down for a coffee... with a coffee, and then suddenly realise, two or three hours had passed... and I think I was having some sort of a break down really, although I didn't disintegrate, it was a form of a break down, but I feel like I needed to have that break down. It was like a break down of the defences, if you see what I mean?

121h Connecting with the assault as opposed to intellectualising about it.

122h Becoming immobile - sitting for hours.

123h Breaking down defence mechanisms.

although she didn't disintegrate. Interesting that she uses the word disintegrate, which seems to equate to descent into chaos in the context of this process. There must have been something in her that was able to hold the process together, even though her behaviours were surprising to her. Taking an idea from Rachel's interview, perhaps she didn't have the language to intellectualise about the process, she just had to 'be' in it.

121h. Allowing the pain to be felt. Perhaps Heather had never allowed the pain of her abuse to be felt. She talked of observing people from a distance and making stories up about them so that there was some sort of order in her world. Was this a intellectual coping strategy? "I could intellectualise it, I could talk about it like it was an interesting... somebody else's case study."


123h. Catatonia (integration period enabling Heather to connect with her feelings) – essential step in moving away from intellectual defence mechanisms.

| Yes. |
| 124h Intellectualising prevented Heather |
| 124h. Although her ability to intellectualise had enabled her to survive it was now |
124h. That had to happen because those defences were all... were, kind of, preventing me to get at the, um, the kind of reality to get... preventing me from accepting what had happened, really, and that what had happened had been... it wasn't OK because I could actually... having done the Social Work course, I could actually understand how these things had happened because I could understand the theory or family dynamics and all this kind of stuff and all of that was actually getting in the way because whilst I could find an explanation and reason and excuses, if you like, for my parents, it was stopping me feeling justified in feeling what I was feeling, or having any feelings about it at all. Um as if... well, because you could understand all of that, you know, it was no good me complaining about it or, you know, because, you know, a) they were dealing with x, y and z and that was difficult for them and therefore it just happened and it's nobody's fault and, in actual fact, it was somebody's fault but I was hooked into this self-blame as well for a long, long time, in fact, until the last lot of counselling really. Because when... because I'd actually seen, seen it laid out that I realised, Oh my God!, you know, it's... although I knew rationally I wasn't to blame, I was hanging on to the blame, self-blame, because it meant, if I was blaming myself, I didn't have to blame anybody else or put the responsibility with anybody else. And I couldn't face the fact that my parents had actually done that, really, and that this had been the impact over my life-span, and...

| 125h | Intellectualising getting in the way of feeling justified in feeling what she was feeling – or feeling anything at all. |
| 126h | Using self-blame to avoid blaming anyone else. |
| 127h | Allowing herself to feel the pain enabled her to move on. |
| 128h | Counselling had remained largely at the cognitive/rational level and Heather still wasn't from accepting what had happened. |
| 131h | Disassociation as a child enabled her to withstand the abuse. As an adult, she had to allow herself to experience the feelings that she had denied herself as a child. Refs for Disassociation Identity Disorder or whatever this mechanism is called that enables someone to separate themselves from the experience. |

So, when you'd connected with those feelings, those emotions, what did you do with them? How did you move yourself on from there?

127h. How did I move on? I think simply by allowing myself to feel them helped me move on. That was actually... the fact that I wasn't allowing myself to feel them was stopping me from moving on. You know, I'd done all this counselling and yet I still wasn't OK, at some level I wasn't OK, and it was because I hadn't allowed myself to experience the, sort...
of, pain and, and all of the stuff that went with it because I was too busy rationalising it and, you know. So I needed to do that in order to move on. I needed to experience it.

Was experiencing it all you needed to do or did you have to do anything else with the experience?

No, if I'd just experienced it I think I would have gone mad. If I'd just stayed there in the experience I think... there were times when I thought I was going mad, actually. And had I not had my counsellor there to, sort of, normalise that for me, because I thought.... I did think I was going mad because as a child, I'd never experienced feelings. I hadn't... As a child... I felt like that was the first time I had experience those abusive experiences, if you see what I mean?

Yes.

As a child, I had separated from them to such an extent I didn't feel it. I knew it was happening but I didn't feel it and I certainly didn't connect with it emotionally and I think, for me, it was like experiencing it for the first time. It was like moving through.... I had to move through this, um, I don't know, what was it? Whatever this was, in order to come out the other end and I could not have done that without my counsellor's help.

Right.

132h. I think, had I not had my counsellor's help, I would have gone back to doing things like self-harming. In fact, I think I probably would have committed suicide at that point because... at points through my life I've actually felt suicidal and I have... the reason the abuse stopped was because I attempted suicide by walking in front of a van when I was thirteen and I think my Dad got such a fright, and my Mum because they

OK.

129h. Thinking she was going mad as she let herself experience the abuse emotionally.

130h. Experienced abuse for the first time without defence mechanisms.

131h. As a child, Heather never experienced feelings - separated from them to such an extent that she didn't feel it; didn't connect with it emotionally.

132h. Recognising that a good counsellor prevented suicidal tendencies and self harming when dealing with the emotional issues.

132h. In spite of a suicide attempt when Heather was 13, people just didn't explore the reasons behind it. Perhaps their fear at finding out what was going on prevented them from 'hearing'. Maybe Heather didn't have the language to use to enable people to know what was going on.
were both abusive, that, you know, too many questions were being asked and... and whilst they were then indifferent, I could cope with the indifference, you know. I was always waiting for something to start again, but I think that suicidal stuff has always been around, it never went away because I didn't get any help with that when I was thirteen. People just passed over it and that was it, you know, Oh she's OK, she's, you know, the physical stuff's healed well, you know, on she goes and, um, so I think, probably, I would have.... Maybe I wouldn't have done because I had the girls and I think maybe they were the reason I wouldn't have done but I certainly felt like it and I think at one point there was a strong possibility that I would have done, um, and resume the self-harming that I used to do as a teenager, had I not had a very good counsellor.

Yes.

133h Remaining vulnerable to suicide and self-harming when connecting with the experience as an adult.

134h Recognising that the girls may have prevented a serious suicide attempt.

135h-141h. Use of metaphor again – lightening the load, casting off a bit at a time, taking the next step forward. Building a picture of a journey.

135h. And I think, because she actually helped me to accept where I was and understand why I was feeling the way I was feeling, I was able then to, kind of, put the responsibility where it lay, I think, with them and accept that, well you know, they didn't love me, they were abusive and accept that reality. Until I did that, I couldn't let it all go I don't think. Um, it took me a long time. It sounds... when you say it in a few words, it sounds like it happened overnight, it didn't, and I was seeing my counsellor twice a week, so we're talking about quite intensive therapy really. But then, once I'd done that, gradually, I started to be able to let it go. It was like letting it go a bit at a time, of this heavy weight. It was like letting go of this heavy weight, I suppose. Like just casting a bit off at a time. And each bit that I actually accepted and let go of, meant that I could take another step forward. It was, it was like that really. It was lightening the load and, and then I found that when I was... when I eventually went back to work, that, I wasn't... that I was able to, er, I was... I wasn't as enmeshed in the whole thing, I was separate from it whereas before I was um... I'd reached the point where I wasn't...
separating myself and my stuff from the client’s stuff, you know, it was all becoming…. I think had I not been assaulted, something would have happened anyway. There would have been a crisis of some sort that would have taken me to counselling and I would have had to do the work whatever, or, maybe, you know, it would have gone another way if I hadn’t had the counsellor that I’d had, I don’t know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>140h</th>
<th>Lightening the load.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>141h</td>
<td>Learning to separate her ‘stuff’ from client’s ‘stuff’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>142h</td>
<td>Believing that had she not been assaulted, something would have happened to take her to counselling and she would have had to have done the work anyway.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So, when she enabled you to experience the feelings and move on, what was your process of moving on? What did you have to do in order to move away the feelings?

143h. What did I do? I think I had to make a conscious effort to let it go. Once I’d actually started to experience all that emotion, I felt like, um, I felt like I would never move on from that. I felt like almost like I didn’t want to move on from that. I wanted to, um, it was like, I wanted to get away from the pain, what do I mean when I say I didn’t….? I don’t know what I mean by that. I think there was a bit of me that would have preferred it if…. It almost felt so difficult at that point that I could not see a time when I could move beyond it and I could not see a time when it could be different and I wanted it to, kind of, end there because I just…. I felt like there was no way…. I think it was so intense the pain really and I was so aware, then, of the effects I think, that I didn’t think that…. and I was looking… because I was looking at all the stuff the way I’d been as a consequence of that and **I didn’t think I had the energy to…. or even**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>143h</th>
<th>Making a conscious choice to let it all go.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>144h</td>
<td>Being overwhelmed by the emotion she was experiencing for the first time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>145h</td>
<td>Feeling stuck in the emotions, not wanting it to end but wanting it to be the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>146h</td>
<td>Experiencing intense pain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>147h</td>
<td>Feeling depressed, de-energised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

143h. This seems to be a phase of hopeless despair. Once the pain and the emotions started flooding in, Heather could not see to the next phase of the process. Not feeling that it would ever change, she just wanted it all to end there. She was subsumed in the process at this point and still can’t articulate how it came to an end. Back in the ‘black hole’? The process seems to move people back and forth at various stages of the process.
the inclination at that point, I was too depressed to actually move it forward or move myself forward. It was almost like I just... for me, I wanted it to end at that point because I just couldn't see a time when it could be different. And I don't know how it became different.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>148h</th>
<th>Feeling that it would never change.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>149h</td>
<td>Not being able to say how it became different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>150h</td>
<td>151h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you express your feelings?</td>
<td>Expressing feelings through tears.</td>
<td>Expressing feelings through anger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150h. How did I express them? Oh, I don’t know. I cried a lot. Um. I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was angry. I was very angry and when my Dad died recently, he died</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earlier this year. My Dad had a workshop and we had to go and clear it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out and my brother was away. I had free reign really. And I thought</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that I’d dealt with all that anger and, because it was the workshop that</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he used to take me to, and when I realised ... when I went there to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear... you know, we were starting to clear out the house, and I thought</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wouldn’t go near the workshop, but I did. And I felt almost drawn to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it. And I smashed so many things in that workshop! And I... I thought I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had finished with my anger, I really thought I had and I just smashed it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I started to put things together, you know, in, sort of, boxes and stuff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and I found a box, under other things, that he had used to store things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that he used when he was abusing me, and it started with that and I just</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smashed it. Just was furious really. I was so bloody angry. And I was</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upset. I was upset as well and I smashed it and smashed it tosmithereens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and then I smashed the work bench. I didn’t destroy that because it was</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>too solid but, er, I was exhausted afterwards, and then I sat and cried</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and then I just left it because I couldn’t do anything with it then, you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know, but... there was all hell to pay when everybody else arrived but</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anyway, you know, I wasn’t there, I got some phone calls that... they let</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me know what they thought because they don’t know you see but um, my</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brother does now, it’s not true actually, my brother knows but er, so I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t know I... the anger was the thing that I had a lot of trouble with.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I couldn’t get angry for a long time, but I was angry that day. Really</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angry that day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes.

So.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>So, you’ve moved to an extraordinarily positive place after a lengthy</th>
<th>153h Divorcing husband</th>
<th>153h. Not only was divorcing her husband a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

280
journey. If there was one thing that you could bring forward in your journey that really made a difference, what would it be?

153h. One thing? God. **Divorcing Chris, I think.** Yeh. Reaching... **even reaching that decision to divorce him** because it took... for me it took an extraordinary amount of courage to do that.

Yes.

Um, because I knew I would be made to pay for it and that's something I had never done before, **stepped out of the, the sort of victim role,** I suppose it... I stopped being a victim at that point and that's when I, sort of, **started to reclaim myself,** I think. I'd lost that with Chris and my Dad, and my Mum, so I think I had... They'd taken all that and I needed to reclaim myself, what was left, you know, the... what they'd left. And I needed to do it and I think my **Dad dying also enabled me to do that in some way.** So. But, yeh, I think it was the best thing I ever did was divorcing Chris. It was a huge relief.

I think it's essential, or it was essential for me, and I think it probably is for others, there's a turning point when, for me... and it was Chris, divorcing Chris, when I stopped being that victim because I think... I don't think I was playing a victim role, but I was a victim, kind of thing, because I couldn't step out of that, whatever it was, that place that they had put me and I needed to do that before anything could change really, and that's why, although the counselling that had gone before had helped, it was never going to change anything because I needed to change that, that I was no longer a victim, you know, that I was now...something else, but not a victim, whatever that was, I was not a victim. Um, until that happened, change couldn't happen really.

Yes.

| 154h | Stepping out of the victim role by making one active choice. |
| 155h | Reclaiming what was left of herself. |
| 156h | Death of father enabled her to reclaim herself. |
| 157h | Differentiating between 'playing the victim' and 'being the victim'. |
| 158h | Counselling helped but was never going to change anything by itself. |
| 159h | Making a choice not to be a victim. |
| 160h | Until 'I was not a victim' nothing could change. |
| 161h | Process of stepping out of victim role |
| 161h | Process more complicated that merely making a decision. Lots of things have to be |

way of removing herself from continual abuse, it was symbolic of her reclaiming herself, her power and making choices for the first time.

153h-158h. I notice that Heather uses the terms 'Mum' and 'Dad' which are generally accepted as affectionate terms for parents. It seems strange that she refers to them in this way. She also uses the possessive term 'my' when speaking about them. I don't know about the psychology of this but perhaps there is still a part of her that yearns for loving parents and these terms help her to identify with that need?

157h. Making a distinction between playing a victim and really being a victim. Is this the difference between colluding (playing a victim because you are getting something you need from it) and genuinely being a victim, (being under someone else's control)?

159h. There is nothing like taking your power and making active choices to thwart victim consciousness.
161h. And although it was slow, it didn’t happen all at once, but it
couldn’t happen…. And maybe, I couldn’t have even stepped out of that
victim role without all of those other bits that had gone before to help
build me towards that.

Yes.

So, I don’t know what comes first but…

*You mean the Social Work course and things like that?*

Yeh, and the friends who, when I first started working, you know, helped
me to see that it wasn’t OK that Chris treated me that way or… They
would get angry on my behalf even if I wasn’t angry and… I suddenly
started to think well, maybe this isn’t OK, you know, this is how I’ve been
treated all my life but maybe it isn’t OK. And I knew other people
weren’t treated like that because my parents didn’t treat my siblings like
that.

Yes.

164h. But somehow, I felt like whatever… for whatever reason, that that
was my lot, that there was something about me that meant that was it.

Yes.

And it was… it sort of…. *Having new information, if you like, or people
seeing things differently, or helping me to see things differently that, very
very slowly, it doesn’t happen… I mean, years and years of it really, a
lifetime of it to reach this point. And, if there’s anything I could be angry
about, really, it’s that.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>162h</th>
<th>Learning from others about what is acceptable behaviour from a husband and what isn’t and what ‘should’ make you angry.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>163h</td>
<td>Recognising that siblings weren’t treated as Heather was treated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164h</td>
<td>Feeling that it was her ‘lot’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165h</td>
<td>Having new information from ‘outside’ to challenge her beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166h</td>
<td>Transformation happened very slowly. If there’s anything to be angry about, it’s this waste of a lifetime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167h</td>
<td>The end of abuse is not the end of the problem, it is the beginning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168h</td>
<td>Seeing abuse as a lifetime issue, but not a life sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169h</td>
<td>Different life events throw it all up again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170h</td>
<td>Anticipating more work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

167h. You know, it's taken... it's not just.... I think people think that when the abuse stops, then that's it. And it did. I mean, for me, when the abuse stopped it... the abuse stopped, but my life was still on hold and in some ways, for me, the real problems began at that point, you know, once the abuse stopped. And it is a lifetime. I'm not saying it's a life sentence, but I think it's with you. Obviously our experiences are with us forever, aren't they? But, um, like when my Dad died, all of that stuff was thrown up again, it's kind of, different life events throws it all up again, maybe not in the same way but it throws it all up and.... we have to, kind of, deal with that and... you know it's um.... And, I mean, I know there are still things that I could probably do with working on and working through and.... But, um,
But you're in a much stronger place now?

171h. Yeh. Oh yeh. God yeh. When I think what I was like, even ten years ago, huge, huge difference and it was as if once the momentum had started... there's been a huge... a huge lot of movement forward, if you see what I mean. But until that... something kick started that, you know, nothing happened, it was, kind of, like I was stuck in it all...

Yes.

..You know, so I couldn't move forward and....

Do you think it's inevitable that victims of abuse are pushed through that process?

173h. Pushed through the process?

Yes.

Of... how do you mean?

Well, that, um, somehow, life conspires to move you through the journey...

No.

...that you've been on.

Um, no I don't think so. No why do I say that?

So was there something inside you...
Yeh.

...that was driving this process?

Yes, because I've seen people who have been defeated by it, completely and utterly defeated by it. So there has to be a driving force.

Can you think what makes the difference?

Um, I wonder if it's different for different people? You see, I think, there are lots of factors that make a difference, um, I was going to say, maybe it was to do with the type and extent of the abuse but when I think, really... I don't think that can be it because I think my Dad involved me in pretty much everything, even organised abuse, because... I think... my Dad... coming to terms with the fact that my Dad was a paedophile was quite hard but... so, I don't think it's that. I used to think it was that.

Something within you perhaps?

I think it's got to be something within the... inherent within the person really, because you can have somebody who has experienced, perhaps... and I don't want to... there's no hierarchy for me of these experiences, but you know what I mean, perhaps who has experienced, I don't know, perhaps a handful of episodes of abuse, or even one, sometimes just one episode is enough to completely devastate people for the rest of their lives.

Yes.

And yet, you know, mine... When I think... I was abused by my Mum all my life but my Dad from between the ages of four and thirteen and when I was about eight he introduced me to this, this ring of people, so I'm thinking, is it something to do with that or is it... It's got to be something
to do with... it's got to be something to do with personality or, or what you've got to start with, I think. What you have, what you come with, what you have to begin with, and I wonder if it's something to do with, um, with the ability to defend against it in some way. I wonder what would happen to people who couldn't disassociate from it? Or intellectualise it? You know, things like that, what would they do?

I don't know because, of course, all the people I have interviewed have been very able to intellectualise their experience.

yes.

And I haven't spoken to anybody who hasn't been able to, so I, I wonder myself if it's something to do with the fact that you have to survive the abuse, and in order to survive, you have to put distance between you and it and once you've created that distance, you've created, I'm theorising as I go, you've created a kind of 'tension' that forces you to release the tension by moving through the experience again in order to get to the other side, if you see what I mean....

Yeh.

You dissociate...

Like an elastic band

...It's like pulling an elastic band, that....

Pull it so far.

And then something happens that makes you let go of the expanded end and it snaps...
Rebound.

...back.

That's what it feels like.

*So, maybe, if you stay in the victim experience.*

And you don't pull away from it.

*And you don't dissociate, maybe you can't, therefore have the potential energy to move through the process of...*

Recovering from it.

*Well, yes.*

I don't know if that's the word.

*I know, I'm trying to think of another word.*

Working through it or... I don't know.

*Putting it somewhere that enables you to live...*

In spite of it.

*In spite of it.*

176h. Yeh. I think about clients, social work clients that I've worked 175h Transformation is a 176h Bateson's levels of logical reasoning?
with, um. I'm trying to think, am I generalising here? Well I am, really, but when I think about it, those people who... it depends a lot on personality. It's not circumstances either. It isn't circumstances because I was thinking is it... is it environment. Mind you, that's partly it, I think. No, what... you start with the thing at the beginning, don't you, really, which is the personality and whatever people have, because whatever environment you put them in, they can only use it according to their... I think... I've worked with quite a lot of people who have been abused, young people, a lot of the time, but certainly adults as well, and, I think, those people who are not able to understand, for whatever reason, understand what happened, and why and why the way they are as a consequencne of that, you know, and all of that stuff, stay stuck in this cycle, really, that keeps going round and round. You can't... It's like you can't help them to break it and step out of it. You're on a treadmill, almost, that goes on and on and on. Because, you're not able to help them to understand or that they're not able to understand...

What it's like outside the cycle?

That's right. Or even, kind of, have any imagination of what it might be like... And I think, those... and this is awful sweeping generalisation... but often, those are the people who then go on to perpetuate it, in actual abuse. I mean I think... I feel that I've perpetuated it in some ways, you know, with my girls. I haven't abused them in any way, but I've brought my experiences in and... and they've been affected by that. But I think people... I mean, I've seen Mums who re-enact their own abusive experiences on their children because, no matter what you put in, how much information you give them, how many hours you spend on parenting skills and, keep safe work and all of that, they're still not able to actually take it in... the information in, or to use it in any way to help themselves or their children... and to step out of that mess, really, they stay there. And it goes on, then, generation after generation. So, it is about... You see, I happen to think, as well, that there's different... the kind of abuse... different types of abuse goes on I know but... in the

matter of intelligence and imagination? Being able to understand the patterns and see a different future. Jaques too?
more, oh I don't know, what are the words I'm looking for?... 'educated' circles, then for want of a better way of putting it, for me, from my own experience and from my professional experience, it tends to be more sophisticated and the degree of psychological abuse is much more sophisticated... and it's actually more apparent and deliberate, I think, in the more educated people. The people, who, perhaps who are less educated or less, I don't like saying less intelligent but you know what I mean...

Mmm.

...tend to be the ones who perpetuate or, oh I don't know, who, who stick with the more basic forms of abuse.

Yes.

If you see what I mean?

I do see what you mean. Yes.

And I think... I know that from my own experience but I also think I've seen it professionally as well. So it's.... if there's different types of abuse too, isn't there?

Yes.

And there'll be different combinations. But also the people who are less intellectually able, or whatever.... You wouldn't think that they would be as affected then, by the psychological aspects of it would you?

Well, except that, um, they may be able to embrace more complex thought which connects... complex thought is about connecting many
ideas and creating patterns...

And if you can't do that....

And if you can't do that.

...then you're stuck. Mmm. Yeh.

It looks like we're coming to the end of the tape and, um, I must thank you for sharing your process with me. I've found it hugely inspiring and, um, I respect your journey enormously. Is there anything else you would like to add before we close?

177h. Um, No. I don't think so. I'll probably think of something afterwards but, er. I think it's helpful sometimes to actually have an opportunity to look at... It has been helpful for me to have an opportunity to look at the process.

That's good to hear.

My process. To get an overview of it. Because sometimes, you're living it and, it's hard to, sort of, get an overview. You can't see the wood for the trees as it were.

Yeh.

So I think that's helpful in a way.

Good. Well, thank you very very much indeed. I can't tell you how grateful I am to have spent this time with you. It's been wonderful.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your welcome.</th>
<th>If I can put it in those terms, which seem slightly ironic.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes. I know!</td>
<td>Anyway, thank you very much indeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. You're welcome. (I'm going to have to switch the fire on!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BLANK IN ORIGINAL
Healing from childhood trauma – the transformative process
Dena Michelli

Introduction

This paper has been prepared for those who have volunteered to comment on the healing process that has been revealed as a result of talking in depth to eight women who were sexually abused as children but who are now experiencing a sense of health and well-being. This paper is not an academic rendition of the research process or methodology used, rather a presentation of the key findings so far.

The purpose of putting this work in front of a group of qualified observers for early review is to see whether they recognise the process from a personal perspective or from observing others going through the process and to comment on where any omissions, differences or discrepancies lie. This is in order to challenge and refine the findings to embrace the views and experiences of a wider community and to reach a point of saturation where nothing appears to be missing. This is the point at which theory emerges, and the point at which this research will have reached its objective – to arrive at a substantive theory of healing from childhood trauma. The healing process may indeed be found to be a transformational process apposite to many different contexts and conditions, thereby leading to the creation of a more generally applicable theory.

As a result of the focus of this study, terms such as ‘recovered’, ‘overcome’ or ‘healed’ are often used by the respondents in the interviews and are therefore reflected in this written text. However, I am conscious, as are the interviewees, that there is no final destination for women who have been
abused as children but find that using more precise language to convey this message is sometimes cumbersome and gets in the way of helpful expression. Please note, therefore, that there is no significance in the use of these terms beyond their transient meaning.

To align the reader's expectations further, there will be no extensive literature review in this paper. This is due to the fact that, when the methodological approach of grounded theory is used, the minimum amount of influence should come from outside the data. In order to remain clear and focused on the data therefore, and let it 'speak' for itself, a literature review has not yet been conducted – although it will form a major part of the final thesis. Equally, there will be no discussion and conclusion as these would be premature and ill-formed without your input and without having surveyed and juxtaposed the findings of this study with other theories.

**Background motivation and influences**

It is well known that for most research projects, the topic chosen is of personal interest to the researcher. This is no exception and I can only declare that I have a personal investment in finding out about this process for my own healing journey. However, this research is not about me, it is about others' journeys and I must acknowledge the courage and support of those who have volunteered to help illuminate a process that can take many years of sustained effort in the face of disappointments and setbacks; a process for which there is no ultimate destination or guarantee of health.

Much has been written for women survivors of childhood sexual abuse as there is copious material for those who are working with women who have been sexually abused. Together these publications present information on the developmental implications, psychological condition and behavioural predispositions of the abused, along with guidance and advice on the appropriate therapeutic interventions for practitioners (Sanford (1991),
Hunter (1995), Wyatt and Powell (1988), Jehu (1988), Bass and Davis (1988), Kepner (1995). However, little has been written from the women's perspective about what really happens in the healing process that enables them to move forward in their lives. This research aims to address this omission; bringing understanding and meaning to a process that so many are experiencing.

The core research question is:

What is the learning and development process, in women who have been sexually abused as children, that enables them to detach from their experience and move towards a place of well-being and how can this inform others' development?

The transcendent nature of some victims' recovery and their ability to 'make sense' of their abuse from the perspective of a 'higher context' is an inspiration. Iyanla Vanzant (1998) in her book *Yesterday I Cried* tells her own story of childhood rape, teenage motherhood, bereavement and abandonment and how she emerged from all of this to become a lawyer, a spiritual life counsellor and an ordained minister. She says: 'As I tell my story, there are places and pieces that other people can tap into so that they may somehow find the courage to revisit their own experiences, bring forth the tears and grow into their greatness.' She goes on to say: 'My experience has been that, no matter what you call it, the result of 'cleaning up crap' is spiritual growth and development.' It was the journey of women who believed they had achieved this that I intended to explore at the outset of this research. Specifically, I wanted to ask what went on that enabled them to take steps towards a fulfilling and rewarding life on their terms.

Kushner, quoted in Sanford (1991) states that 'Pain is the price we pay for being alive. ... When we understand that, our question will change from 'Why do we have to feel pain?' to 'What do we do with our pain so that it becomes
meaningful and not just pointless, empty suffering? How can we turn all the painful experiences of our lives into birth pangs or into growing pangs?’ ... Pain makes some people bitter and envious. It makes others sensitive and compassionate. It is the result, not the cause, of pain that makes some experiences of pain meaningful and others empty and destructive.’

Firman and Gila (1997) in their book *The Primal Wound* hypothesise that everyone suffers a primal wound in their early years that results in a sense of estrangement, falseness and lack of meaning in their lives. ‘Child abuse and neglect, sexist and racist culture and bonding to wounded caregivers are just some of the very many ways we receive the primal wounding. ... and it cuts us off from the deeper roots of our existence.’

Firman and Gila further go on to say that there is a growing collective realisation of this primal wounding and that this is manifesting itself in several ways. Firstly, there is a strong ‘recovery movement’ in which people recognise the way that their lives are dominated by addictive and obsessive behaviours. Secondly, there is a deeper appreciation of the nature of childhood wounding – even in ‘normal’ families and thirdly, the emerging realisation that childhood wounding is often caused by severe child abuse and neglect.

Drawing upon the work of Assagioli (1965), *The Primal Wound* is about the re-integrative journey to a deeper appreciation of the human spirit, a journey to the ‘Transpersonal Self’. More than this, it is about a collective evolution that will no longer tolerate the passing of destructive patterns of abuse from parent (or carer) to child.

All the above writers and researchers imply (or state categorically) that there is something special about the way some victims of abuse (but by no means all) manage to move to a fully functioning and mature adulthood. This is
described in many different ways, but in each case, there is a transcendent quality to the growth.

**Ethical issues**

The nature of this study is extremely sensitive and it was considered possible that it could be potentially unsettling and give rise to further disquiet, even though the explicit intention was that the abusive past of volunteers was not to be explored in any way. It was important, therefore, that the interviews took place in a truly confidential and safe environment and that access to emotional support (or professional assistance) was available. In every case the interviewees chose the location for their interview and a transcript of the session was offered to demonstrate the accuracy with which their account was recorded – having removed any identifying names, circumstances or locations. In several cases, this was specifically not requested.

The contract with each volunteer has been one of discretion and confidentiality. Recognising that the subject matter is of a sensitive nature, on going psychological support was offered should this be needed.

Each volunteer signed a release document allowing the material to be used in the research project and written up in a doctoral thesis. They also agreed to take responsibility for their input with the return guarantee that their anonymity would be preserved entirely and the taped interviews destroyed after successful completion of the PhD programme.

**The Research process**

Although I don't wish to go into detail of the methodology I employed, I feel it is nonetheless important to frame the approach as it may have some bearing on the way these findings are viewed.
Grounded Theory

As the main purpose of this research is to generate and develop a theory about the healing journey that victims of childhood sexual abuse go through, it points towards the grounded theory approach. Strauss and Corbin in Denzin and Lincoln (1998) state that 'grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed. Theory evolves during actual research and does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection.' They also state that the grounded theory methodology explicitly allows 'generating theory and doing social research as two parts of the same process.'

As a methodological approach that aims to derive meaning from the data collected, it is clear that no pre-conceived ideas should be held so tightly that open enquiry is prevented. Gregory (1994 p27) points out that ‘Defining the area rather than pinpointing the questions’ is recommended in grounded theory as a way of ‘avoiding incorrect research aims’ or ‘premature closure’. Making assumptions or drawing early conclusions based upon the incomplete collection or analysis of data therefore became a discipline in undertaking this research study. Having set these boundary conditions, grounded theory does allow the researcher to use personal experience to understand the processes under study.

Glaser (1978) argues that grounded theory allows us ‘to discover what is going on’ and it is precisely a ‘discovery’ that is desired in this case; to discover what is going on in the process of healing (a basic social psychological process) as an individual emerges from the childhood trauma of sexual abuse.
Data collection

As grounded theory is an inferential research approach, many different sources of data are legitimate in generating theory. These include: listening to the narrative of informants, reading the testimonies of those that have experienced the process and theoretically sampling the views of observers of the process. For the purposes of this research all the above approaches will be adopted.

To initiate the study and give it some immediate shape, I conducted in depth interviews with eight women who had responded to an advertisement placed in the Journal of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. In placing the advertisement in this publication, I was making the assumption that many who had been through the process of healing would be inclined to want to help others do the same. (For example: Diana Lamplugh became the Founder and Director of The Suzy Lamplugh Trust in 1986 after her daughter disappeared, having gone unaccompanied to a meeting with a client. The Trust is now the leading authority on personal safety. Also Gordon Wilson who worked to bring reconciliation between people in Northern Ireland after seeing his daughter killed by a terrorist bomb in Enniskillen whilst watching a peaceful Remembrance Day service in 1987.) The motivation to help others proved to be the case and a total of fourteen people volunteered to be interviewed. Unfortunately, the distribution of volunteers was long and broad so the logistics were challenging and only eight people were seen in the initial phase of the research. Four others have indicated their willingness to comment on this paper and the healing process it presents whilst the remaining two deselected themselves for unknown reasons.

It should be noted that it was not intended that the research pool be exclusively women. It just happened that there were no males represented in the group of volunteers. Neither is this a piece of research taken from the feminist perspective, for that would turn it on its axis and render a very
different theoretical construct – a very valuable one and no less important but not the purpose of this study. Rather, this research is about the healing journey, no more, no less. It is designed to illuminate the process so that those travelling along its path may be forewarned of its characteristics and therefore, perhaps, forearmed, and so that those accompanying people along its route may do so appropriately and helpfully.

**Initial analysis and findings**

In each case, the interview was conducted in a place agreed by the volunteer. It was felt important that they feel comfortable and confidential as they disclosed details of their process. The interview was transcribed and codified according to the response to a set of questions that began with the very general question; ‘what is this data a study of?’ This moved to a more specific question; ‘what category does this incident indicate?’ to a yet more precise question ‘What is actually happening in the data?’ The responses to these questions slowly build understanding and lead the researcher towards the generation of a core category. The concept indicator model (Glaser 1978) was used to direct the conceptual coding of a set of empirical indicators. It is based upon a constant comparing of indicator to indicator and, when a conceptual code is generated, comparing indicator to conceptual code. This method provides the essential link between data and concept. See figure (i) below:
Theoretical coding is the process by which theory is woven together from the concepts that have been derived from the raw data above. Theoretical coding is done using a technique of constant comparative analysis; the rigor with which this is done will have a direct bearing on theory development, saturation, verification and the conclusions that are ultimately drawn. A useful tool for constantly comparing concepts derived from the data is provided by the six C's as devised by Glaser (1978). They are:

- **Cause** – what causes this phenomenon to occur?
- **Consequences** – what are the consequences of this phenomenon?
- **Conditions** – what are the conditions for its emergence, significance and stability over time?
- **Context** – what is the context in which this phenomenon takes place?
- **Contingencies** – which pieces of data are contingent on others?
- **Co-variances** – In what way does one category co-vary with another?

Consolidation of the categories rests on the identification of more abstract definitions of the concepts. These categories are further lifted to a higher level of abstraction until one core category emerges that subsumes and accounts for all the processes going on in the data thereby revealing the basic
social psychological process that is relevant to the group of informants. Once this position is reached, the proposition arrived at can be put in to context with existing theory. As a result of this work, a working theory can be formulated which can be shared and validated. Validity is dependent upon the range and variety of categories sought through theoretical sampling. The wider the variety, the more generaliseable the theory becomes.

Having coded the eight interviews, the concept indicator model was used to generate higher order concepts and categories which will then be used as the basis for generating theory. For example, using the notation from Figure (i) and taking the codes (indicators) from a number of different interviews, a worked example of generating a concept is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Codes/indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-1</td>
<td>Succeeding on one level but not on another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-2</td>
<td>Living on two levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-3</td>
<td>Managing quite well on the social level but not the psychological level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-4</td>
<td>Living on the surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-5</td>
<td>Hiding part of myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-6</td>
<td>Putting on different roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-7</td>
<td>Compartmentalising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-8</td>
<td>Living disassociated from any kind of real contact with life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-9</td>
<td>Put memories of abuse on hold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-10</td>
<td>Disassociating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concept: Coping strategies

In the above example, all the data bits suggest a kind of splitting off from one level of consciousness in order to manage life. They could also perhaps be considered to be 'avoidance tactics' or 'denying', enabling the individual to continue with life in an apparently 'normal' way without having to face the reasons they needed to employ such tactics.
A second example of the derivation of a concept is shown below:

**Number Codes/indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-1</td>
<td>Losing the ability to function as before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-2</td>
<td>Everything was falling apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-3</td>
<td>Life in turmoil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-4</td>
<td>Things started to come undone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-5</td>
<td>Couldn't hold it together any more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-6</td>
<td>Flooded with memories, couldn't work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-7</td>
<td>Feeling fragmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-8</td>
<td>Coping strategies failing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-9</td>
<td>Physically sick/eating disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-10</td>
<td>Sense of chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-11</td>
<td>Entering a big black hole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Concept** Disintegrating

In this example, the respondents describe a phase in their journey where everything seemed to be falling apart. In one woman’s account she described it in the following graphic way.

"*I wasn’t even able to compartmentalise my parent’s* death and *at the same time all these other boxes were opening and so it was all beginning to come unhinged and I couldn’t hold it."

In another description:

"*Things almost started to come undone. I was as if I’d been holding on to everything, all these threads, as it were, very tightly, and juggling everything.*"

From these examples, it can be seen very clearly that a kind of unravelling or disintegration was occurring. These kinds of comments were reflected in each one of the interviews.

I have included one more, perhaps more positive example of the derivation of a concept below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Codes/indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-1</td>
<td>Being able to see things in a new way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-2</td>
<td>Finding clarity – like a light being switched on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-3</td>
<td>Talking about things enabled her to get a picture of her life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-4</td>
<td>Reaching a point of realisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-5</td>
<td>Breakthrough in terms of awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-6</td>
<td>Clearing the fog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-7</td>
<td>Finding a new (intellectual) perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-8</td>
<td>Continuing to clarify patterns of behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-9</td>
<td>Seeing it all laid out like a jigsaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-10</td>
<td>Piecing the bits together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-11</td>
<td>Learning to see what had happened from different perspectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Concept** Crystalising/Clarifying

There seems to be a connecting/clarifying/illuminating stage in the process which occurs after the ‘big black hole’, the ‘chaos’, the ‘fog’, the disintegration. This is often presented as the turning point where, finally, some semblance of order is beginning to be achieved and sufficient understanding is gained to start moving forward in a more positive way.

Below is an indicative list of concepts derived from the first few interviews. It is by no means complete but serves as an example of the sorts of concepts emerging.

- Using coping strategies
- Disintegrating
- Gaining Understanding
- Releasing anger
- Creating fantasies
- Suppressing memories
- Denial
- Becoming vulnerable
- Despairing
- Awareness of inner process
Controlling boundaries  
Seeking help  
Making sense  
Finding patterns

Each of the concepts listed above was identified in the same way as those illustrated in the preceding tables. These have yet to be further refined as some may well be subsumed by others. For example the concepts of 'creating fantasies', 'suppressing memories' and 'denial' could all be considered to be part of 'employing coping strategies' – a category that itself may go on to be subsumed by a yet broader category. It is this constant comparison and refinement that will eventually lead to the emergence of a theory. However, I do not wish to 'lead the witness' too much and therefore present a map of the categories that have emerged so far from the data in the hope that this will provide sufficient material for your comment. This is illustrated below in Figure (ii).
Continual process of healing – “I just get better and better.”

Unrecognised Coping Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triggers</th>
<th>Coping strategies revealed</th>
<th>Disintegrating</th>
<th>Seeking help/validation</th>
<th>Clarifying</th>
<th>Controlling</th>
<th>Integrating</th>
<th>Distancing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>Physical illness</td>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>Descent into chaos</td>
<td>Counselling Therapy</td>
<td>Making connections</td>
<td>Sense of self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disassociation</td>
<td>Daughter at the same age that abuse was experienced by the mother</td>
<td>Disassociation</td>
<td>Falling into a black hole</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seeing the patterns and linkages</td>
<td>Feeling healthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compartmentalising</td>
<td>Living on two levels</td>
<td>Compartmentalising</td>
<td>Being fragmented</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Feeling healed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living on two levels</td>
<td>Displacement activities</td>
<td>Living on two levels</td>
<td>Coping strategies not working</td>
<td></td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Feeling powerful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displacement activities</td>
<td>Creating fantasies</td>
<td>Displacement activities</td>
<td>Everything falling apart</td>
<td></td>
<td>Talking to others</td>
<td>Making choices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating fantasies</td>
<td>Suppressing memories</td>
<td>Creating fantasies</td>
<td>Experiencing ‘madness’</td>
<td></td>
<td>Finding different perspectives</td>
<td>Confronting abuser(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppressing memories</td>
<td>Intellectualising</td>
<td>Suppressing memories</td>
<td>Feeling suicidal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re-sequencing the memories</td>
<td>Feeling powerful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectualising</td>
<td>Latent healing</td>
<td>Intellectualising</td>
<td>Overwhelming feelings of guilt, shame</td>
<td></td>
<td>'Inside' has joined the 'outside'.</td>
<td>Making choices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure (ii) Categories induced from the constant comparison of coded data

306
Figure (ii), above, may be in danger of over-simplifying what is indeed a complex and involved process. However, what it seeks to provoke is a critical review that will further illuminate or refine what is being presented.

The concepts have been chosen on the basis of their frequency within the data and I suggest you think of them as representing different phases of the healing process. Below the headlines in figure (ii) are shown the data bits or indicators that have given rise to these concepts. As the figure is two-dimensional and static, it is difficult to illustrate the dynamic nature of the process. Interviewees often recount their journey as one that goes back and forth, deepening as it does so. When an aspect of healing has been integrated, very often the journey will start again, sometimes in a new area, other times in a different context or perhaps at a new level. In some cases, different healing journeys are being experienced simultaneously, although they may be at different phases in the process. Although it does not become easier as new challenges are thrown up each time interviewees often talk of a degree of familiarity with the process and recognising the phases as they re-experience them on the next iteration. They frequently add that it is never as bad as the first time.

Descriptive overview of the healing process

Although Figure (ii) is useful to illustrate the overall pattern of the healing journey, some of the richness is lost by reducing it to data bits and concepts. For those who prefer to have a story, the following descriptive passage of the healing process may be helpful.

In every case, interviewees were asked at the outset how they felt now. It was intended that the interview should start on a positive note and relax the respondent into the process. With a few qualifications, every respondent spoke of feeling more positive, more confident, more complete and healthier
than they had felt when they began their journey. In some instances, the reference to health was compared to a time when the respondent had reached an extremely low ebb physically and was either in hospital or being treated for a serious disorder. One of the most graphic illustrations of this was given by one of the respondents who said, "My body was rigid, literally rigid. My whole back and my neck, was solid. All the muscles in my back were locked and my hips were locked and the pain of that, constantly, I think was probably what made me first begin [the process of healing]." Many talked of the 'mind/body' link, equating their physical condition to their mental or emotional condition.

When asked how the healing process began, reference to a primary trigger of some description was common, although it should be noted that in most cases, many other things were happening at the same time that contributed to the impetus created by the trigger. The primary trigger often took the form of a daughter reaching the same age as the respondent was when she was abused; hospitalisation as a result of a physiological disorder; the death of an abusive parent or just a chance question that struck a stark chord and reflected a truth that had been denied. "Who taught you about sex?" was one example of a question that challenged further avoidance of the issue and triggered a lengthy process of healing.

Once the process had been triggered, many felt themselves 'fall into chaos', descend into a 'black hole', become 'fragmented' or 'unravelled'. Respondents conveyed the impression of 'things falling apart' and of being out of control. Once things had deteriorated to this level, they were able to look back and identify the coping mechanisms that they had employed to 'hold things together' and prevent them from entering this disintegrative place. Common coping strategies were denial, living on two levels, compartmentalising and disassociating from the trauma. It was the breakdown of these strategies that marked the descent into chaos and the attendant feelings of
hopelessness and despair. It was often the extent of these emotions that led respondents to seek help from a counsellor or therapist. However, this action did not always mark the beginning of healing. Some had poor experiences of counselling which prevented them from being able to deal with the situation and prolonged the ‘fragmented’ phase of the process. Others were more fortunate and began to experience a healthy relationship for the first time in their lives.

In most cases, the counselling or therapeutic experience – either with a trained professional or a trusted friend – helped throw light on the situation and brought the first glimmers of understanding. For some, the connection between their current experiences and their childhood pasts was not clear. For example, one respondent thought that her abuse couldn’t possibly be contributing to the fact that her world was falling apart because her abusive experience was in the past and was ‘no longer relevant’. For others, they had to make slow and patient connections from their pasts to their current dysfunctional behaviours. This was often done through sensitive and careful questioning that made the linkages clear without forcing conclusions before they were ready to be received. One of the most notable features of the counselling or therapeutic relationship was ‘being heard’, ‘being validated’, ‘being believed’ and ‘being witnessed’. In many cases, it was the first time that the respondents had been given the time and space to present their material. The fact that they heard themselves doing so began to enlighten them in their process.

Thereafter began the work of ‘piecing’ their fragmented world back together again. One interviewee used the following analogy to express this part of the process. “It’s like having a jigsaw, you’ve thrown all the pieces down, and you need to look at each piece to see where it fits to make the big picture....and sort of put it back together.” It may sound strange to say this, but in the interviews, this phase comes across as ‘sense making’, ‘putting
order into the chaos' and being able to see what is going on. Whilst this is happening, various other activities are often pursued, such as going on training programmes, undertaking a course of study and volunteering to assist others going through crisis. Anger may be expressed at this stage or in the earlier stage of disintegration. There may be a qualitative difference between the two expressions, however, since one is born of confusion and the other is more clearly directed against a person or a situation.

Having gained an understanding of the complexities and effects of an abusive past, respondents often talked of learning to control their boundaries in relationship with others. This is often in respect of controlling the proximity or level of intimacy of a relationship – including sexual relationships. Indeed, some women talked of experimenting with or finding their sexuality, others talked of making choices about sexual encounters and level of involvement – anything from prolonged extra-marital affairs to one night stands. Whatever the nature of the expression, being able to choose was the motivator of paramount importance. Taking control also manifested in some instances as confronting the abuser. Sadly this did not resolve anything but at least it clarified the challenges that were to be faced as a result of this.

Once the ability to choose was experienced and the women began to be assured of their ability to control their world, there followed an integrative phase where all the strands were brought together in a way that brought that particular aspect of their journey to a conclusion. At the same time, they acquired the ability to distance themselves from their abusive pasts. This does not seem to be about further denial or disassociation, rather it is about looking at things more objectively and with less emotional entanglement. One respondent talked of 'a childhood I don't recognise'. Another said 'It's difficult to remember because I feel so different now' and a third said that she was 'recognising that the abuse no longer has any power over her.'
Each interviewee said that they didn’t feel that their journey would ever end and that it would be a continuous process. There is no ‘destination’, just a process of getting better and better.

I was interested to note that many of the women talked, with some satisfaction, of their abusers reaching old age or senility prematurely. Rough justice indeed.
A final note

Of course, it is impossible to present the richness of the interviews in this short space but I hope this gives sufficient understanding of the process to invite your comment.

There are several questions that I will be asking you when we meet and I thought you might like to be forewarned of them so that you can start thinking about your responses. They are:

- What aspects of the process do you recognise? (Would you substantiate your response with observations or examples from your experience?)
- Would you describe any features that you feel are missing?
- Would you comment on aspects of the process that you feel are spurious or irrelevant?
- What is new for you about this process?
- Do you have any other views or comments that may illuminate this process further?

IMPORTANT NOTE

This research is unfinished and has not been placed in the public domain. May I ask you therefore to treat it with the utmost confidentiality and refrain from discussing it openly or copying or disclosing any part of it to a third party.

I appreciate your willingness to help and look forward to meeting you.
References:


Gregory, J. (1994) *A Grounded Theory Study of the Education of Hospital Nurses: How education for interpersonal relating influences the way nurses relate to each other in the college and on the ward.* University of Surrey. UK


Vanaznt, Iyanla (1998) *Yesterday I cried.* Simon & Schuster Inc; USA

BLANK IN ORIGINAL
BEST COPY

AVAILABLE

TEXT IN ORIGINAL IS CLOSE TO THE EDGE OF THE PAGE
**Appendix V**

### Theoretical Memos - Emma

1. Therapy is continuing and there is no sense of ‘having arrived’. Emma is anticipating more effects from her therapeutic work. Perhaps this indicates an intuitive understanding of the process and its phases.

5. Emma has developed the ability to be more vulnerable. She has less fear than she did of a catharsis – which she is anticipating as the next stage of her process. (Although, throughout the interview, I get the feeling that she was holding back and harbouring a fear about releasing the emotional tension that has built up over the years.

2–7. The use of ‘more’ or ‘less’ is comparative, not absolute. Perhaps it confirms Emma’s assertion that she is still very much in process. (It’s interesting, some respondents say how they are now – confident, positive, physically healthy – as if it is a kind of absolute state, others talk about being less ‘this’ or ‘less’ that, taking the ‘less than’ as an indicator of their progress. I wonder if this is a language/personality (NLP?) thing or whether this represents where they are in their process?)

8–9. It seems to be important for Emma to understand the theory behind her process. Is she looking for reassurance/validation that she is following the ‘right’ path or that she is a ‘classic’ case. Looking for reassurance that she is not isolated in her experience?

10. Recognising that there is an ongoing internal process. Latent work?

11. Having a good therapeutic relationship has been found to be important in many volunteers’ healing journey. However, the damage a poor therapeutic relationship (due to ignorance/incompetence) is almost unbelievable!

12. Allowing herself to use the external support that she has. What enables her to do this? Is she more able to make herself vulnerable? Not so driven to cope with everything on her own? (As she had to with the abuse.)

13. Although a long term relationship was available as a support mechanism, Emma didn’t use this. Therapy, enabled her to open up to this support which, concurrently, enabled her to open to a new relationship. Was this about letting go of control and allowing herself to be vulnerable?

14. Using the therapist as a role model?

15e, 16e, 17e. A trusting relationship needed to be built to enable the therapist to walk the line between challenging Emma and not confronting her with further ‘abuse’. This would prevent her from using her usual tactics of avoidance – Emma said that she was a skilled practitioner that could ‘outwit’ less able therapists. Although she talks of nothing being hidden in the relationship, Emma go on to say that intellectually, she could run rings round most therapists and therefore, the relationship was pretty conditional on her part and she probably had a hidden agenda – testing the therapist intellectually to see if she was up to do the job. **Powerful position being a victim – also in Sharon’s interview.**

18. Building intellectual regard for the therapist was key in Emma’s therapy. The process of
setting boundaries made her feel 'safe and secure' and enabled her to get over her fear of being able to damage other people through being 'bad', 'evil' or 'wicked'.

19e, 20e. Although Emma was slight in build, she appeared very tense and I felt that if this tension was released, it would indeed be overwhelming. She controlled her environment during the interview by having her partner present and by taping the session to compare with the transcript so that no anomalies would be possible. She set her boundaries very clearly and I was able to reassure her that I too was working within strict boundaries. She and her partner monitored these boundaries closely throughout the interview. It was a very difficult session.

21e. I wonder if she has a fear of letting go of her identification with her abuse. Who am I if I am not the abused?

22e. Withholding 'overwhelming' emotions in order to maintain support. It seems that Emma wants no hidden agenda from her therapist but she certainly has one of her own.

23e. In my experience with other interviewees, it is that feeling of being adrift (in the void) that eventually enables them to move forward. Emma has such a fear of this that she protects herself from going there. I wonder if this is arresting her healing process.

24e-30e. There was a lot going on here which mirrored the description that Emma gave of being skilled with her defences. In having this conversation with her therapist, she was already building defences. If things didn't work out because the therapist got 'frightened' or didn't challenge at the appropriate moments, Emma would say 'I told you so' and feel vindicated in her dysfunction which would reinforce the negative feelings she had about being a Pandora's box and overwhelming people. Emma recognised her preference for staying in her mind and was 'quick' in building defences, arguments that would reinforce her identification with 'the victim' rather than challenge it. I wondered if there was some pride in her condition. (I am a really 'bad' case. Look, there's nothing anyone can do with me. I'm too fast and too clever for them!)

31e. Yet, at the same time, she was sabotaging her own ability to outwit the therapist by declaring her pattern. This may have come across as a professional challenge to the therapist. It feels as if Emma is in the teeth of a dichotomy: Shall I pursue healing or shall I hold onto the power of being a victim?

32e-37e. Throughout the interview, Emma describes the difference between her intellect and her emotions and acknowledges that she tends to prefer being in her head. However, she sees this as holding her progress back. Although she chose a cognitive approach she seeks emotional release. The cognitive choice enables her to avoid catharsis although, intellectually, she can see that this may be the next and essential step. She holds this in front of her as the next step on her path.

35e. Identifying with the 'fragile victim' yet recognising her own power as a dysfunctional woman.

36e. The fear of fragmentation may be holding Emma back from making progress. In all the other interviews, it was piecing together the fragments that enabled them to move forward. In relation to others, fear of fragmentation and high levels of control seem to have blocked
Emma.

38e-40e. Emma recognised her tendency to retreat into the mind and not address emotions and was therefore not too concerned when her cognitive therapy came to an end. Although, throughout her interview she talks about emotional release and catharsis, she never has achieved this. This may be something she is deeply fearful of and, although skirts around the concept, does not feel able to 'let go'.

42e-44e. Although Emma was angry and being imposed upon therapeutically, she shows here that she was beginning to see the therapist’s perspective and co-operate. The strength showed by the therapist in this regard (and the eventual sense it made to Emma – cognitive again) enabled further trust to be established.

45e. I am relating these manageable ‘bits’ to the concept of fragmentation which seems to be an important theme in many of the interviews.

46e. Emma talks of a less chaotic place, cognitively speaking, and the ability to recognise individual moments and stop some of the automatic processes. I wonder if these individual moments could be related to the concept of fragmentation – seeing bits and being able to deal with them separately.

49e. A challenge to Emma’s fervent self-sufficiency. Seeing asking for help as progress rather than a weakness/allowing someone to control her.

47e, 48e, 50e, 51e, 52e. The notion of ‘unpacking stuff’/‘breaking down thought patterns’ again points to the idea of separating issues into ‘bits’ that are manageable. (unravelling)

53e-57e. During this part of the interview Emma confided that she felt that progress had been slow. This seems to stem from the fact that she was always in her mind and not in her emotions. She keeps returning to the theme of catharsis, emotional release, and is certainly anticipating that this will be her next major step. In the mean time, she is training herself to value the small steps that she has taken which challenge her automatic responses and behaviours. Is catharsis (emotional release – anger) always necessary as a step on the healing journey?

53e, 56e, 57e. Emma’s language suggests that fragmentation has taken place and that she is looking at the smaller pieces. Although she talks of it still feeling a little chaotic (diminishing sense of chaos) the clarifying process nonetheless seems to be taking place.

58e. Find out more about dreams. Emma is not the only one that reported nightmares. Are troubled dreams representative of unconscious processing? Jung.

59e. In my interview with Kate, reference to muscular rigidity was also made. She referred to this as literally being petrified. Emma talks about being terrified of being held in her nightmares if she took sleeping pills. She questions whether her muscle tension is a physical signal of the extent to which she is blocking the emotional release of all that has built up in the past – and present.

61e-65e. Again, Emma anticipates the next and ‘most complete’ part of the process, that of emotional/pain release.

66e. Emma rationalises the reasons for her anger – shame, guilt and pain - and fear of the
extent of it results in high levels of emotional control. Again, she is in her head.

67e. I wonder what is underpinning the fear of 'inappropriate' release? What is 'appropriate' anger and what does it mean behaviourally. Has someone placed expectations in her mind about anger being inappropriate behaviour? Probably her abuser.

67e-70e. In the expression of her fears about releasing anger, it is clear that she feels that there is so much there, that if she lost emotional control, she would unleash a lot of anger — and even then, it would only scratch the surface of shame and guilt. Being able to release anger is something that many of the women talked about as an essential part of their healing journey. It would appear that Emma has not reached this stage yet.

70e-72e. This is a complex piece of the interview where the empathy she experiences towards herself as a result of understanding the extent and nature of her anger is felt as pain and sadness as well as kindness and gentleness — a sort of 'soft despair' as opposed to 'hard, angry despair'. I wonder if this softening is as effective as catharsis. It perhaps allows 'new energy' in to the process.

72e-76e. In this piece, she expresses her belief that her anger has helped her to survive. It is a powerful energy that has helped her to 'kick back' and enabled her to hold it all together but she also turned it in on herself. Withheld anger, a survival strategy that is no longer useful.

76e-77e. There is a lot of clarity in this interview about the role that anger plays and her need to address it — in whatever way. I get the impression she is caught in a cleft stick with this one, fearful of moving forward and releasing anger, yet aware that it can be self-destructive. Through all this, she is trying to be gentler on herself, but this in itself, raises issues of pain and sadness.

77e-79e. I spoon fed this to her really but she could see the goal very clearly, that of full integration. This implies a shared understanding between her and me of 'bringing all the parts together'. Is this what psychosynthesis is all about?

81e. Living on two levels. Separating thinking from feeling. Dissociating/disassociating. (Is there a difference between these two conditions?)

80e-82e. In other interviews, interviewees talked of feeling 'whole', 'complete', 'integrated' when asked how they felt healthy now. The sense of separation that Emma feels may indicate that she is part way through the process — if it is defined as coming to a place of completeness. Interesting though, she can see the goal on the horizon and seems intuitively to understand where her destiny lies in terms of arriving at a state of 'health'.

83e-87e. I believe Emma is presenting herself with all the arguments for catharsis but has an innate fear of doing this because in the moment of catharsis, control is lost. In her mind, she has thought through the reasons that suggest catharsis is a good idea but she also presents counter-arguments. Perhaps it is better not to do it at all if you can’t do it continually? Her rational argument doesn’t really stack up, catharsis may not be worth doing because once you’ve released the past, then it just builds up again in the present — but at least there is less of it! Perhaps she is justifying her fear.
88e-90e. Is this about others’ fears getting in the way of appropriate challenge or about the professionalism of therapists? I think Emma is torn between having pride in her ability to outwit therapists and being really pissed off when they don’t challenge her properly, albeit recognising the fine line between being ineffective and abusive towards the client.

91e. Intellectualising about the process. Innate intrigue about her own processes as a child. Read psychology books as a child. Trying to work out how people functioned. Heather did a similar thing.

92e. I wonder if the fact that she understands the process theoretically prevents her from being open to her own process spontaneously. A watched pot and all that!

93e. This seems to indicate Emma’s view that some people are inclined to take themselves on a healing journey whilst others are not. An internal quality?

94e-96e. I’m not sure what was happening here. I think Emma misunderstood my question. However, she presented a comparison of how she felt when she first moved to [City] and how she felt now. (She was in a fairly new relationship with a therapist when I interviewed her and she elected to have him in the room during the interview. He was obviously very protective of her – and quite threatening towards me.)

97e. Obviously, Emma has picked herself up and started processing again after a very low period when she was isolated and lonely. It appears that these ups and downs of the process seem quite natural and often trigger the next phase. **Now she is able to allow some nourishment into her life.** (New relationship.)

98e-100e. Emma has an image in her mind of something ‘massive’ that needs to be addressed from the emotional perspective and doesn’t believe that this can be achieved in a regular hourly therapy session. She sees her new boyfriend (therapist) as having a role to support her through the next stage of the process. Sounds dicey to me! She sees therapy as an essential forerunner to enable her to be open to ‘external support’. Again, we have her anticipating a cathartic stage in her healing.

101e-102e. Physical illness seems to have been a common trigger for many of the interviewees and also a pertinent question at a time when guards were down. (Physical disease being a manifestation of psychological disposition? Caroline Myss – The Creation of Heath, The Anatomy of Spirit.)

103e-105e. This seems to have been the beginning of the descent into chaos, a place that Emma feels that she is emerging from.

106e. The creation of a ‘story/fantasy (Reference?) to enable Emma to manage her memories was challenged and ‘unpacked’ – Coping strategy. Perhaps this is the process of fragmentation that seems to be an essential step in the process of moving towards health. Perhaps it is about ‘facing the truth’, whatever that means.

109e, 110e. Emma seems to have overseen her process from a dissociated space, viewing critically those experiences she was being encouraged to put herself through. She may have thought she was ‘looking after herself’ but this may have been another coping strategy, controlling the boundaries around her exposure to pain.

111e. The importance of honouring the boundaries agreed before therapy is clearly paramount. When trust is broken in such a way, it can put someone back in their process.
Several things going on here but because of her desperate tiredness, and the fear of losing emotional control, Emma subjected herself to another bout of therapy. Emma feels that the underlying emotional issues were driving her health and behaviours and she could only see things getting worse if she didn’t do something about them. This is a negative driver that pushed her into more therapy. (NLP – away from, not towards)

Emma seems to have re-engaged with her anger and this has moved her forward in her process. This time, at her mother for bracketing Emma in her own experience of aloneness having been widowed. I guess this was too intimate. Is anger a propellant to the process?

Solitude – a period of latent progress whilst processing? Withdrawal to gain perspective?

Caught in a paradox – needing a relationship but fearing that she may contaminate someone if she were in relationship with them. An imponderable really.

Emma dealt with her partner’s transvestism and problems with his sexuality through an intellectualising process – she used it as the topic for her MA dissertation. When she discovered that her partner was a transvestite, and had problems with drink and money, she recognised that she “didn’t want to die that way again, you know, in a horrible relationship.” She was beginning to see the value of herself and the need to rescue herself and move away from this destructive place. (Kate also completed a Masters degree on ‘Recovery from Childhood Sexual Abuse’.)

Emma could see that as a child, she had to keep sexual secrets and she didn’t want to do this any more. For this reason, she chose to ‘expose’ her partner’s transvestism.

As with many other interviewees, there often seems to be more than one trigger that initiates the healing journey. Here Emma describes a number of things coming together to propel her into process.

Flashbacks – triggers that force her to remember the past.

Some people seem to forget completely, others seem to be able to suppress memories and still others create desirable fantasies around them (Heather and Emma). However, there seems to be leakage in one form or another. In this case, in the form of dreams.

The circumstances around her departure from her husband conspired to force her to look at her behavioural patterns and determine what was ‘normal’ relating behaviour and what was not.

When one is steeped in an environment, it is hard to be critical about it, especially when being undermined/brainwashed by one’s partner. This is where Emma came to understand the level of dysfunctionality of her marriage.

Many seem to cite leaving their husband as one of the triggers that moved them into process. Perhaps ‘being married’ is another defence strategy – it perpetuates the abuse or prevents one from looking at the abuse.

Her newfound perceptions were reinforced when her daughter became sexually active.
and she could see another way that was different from her own.

141e, 142e. Discussing intimate things with other women reinforced this new perception that her marriage was seriously dysfunctional.

143e. During the session, Emma manifested signs of discomfort. I felt that she was very fragile and this made me anxious in running the session. I think she volunteered prematurely for an exploratory interview such as this. I felt that she was ‘on the edge’ and probably in another dysfunctional relationship. (Her boyfriend threatened me after the interview.)

144e. Lots of anger against the benefits system and the humiliation it caused Emma. Perhaps because it was another form of dependency/victimhood? This was used to motivate her determination to move forward and study for a qualification. However, this constant intellectual activity postponed the healing process from her broken marriage.

150e. Physical immobility has been a recurring theme in this study.

151e. The body shouts, and no-one hears. So it shouts again, and louder, until hospitalisation is the only choice. Then it shouts again – and still no-one hears! (This is what happened to me too!) This is the power of denial and the level of resistance to dealing with the issues.

153. Avoidance at its extreme. Lots of displacement activity? Academic workaholism, dysfunctional relationship, serious health issues, bringing up children, death of a parent. There was no time or space to hear what the body was saying.

155e. Playing the tragic heroine – Look I can do all this, and more (but I can’t look at the past) OR Look how bad the past is, I have to do all of this to stop myself thinking about it.

156e. When Emma talks about assembling a kitchen by herself, I looked at all 4’10”/6 stone of her and wondered, where did she get the strength post surgery, post studying, post relationship?!!!!!! This is a very strong woman and sometime this level of strength can be a real block to healing.

157e. Running away, towards.

160e. Emma is beginning to create boundaries around the commitments she makes outside the home, albeit with a hint of an apology. (…not by my design…) However, perhaps she is at the beginning of creating space for herself in which she can heal and build her strength - in readiness for the ‘promised’ catharsis? She is still finding it hard to detach from high levels of activity and over-achievement. Although she sees the value of making choices, I wonder if she would have made those choices had they not been imposed upon her.

161e, 162e. Emma sees her latest relationship as a means of helping her resolve some of her old patterns. I wonder if she is in the loop again? My observation of him was that he was another small and angry man.

Theoretical Memos - Heather

1h-5h. Definition of ‘health’ compared to the beginning of the journey of healing – integrated with a sense of self. This is not an ‘absolute’ point, (use of words like ‘less’ or ‘more’ implying that there may be further to go) rather this is another step along the way with many interviewees anticipating further work and further healing. Perhaps this is a description of a stage, or resting place, on the journey that creates the foundation for the next phase.
1h. When asked how she was feeling now compared to the beginning of her journey she offered a list of her achievements, not feelings.

1h-5h. Being a successful parent and managing a career contribute to feeling well. These are outward, measurable qualities; the other qualities (whole, complete, less fragmented) are more internal and abstract.

3h. Feeling different now to how it was before. However difficult it is to grapple with what that means, it indicates that a transition has occurred.

6h. Making connections between her father and her husband and recognising similar patterns of behaviour. It seems she couldn't make these connections until she observed the dynamic between her husband and her daughter. Was this because she could observe the dynamic more objectively? Subjectively, it didn't have the same impact. Perhaps because she was so used to being treated in a certain way that she didn't see anything wrong with it.

7h, 8h, 9h. (Moustakas, C., Phenomenological Research Methods, Sage Publications, 1994, pp127 – taken from Palmieri’s Study of Childhood Abuse, 1990 – The Experience of Adults Abused as Children. Extracted from his interview with ‘Geraldine’. “I know what scared me the most was mainly with my oldest daughter...she’s going to be ten and starting to develop. That’s a strong fear of the same thing happening to her that happened to me.”)

7h, 8h. Seeing her own dysfunctional behaviours reflected in her daughter’s behaviours led to fear of the same history unfolding for her daughter. As a parent, this was unacceptable and it stimulated action on Heather’s part that began her own journey of healing.

11h. When Heather made a choice to protect her daughter it occurred to her that the situation wasn’t OK for her or her other daughter either. It was at this point that she started seeking help.

15h-18h. Being able to parent the girls on one level (practical) but withdrawing affection and physical comfort from them (emotional) when they reached a certain age. Compartmentalising? Coping in one domain but not in another. Intuitively recognising that something was wrong but not being able to determine what it was. The act of withholding triggered concern and brought the situation into focus. Wilber, In the Atman Project credits Gardner, (and indirectly, Piaget) with the insight that development is composed of a variety of domains (developmental lines) and that a human can be competent in one domain whereas this competence would not be identical to that in other domains. This may explain why Heather was a practically competent as a mother but emotionally withheld.

19h. Children were observing Heather’s behaviours and asking ‘why’ she did certain things which made her question herself. Had the children reached a certain stage in their development that mirrored Heather’s when it was arrested by abuse? Not having experienced ‘normal’ development herself, she may not have known how to fulfil her role as mother.

20h. Fulfilling her role as a protector of her children meant that she could deny the dysfunction in herself and her family but it reached a point where the enormity of the denial was revealed by her daughters’ questioning and the strategy was no longer effective. At this stage, there was nothing else for it but to do something about it.

25h. Something felt wrong but Heather was unable to determine what it was. Withholding
Affection from your children must feel wrong at some level. How do we know how to parent our children? Who teaches us? Is it innate in us? Was affection withheld from Heather when she was the same age as her daughter? Some people see abuse as the only ‘soft touch’ a child may receive; the only demonstration of love or affection. Perhaps this is an indication of the brutality of Heather’s abuse?

29h-30h. When her mother died, all that she had ‘held on to’ escaped her grasp and things started to come undone’. Had she colluded with her mother to keep things under wraps and her departure triggered the questioning process? – Use of metaphor very strong. Ref: Metaphors we live by. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.

31h, 32h. Disassociation? Split personality?

33h. Strong use of metaphor – boxes becoming unhinged, juggling. Many interviewees pepper their accounts with metaphors to describe their process. Perhaps because they just don’t have the words. In Rachel’s interview, she reported that she couldn’t talk about her abuse until she became educated and had the language to convey what had happened.

35h. Resorting to old coping strategies as a means of staving off the inevitable and returning to the ‘safe place’ of denial.

39h. Going to a counsellor every week and just talking about what had happened during the week was a new coping strategy. It enabled Heather to get a picture of her life through externalising her thoughts and hearing herself. Is there something about this externalisation process that helps create clarity about what is going on? The therapeutic effects of talking and being heard.

40h. Using the metaphor of not being able to see in front of her face because of the fog and, through talking, she was able to see a much clearer picture of what it was like for the girls and what her relationship was like with her husband.

45h. Disassociation. Splitting oneself and living on two levels as a means of getting through life. Hiding a part of herself away and never letting it out. The hurt child? Numbing herself to life.

52h. Displacement activities – obsessive cleaning – so that memories couldn’t seep out.

45h-55h. A great deal of effort was put into containing the situation so that it didn’t have to be addressed. It was as if Heather knew that to face the memories and deal with their significance would be extremely challenging and she tried everything to veer away from having to do that.

56h-59h. The importance of achieving the small steps to build sufficient confidence to make major changes is articulated here. The process of changing patterns of behaviour in small ways and being strong enough to go against her husband. This was dependent upon having a supportive network outside the home, people who could ‘hold’ the situation and not make frightening demands to make major changes. This seems to be a core process and many interviewees talk of building confidence/strength, bit by bit, until they are ready to make a significant change. This seems to go hand in hand with a ‘sense making’ activity – piecing things together to gain understanding.

60h. Gradually building self-esteem and being able to trust people. This process was
piecemeal and took a long time. The process of breaking down old paradigms and replacing them with new ones.

62h. Many interviewees have talked of the role of academic study in their healing journey. Perhaps it’s because it deals with situations in the abstract which can then be related back to their own experiences. It is a less threatening environment. One in which like-minded people congregate and personal agendas are not at the forefront. This might be the first experience an abused person has of a supportive environment and a real education in how healthy relationships are formed and maintained. Is this a process that healthy children go through when they go to school and start becoming individualised? Making sense, creating meaning?

66h. In spite of the downside of making herself more vulnerable, Heather had this impetus to continue doing it – an internal driver that she didn’t understand. Is this what Ken Wilber describes in the Atman Project as a compulsion to actualise (or something like that)?

68h-72h. This was a scary but freeing stage in the process as Heather learned to control her space and find freedom within it. She was challenging her own behaviours and assumptions and being rewarded for doing so. This catalysed building supportive relationships with people in her external environment and gave her the courage to branch out in a way that she had not done before.

73h. The course content resonated with Heather’s childhood experiences and, although she was unsettled, she didn’t think it was having any effect, yet she was feeling tired and physically ill.

77h, 79h. Heather was confused that the course was causing her distress because she held the belief that her past experiences had nothing to do with her present feelings – even though it was making her feel ill. The process she is describing is one of clarifying, which I begin to think is the basic social psychological process that defines the healing journey; bringing light to the dysfunctional patterns so that they can be seen and understood.

82h. Being denied the counsellor that she had worked with during her Diploma course, Heather tried to put the memories back into a box again. It didn’t work. There was still an impetus to seek resolution. Where does this come from? It seems that once the box is open, it cannot be closed again – to draw from one of Heather’s metaphors.

86h. As Heather emerged in her own right and became financially independent she changed the dynamic of her relationship with her husband and he could no longer control her through money.

89h. Heather knew that she couldn’t deliver her decision to her husband face to face so she created a situation where there was no way back. She deliberately cornered herself so that all she had to deal with was the fallout from her decision. She knew there was no way back once this had been done. The decision and the repercussions were asynchronous which gave Heather the space she needed to plan and prepare.

91h. At college, Heather was presented with her past through her studies and as a Field Social Worker, she was presented with her past through the content of her work. It’s like, if she didn’t do it for herself, something would drive her to do it. Does this process always take over? It’s like it has a life of its own. Does it naturally seek resolution – whatever that means?
92h. Heather seems to have an unerring ability to encounter her past through her occupation. Firstly, it was the Social Work Diploma, then it was working as a Child Protection Officer and then it was Residential Care Work. All these situations triggered ‘stuff’ and made her question her suitability to work in these domains. Is this process orchestrated by a subconscious understanding of the phases and a need to work through them?

93h. Do we put ourselves in the path of experiences we need to have?!

96h. It is amazing how many people have ‘false starts’ with counsellors who apparently don’t understand what the needs of the client are or who don’t understand the process they are going through. Ref: Survey of CACREP-Accredited Programs: Training Counselors to Provide Treatment for Sexual Abuse.; By: Kitzrow, Martha Anne., Counselor Education & Supervision, Dec 2002, Vol. 42 Issue 2, p107, p Argues that lack of training can re-traumatise victims of childhood sexual abuse and that a high proportion of counsellors do not receive adequate training in this area. The quality of the counsellor seems to be of tremendous importance in these cases.

100h. This seems to have been a powerful phase in Heather’s healing journey where she was able to address issues raised through her work immediately with her counsellor – a kind of parallel processing perhaps. This enabled her to move rapidly along the healing path.

102h. No longer separating her past experiences from her present – integrating. She used to try and compartmentalise her abusive past but now acknowledges that it has an impact in her present life and will probably continue to do so. Perhaps this begs a different coping strategy? Is this a critical realisation?

103h. For the fourth time, Heather puts herself in the line of fire and the pattern repeats. Starting the counselling course raised numerous issues.

105h. Recognition that taking an holistic view was another phase in the process and she needed to seek help to deal with the losses and continued impact of the abuse. Seeing this as another stage in the process. Are there discrete phases in the process? Is there a natural ordering of these stages that can be mapped? Needing someone else to go through the next stage. Is this about accompanying her on her journey? Is this the role of the counsellor?

107h. Heather conveys a sense that there is deeper processing as the various stages are moved through. Others have described this as ‘peeling the layers off an onion’.

108h. Feeling less fragmented – is this about integration? Being able to fit the pieces together like a jigsaw is a common metaphor for this phase of the process.

109h. The concept of layers is referred to again and the idea that processing becomes deeper and deeper as it progresses. To begin with, Heather just talked of what was happening to her during the week and this was what comprised her counselling. No abuse was addressed at this stage. Now, her life is being laid out in front of her with all the patterns and implications coming into focus.

113h. Recognising that some pieces of the jigsaw still don’t fit and that they will need to be addressed sometime in the future. In fact, Heather did go into another cycle of processing after the interview as a result of which her counsellor encouraged Heather to report her abusers to the Police and threatened to do so herself if Heather did not. Heather felt tremendously let down by this episode and finished seeing this counsellor with whom she had
formerly enjoyed a strong and trusting relationship. She is now questioning the wisdom of finding another counsellor to assist her further work. (Makes me so mad!)

115. Feeling of integration, wholeness. This stage has been hard won and it is graphically described by Heather. Although this isn’t the end, it is certainly a stage that has been reached.

116h. As a child, Heather spent hours and hours working people out. This is something that other interviewees have spoken about. (eg Emma) I wonder if it has something to do with the level of confusion and isolation they experience.

118h, 119h. The brutality of the assault shocked Heather into having to dig beyond her intellect and deal with it on another level. Emma also talked of using the intellectual level as a defence mechanism. In her interview, she speculated that the next step of the process for her was to move to the emotional level and this seemed to be a real challenge for her. Yet Heather’s counsellor helped her make this transition. In Emma’s case, she spoke of becoming so intellectually adept at defending herself that counsellors had to be more able than her in order to help her change this dynamic. Is this level of counselling a matter of luck?

120h. Making the transition from intellectual processing to emotional processing was extremely challenging because Heather couldn’t understand the process. She thought she was having a breakdown although she didn’t disintegrate. Interesting that she uses the word disintegrate, which seems to equate to dissension into chaos in the context of this process. There must have been something in her that was able to hold the process together, even though her behaviours were surprising to her. Taking an idea from Rachel’s interview, perhaps she didn’t have the language to intellectualise about the process, she just had to ‘be’ in it.

121h. Allowing the pain to be felt. Perhaps Heather had never allowed the pain of her abuse to be felt. She talked of observing people from a distance and making stories up about them so that there was some sort of order in her world. Was this a intellectual coping strategy? “I could intellectualise it, I could talk about it like it was an interesting... somebody else’s case study.”

122h. See Emma’s interview. She sat for two days without moving. Heather sat for hours without moving. Catatonia? Post-traumatic stress disorder? Body shutting down in the teeth of something unbearable. (Same phenomenon as with Kate and Emma)

123h. Catatonia (integration period enabling Heather to connect with her feelings) – essential step in moving away from intellectual defence mechanisms.

124h. Although her ability to intellectualise had enabled her to survive it was now preventing her from feeling justified in feeling what she was feeling – or feeling anything at all. If you can intellectualise, and be objective about an experience, you can’t connect with it from an emotional perspective - in the way that Heather did her assault. This coping strategy then becomes a blocking strategy. This seems to be a critical part of the process. Changing the way you think about things. Having realisations. Ah ha moments. In this case, it happened when Heather saw ‘it all laid out’. In this sense, she was able to ‘see’ what was happening – Making sense, creating meaning?
131h. Disassociation as a child enabled her to withstand the abuse. As an adult, she had to allow herself to experience the feelings that she had denied herself as a child.

132h. In spite of a suicide attempt when Heather was 13, people just didn’t explore the reasons behind it. Perhaps their fear at finding out what was going on prevented them from ‘hearing’. Maybe Heather didn’t have the language to use to enable people to know what was going on.

137h-141h. Use of metaphor again – lightening the load, casting off a bit at a time, taking the next step forward. Building a picture of a journey.

142h. It is interesting that Heather conveyed the belief that had she not been assaulted, ‘something’ would have happened to move her on in her process. Does this indicate a belief in an external moderator/motivator for the process; that fate is somehow wrapped up in the process? If so, what happens to those who don’t go through the process? How is someone ‘chosen’? Because they are strong enough? Because they are worth while? OR Is the process inevitable?

143h. This seems to be a phase of hopeless despair. Once the pain and the emotions started flooding in, Heather could not see to the next phase of the process. Not feeling that it would ever change, she just wanted it all to end there. She was subsumed in the process at this point and still can’t articulate how it came to an end. Back in the ‘black hole’? The process seems to move people back and forth at various stages of the process.

150h-152h. This is the story of Heather’s catharsis. The sudden and physical release of years of anger. Having thought that she had dealt with the anger (intellectually), visiting her dead father’s workshop, the place of her abuse, and finding the instruments of abuse, tapped into her anger which she expressed physically.

153h. Not only was divorcing her husband a way of removing herself from continual abuse, it was symbolic of her reclaiming herself, her power and making choices for the first time.

153h-158h. I notice that Heather uses the terms ‘Mum’ and ‘Dad’ which are generally accepted as affectionate terms for parents. It seems strange that she refers to them in this way. She also uses the possessive term ‘my’ when speaking about them. I don’t know about the psychology of this but perhaps there is still a part of her that yearns for loving parents and these terms help her to identify with that need?

157h. Making a distinction between playing a victim and really being a victim. Is this the difference between colluding (playing a victim because you are getting something you need from it) and genuinely being a victim, (being under someone else’s control)?

159h. There is nothing like taking your power and making active choices to thwart victim consciousness.

161h. Process more complicated than merely making a decision. Lots of things have to be in place before that can happen.

168h. An interesting distinction being made between abuse as a lifetime issue but not necessarily a life sentence.

170h. Never arriving at the end of the process. Anticipating more work.

176h. Bateson’s levels of logical reasoning? Jaques too?
Theoretical Memos – Kate

1k. Implication that her level of physical well being represents psychological/emotional health which is a significant shift from earlier in her adult life when her health was very poor and her psychological/emotional health was less stable. (Caroline Myss, The Creation of Health/The Anatomy of Spirit. Louise Hay, You can Heal your Life.)

3k, 4k. Kate has very clear philosophical beliefs about the mind/body link and uses the state of her physical self to determine the state of her psychological/emotional health. (She uses these words synonymously.) (Caroline Myss, The Creation of Health, The Anatomy of Spirit.)

7k. Generally feeling fine about herself, even though there are some areas where she worries, such as whether people like her. However, this is not seen to be a problem. Kate is able to accommodate lapses in confidence and it doesn’t undermine her general sense of well-being. She is accepting of herself as a ‘whole’; ‘good’ and ‘bad’.

7k. Psychologically healthy and yet struggling with how many ways she gets it wrong/not being perfect. Issues of self-esteem. Tenuous confidence?

9k. Kate introduces the idea that her physical appearance reflected her psychological/emotional condition as opposed to earlier, when she introduced the idea that her physical health reflected her psychological/emotional disposition. People don’t recognise her now because the physical changes have been so great. Do we physically manifest what state we are inside? Do we elicit people’s reactions to us through physical (and non physical) triggers? Does a victim remain a victim because he or she manifests victim consciousness?

10k-12k. Kate’s body was completely rigid before she began the process of healing. Everything was ‘locked’ and she was in great pain. She was literally ‘petrified’ as in ‘turned to stone’. (She refers to this herself later in her own words.) (Emma also referred to a physical illness triggering her emotional healing process: What actually triggered seeking anything was I had become extremely anaemic.) This reinforces the idea of the mind/body link that was spoken of earlier. Was the level of pain she experienced indicative of the level of resistance she had to seeking and addressing the cause of the problem. When this became intolerable, she ‘broke’ and was then open to the suggestion of therapy. Was her body was signalling her need? (This happened to me. I was in hospital, unable to move, waiting for surgery on my back when I decided to seek therapeutic help.)

12k. Kate acknowledges that therapy provided the biggest shift for her. However, that’s just the vehicle, it’s not the process.

10k-12k. Seek references on ‘Body wisdom’. (Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine.) After the Darkest Hour: How Suffering Begins the Journey to Wisdom by Kathleen Brehony
Listen to Your Body: The Wisdom of the Dao by Bisong Guo, Andrew Powell
The Wisdom of the Body by Sherwin B. Noland

14k-16k. When asked about what triggered the process, Kate made the connection between her daughter’s age and the age she was when her mother became ill and subsequently died. Unprotected by her mother, the abuse started at this point. She hadn’t made this connection until the question was asked during the interview. It is possible to get a feeling for Kate’s realisation in the transcript of the interview. “I’ve never really thought about it before. She was that age. The same age.” Kate’s daughter was more of a trigger than her son because
of her gender.

14k-16k. Taken from Heather’s interview: “…it started because I wanted to protect Maddie.”

14k-16k. (Moustakas, C., Phenomenological Research Methods, Sage Publications, 1994, pp127 – taken from Palmieri’s Study of Childhood Abuse, 1990 – The Experience of Adults Abused as Children. Taken from his interview with ‘Geraldine’. “I know what scared me the most was mainly with my oldest daughter…she’s going to be ten and starting to develop. That’s a strong fear of the same thing happening to her that happened to me.”)

17k. (There have been a number of instances with different interviewees where poor therapists have prevented progress in this process of transformation. The importance of having a ‘good’ therapist seems to be paramount.)

19k. In most interviews, volunteers talk about being able to ‘see it all laid out’ and this is what brought ‘sense making’ or ‘clarity’ to their process. Not believing in ‘spreading it out and looking at it in detail’ seems to be an opposing view.

20k, 21k. Kate draws the parallel between her anger and the paralysis and pain she suffered. She also says that the release of anger was very important, perhaps in bringing her to physical health.

22k. She acknowledges that ‘little pockets’ of anger remain and still haven’t been released. A continuous process?

23k. Kate found herself in a self reinforcing context where a respected other was sending positive messages about her capability. Being valued and validated challenged her feelings of worthlessness. Is it important that the person giving validation is external and respected? Is this a childhood phase that has been missed – do we go back to where the childhood phase of development was arrested because of the abuse? – Healing Tasks, James Kepner – ‘Healing is really the process of re-establishing the natural cycle of growth and development in relation to those developmental issues that have been most affected (distorted, truncated, redirected, rigidified or fixated) by the abusive situation. Healing from the impact of childhood abuse and trauma is fundamentally a process of growth.’ P 2.

25k. Building trusting relationships with youngsters who then wanted to ‘be heard’ by Kate pushed her in to becoming a trained counsellor because she didn’t want to let them down. She stated that this training started her journey. Another trigger?

26k. Fate was responsible for Kate starting her journey – although she had also said that her pain and her daughter reaching a critical age was also responsible. It seems that there are often several triggers coming together to enable this process to take place. This is reinforced by other interviewees.

- Age of daughter
- Physical pain
- Debilitating illness
- Emotional breakdown
- Severely dysfunctional relationships
- Physical/emotional paralysis
• **Loss of abusing parent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>27k. Process is unending, more pockets to work on - but it is a very positive trend.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28k. After six and a half years of therapy, Kate feels that she has arrived at a place where she now knows what issues she needs to work on. This, in spite of the fact that she sees herself having transformed from her earlier years of paralysis and pain. Perhaps she sees the next horizon of health or quantum challenge in her healing – working on the 'small pockets'?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29k. Sometimes, working with a therapist is the first experience of building a successful relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27k, 30k. Kate sees the healing process as continuing, she has not yet 'arrived'. Each interviewee reflects this same understanding; although they feel they have reached a place of health, they still see their healing path stretching into the future but feel they are better equipped to deal with it and are optimistic about its rewards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31k, 32k. Many interviewees didn’t realise they were angry with their mothers for ‘allowing this to happen’. Recognising anger seems to be a problem as it can manifest in many different forms, not all of which are stereotypical. When it is suppressed because its release is unacceptable in certain contexts, it can become distorted and unrecognisable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32k. Sounds like an intellectual justification for not dealing with anger towards her father. ‘I know he did his best.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33k. Kate describes being unable to identify with herself as a child. She knows who she is now but doesn’t connect with who she was. Because of this, she is also disconnected from her father. Is this a critical place to have reached? <strong>DISASSOCIATION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35k. (Although not the point of this study, it is remarkable how many interviewees talk of their perpetrators as being ‘old’ or losing their faculties before their time.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36k, 37k. Another realisation that being able to let go of the past enabled Kate to move on. Hearing herself respond to the questions seems to be making some links for her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38k. Still some tension between letting go of the past and having a residue of lack of self worth. This appears from time to time but is very different to the extent of lack of self worth that Kate felt as a child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40k-42k. Kate felt that the healing process could not have taken place earlier than it did due to the power of the negative beliefs she held about herself. She implies that there is a time when strength and maturity – along with a trigger – enable the journey to health to be taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41k, 42k. Again, Kate makes the link between her body and her psychological disposition. She was physically and emotionally petrified as a result of her traumas as a child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43k, 44k. Although Kate sees that relationship issues with her husband were symptomatic of her need to heal, she didn’t embark on therapy in order to address these specifically. She sees herself as having moved on a long way but she implies that her husband hasn’t grown very much.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
45k, 46k. Refers again to parents ‘doing their best’ but in relation to her and her husband, rather than her father this time. Intellectualising/justifying inaction on the marriage front. I think she probably just doesn’t want to build the intimate bridges with her husband again.

46k. More dichotomies emerging, “There’s no tension in the house” vs “There’s bound to be tension when you’re living with someone and there isn’t that intimacy.” But, even though she acknowledges they could do something about this, because they are ‘doing their best’ she is content to leave things as they are. Is this an intellectual justification for inaction or a behaviour learned in her past for keeping the lid on things?

47k. Avoidance tactics? ‘The children seem to be fine’ enables her to justify. her philosophy of ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’. How many times have people thought that the ‘children seem to be fine’ when in fact, they are being abused. Children learn to conceal what is going because they fear the reaction of their perpetrator. Even if this is not the case with Kate’s children, she doesn’t show any awareness that this could be the case – as it perhaps was with her as a child.

48k, 49k, 50k. I don’t know if this is part of the process or not but it does seem likely that it is important for someone to be able to explore intimacy where there are no ‘real’ expectations of having to honour or maintain it in the longer term? A sort of ‘quasi’ intimacy. Something to do with being able to control the boundaries of the relationship so that it is manageable - safe.

48k-52k. Acknowledges that her preference for having affairs is something that she doesn’t like about herself, yet at the beginning of the interview, she stated unequivocally that she liked herself. Although this may be true in the main, she clearly still has issues about ‘getting it wrong’ sometimes and about her need for ‘safe’ intimacy through affairs – in spite of it ‘damaging’ her family – presumably through channelling her ability to be intimate away from her husband and children.

52k. Although she expresses that her affair gives her something very important, she has no desire for it to be more than it is. Keeping things as they are for the time being is all that she seeks. Perhaps it fulfills a desire for intimacy without vulnerability; ‘it keeps it at a safe distance’. What is ‘safe’ in this regard? The ability to control boundaries, to hold something back, to be in control. Is this driven by the fear of annihilation that was experienced in childhood? ‘There were times when I thought he was going to kill me.’ (Perhaps it is worth noting that only one of the women interviewed for this study was in a long term ‘intimate’ relationship – this was a same sex relationship formed after a series of damaging heterosexual relationships where any prospect of intimacy was too threatening.)

54k. Philosophical stance – about taking responsibility. When Kate volunteered to be interviewed, it was mainly because she was very interested in why some victims remain victims and why others don’t. She disclosed that she had a deep frustration with women who languish in victim consciousness and don’t take responsibility for the choices they make.

54k, 55k. Kate hates people who say ‘This is my lot and I can do nothing about it’ yet she says ‘I’m doing the best that I can.’ This seems like a ‘victim’ statement from someone who holds beliefs that we make our own choices and are not driven by external forces. Kate is
actively taking responsibility for her affair. In doing this, she is satisfying her espoused philosophy yet in spite of her belief that the affair is 'damaging' the family, she is not taking any responsibility for changing things. Is 'doing the best that I can' an excuse for not taking responsibility? Is it a victim statement or a statement to disguise an unpalatable truth or choice?

56k. On her husband, she says 'He is a good man. He is the best.' Yet, she doesn't choose to be intimate with him. Perhaps because she feels that she cannot control the boundaries as his wife. Intimacy is expected of a good marriage.

60k. "I'm not hesitant at all now" vs "sometimes I have days when I think, I can't do this, this is scary." – More dichotomies. Presents a more confident front than is actually felt. "I can do whatever I want to do, whatever I choose to do." is undermined by frightening self talk/self doubt. This tussle seems to be apparent several times in this part of the interview. Is Kate on the fulcrum between 'victim' and 'choosing adult'? She sways from one position to the other bringing up contradictions and dichotomies as she presents her thoughts in the interview.

53k-60k. Is there such a thing as a 'survival' personality? Kate demonstrated her ability to control her environment, to manage her healing on her own terms at 23 after her accident – even though she describes herself as a mouse at this stage. Perhaps this contributed to her current belief in self healing – emotionally and physically.

61k. Survival techniques developed as a child resulted in a 'bloody-mindedness' that took control of Kate's healing after the accident. (This is contrary to her description of herself as a mouse – physically and emotionally.) Ref: Man's search for Meaning by Victor Frankyl.

61k-63. There seems to be a complex battle in Kate between being a strong survivor and being a weak victim. Only in adversity does the strength of the survivor emerge. The projection of a diminutive personality may be used as a strategy to avoid conflict or challenge – unfortunately it could also attract it thereby rendering the survivor a victim.

61k-63. There seem to be some people who, in spite of their physical appearance of strength, so believe they are a victim that they attract abuse, they create their own reality. What you believe, you get. It is only when their belief changes that they are able to stop sending the message of co-operative victim to a seeking perpetrator. Women to love too much and the men who Hate them by Robin Norwood.

Ref: Victor Frankyl's, Man's search for Meaning

64k-68k. I was interested if Kate's experiences were a family pattern – probably not pertinent to the focus of the interview. (Sometimes I ask a question just to keep the interview going and then when I read it back, I realise I have lost focus!) Anyway, she talks about her family's dysfunctional behaviour and not her process in this part of the interview. Kate is speculating on the psychological dynamics that exist in her brothers and father. She catalogues their experiences of abuse/abandonment and speculates on whether they are survivors or victims. It is interesting that Kate notes her brother was a survivor BECAUSE he went on to abuse her. Perhaps he went on to abuse BECAUSE he was a victim and this gave him the illusion of being powerful?
Forgiveness has often been cited as a means of moving forward in situations of childhood abuse. It is interesting that Kate has no sense of needing to forgive. Equally she doesn't spend time any longer getting angry. In fact, she seems to be in a neutral place in respect of her father. She certainly understands where his behaviours have come from yet she feels that this doesn't excuse them. She describes the patterns of abuse in her family from a fairly detached perspective seeing her siblings as victims (and her brother as a perpetrator). Kate is anxious not to display the behaviours they display and checks with her children that she does not do the things that they do – verbal diarrhoea, dysfunctional relationships, being the perpetual bride.

Kate is distancing herself from her siblings and asking herself what lies within her that enables her to thrive when her three siblings are 'stuck'. I think by distancing herself from 'victim consciousness', Kate is enabling herself to gain a perspective that would have been impossible had she still been identifying with the abuse. Is this a distancing versus identifying continuum?

Seeking deeper meaning.

Kate saw herself as being much quieter than her siblings and very shy. Reflective type?

Kate says that she is very shy and that this is a difficulty when meeting new groups. This statement is very different to her statement: “I was very hesitant in approaching people. I’m not hesitant at all now.” Another dichotomy.

Kate is articulating the lack of identification she feels towards her childhood memories. Another distancing/disassociating signal?

In a place of ‘quiet’, knowing where her experiences sit within her philosophy.

The journey will never be completed. Aims to be free of the past and be in the present. Taking responsibility for what is now. (Eckhart Tolle, Byron Katie)

Looking forward not looking back. (NLP? – towards/away from)

Childhood experiences have given Kate 'staying power'; the ability to survive.

CHOICE. Being able to make choices. This is an empowered/transformed state?! It is about being in control of reactions and not letting old patterns take over. Beside the 'small pockets' that will perpetuate the journey, the philosophy is in place for continued growth and increasing health.

Theoretical Memos - Mary

Mary is making a comparative statement between 'now' and 'before'. She is able to cope better and she takes this is an indicator of her health.

Prior to her being able to cope, Mary was continually in a state of crying and depression – The black hole, chaos, fog?

Mary describes what it was like prior to finding health – tearful, despairing, life not worth living – Classic symptoms of depression?
4m. I asked Mary about her physical health because quite a few of those I have interviewed have related their physical well-being to their emotional well-being. However, in spite of saying that since her abuse she developed osteoarthritis she does not relate this condition to her abusive experiences.

5m. Mary’s process seems to have been shaped by the external world rather than her own need to tread through the healing that she felt was necessary. Her process was triggered by an advert by Rape Crisis and then further, the stories of the people she listened to on the helpline acted as triggers for her own process which she then took away to work on with her therapist.

6m. Not realising what a mess she was in until she started training. Perhaps, when you have never seen what may be called ‘normal’ relating patterns, you don’t know when they are not ‘normal’. No external comparator. Perhaps this is how a perpetrator keeps his victim from finding their own power?

5m-9m. Mary says that she was in a sexually abusive relationship up to fifteen years ago but she goes on to describe her abusive relationship with her ex-husband whom she divorced five years ago. Discrepancy?

10m, 11m. Identifying with others who have been abused has been instrumental in helping Mary process further ‘stuff’ with her therapist. Things came up that she thinks she may not have thought of otherwise and I wonder whether this is an over-identification with others OR perhaps her victimhood was so entrenched that she didn’t have any expectations of a better life.

10m, 11m. It seems to be important to have a mirror to help recognise the dysfunctional patterns.

12m. Mary’s expectations around her Christian marriage disabled her from recognising that she was in an abusive relationship at first.

13m. Things became unacceptable when Mary saw her husband ‘do something’ to some friends of theirs. Interesting that when she saw it happening to someone else, from a more objective standpoint, she recognised that it was unacceptable behaviour – for herself too.

14m, 15m. This is the first time that Mary has exerted her power. The fact that she challenged The Church, an establishment that she had given credence to, makes it all the more remarkable. However, this was not triggered by her husband’s unacceptable behaviour to herself but to her friends. She was standing up for another party. This is characteristic of her work with Rape Crisis also. She seems to be finding her power through the defence of others, not through her own sense of self-worth. Perhaps this is motivated by her Christian ethic and, in a strange way; it may create the appearance of healing but not actually be healing. A displacement activity?

16m. Mary saw the enormity of her own task as a result of the training she did for the Rape Crisis work. Perhaps for the first time, she saw it laid out in front of her and could see the extent of the terrain clearly.

20m, 21m. In all the interviews, the importance of being heard, valued and validated is highlighted as one of the critical early stages of the process. Being believed or having a
witness is also key. Ref: Claire, Vicky.

23m. The silences in the therapeutic relationship reminded Mary of the ominous silences she endured as a child when she feared that her mother had been killed by her father. Other than these times, the house was filled with violence and noise. Silence also preceded her step-father’s entry to her bedroom and was therefore extremely threatening. These circumstances conditioned her to be fearful and almost unable to allow silence to occur.

27m. Others talk about feeling ‘fragmented’ at the outset and being able to piece together the fragments so that they make some sort of ‘sense’. Heather uses the metaphor of the jigsaw to describe ‘piecing the bits together’. Mary talks about things linking in and tying up. This seems to be some sort of integrating or sense making process.

32m. Kate had pockets of anger that still needed to be released. Heather called her ‘unfinished business’ pieces of jigsaw that don’t fit. Mary talks of ‘little empty spaces’. All seem to recognise that there are small areas that still need working on, but they diminish them in size to indicate that comparatively speaking, these are small and less disabling than the ‘big black hole’ or the ‘one awful mess’ that characterised the beginning of their journey.

33m. It seems to be a slow process but Mary is describing the ‘sense making’ aspect of her therapy. Making linkages, tying things together, seeing where things were coming from. It is all part of ordering the mess or clarifying the confusion.

34m. Abandonment. Same for Rachel – seek references.

39m. Seek information on managing anger. Finding an outlet for years of pent up emotion and being sane enough to direct it where it can’t do any harm.

47m-53m. Having faith enables people to feel that there is hope, they are accepted and will be loved whatever. If interviewees don’t ‘have faith’, what do they have?

53m. Being heard has come up again. This seems to be the one consistent feature of all the interviews. Being heard is clearly a core theme.

54m. Need to have witnesses and be believed. Fear of being judged negatively?

56m. Developing a positive self-image through being valued by others. Is this one of the crucial childhood development steps? (Parents valuing their children in a healthy family, clearly not in a dysfunctional family. Valued children grow to have self-esteem and trust the continuity of their acceptance. Am I a good girl? Will you still love me if I am bad? I’m going to push the boundaries. Normal development that is prevented in an abusive relationship.)

There have been suggestions that abused people are arrested at whatever childhood development stage they have reached at the time of the abuse. Healing Tasks, Kepner. I need to find out more about this. Do others concur with this hypothesis?

59m. Many people who have suffered severe trauma seek to help others as a means of coming to terms with their own. There must be lots written on this subject. All the interviewees have moved into the counselling world so that they can help others. This does not, of course, mean that it is inevitable that abused people go on to help others, indeed, there must be many who don’t take this route – and it shouldn’t be surprising in these cases because the advertisement for volunteers was placed in the British Association for Counsellor’s journal. However, this does not deny the fact that this pattern is a common one. The Susie
Lamplough Trust, parents of children who suffer rare diseases form support groups.... Find other examples. Is this to find self-worth or to exorcise the anger and frustration of their experience?

60m. **Learning** to give oneself pleasure seems to be a big step. It is like the abused have to learn to stop punishing themselves for the abuse that has been perpetrated upon them. I need to find out more about this. Perhaps it's around perpetual feelings of guilt/shame.

62m. Mary's confidence is still easily rocked and in this case, she just removed herself from the environment in which she felt inadequate. I believe to withdraw from what she may have experienced as an abusive situation is a very positive step. She rescued herself, perhaps one of few times that she has done this – other than divorcing her husband which was a pretty major self-rescue.

63m. Mary seems to have exposed herself to a number of harrowing courses which brought things up for her. Her process seems to be largely externally driven. She puts herself in situations that are likely to be challenging and then works through her reactions to them.

67m. In all interviews, there seems to be importance placed on the ability to **speak out** what is held inside and express feelings to someone who hears/witnesses their story. In this passage, Mary is sharing her reactions to the shocking images of violence. Does this help in the clarification process?

68m. The fact that Mary could withstand the shocking images that she was presented with makes her realise how far she had come (along a path?).

69m. Journaling as a technique is very powerful. Find out more about this. (Honey and Mumford’s learning styles and the importance of journaling for developing and retaining a greater understanding of processes.) Is it something to do with **externalising thought**?

73m. Reading was another externally driven process that brought things up for Mary. She used it as a measure of where she was in relation to others' experiences – in spite of the fact that she goes on to describe an exercise that she did that demonstrates no abuse is 'better' or 'worse' than any other.

74. Implications regarding the trajectory, force, direction and distance of healing. Vector qualities. How much, how hard and in which direction. Internal measuring system?

77m. Some vicarious processing going on?

78m. There is something here about expressing one's thoughts to a third party in order to get things clear. Hearing oneself speak seems to be important. Also writing and reading back thoughts, feelings, ideas and so forth is important. Perhaps it's about 'getting it out there', making it tangible which, because of its nature, was impossible to do beforehand. Again, the clarifying process seems to be emerging here.

79m. Making linkages, connections, putting things into some sort of order is repeatedly coming up in the interviews.

81-83m. Crying, getting rid of anger, shouting, and so forth. A physical component of the emotional processes. Getting things out. Exorcising? Exhausting? (As in evacuating.)
86m. Process of **self-examination**. Why? To know oneself?

88m, 89m. Dealing with things from the past that haven’t been dealt with before. Is there never a time when one can move on without expressly dealing with an experience?


92m. Making own experiences ‘worthwhile’ by using them to help others? Transmuting the negativity into something positive. Channelling negative energy and making it creative/functional. Holding the pain for others?

93m. Having a sense of what ultimate healing will be like. Is immunity from pain an unnatural human condition? Is ‘being healed’ about being able to manage pain?

95, 96m, 98m. Being able to set boundaries around her healing journey. Knowing where she is prepared to go and where she is not. Being able to sense when she is ready – or when she will allow herself to be led into this territory. Managing her own process?

101m-103m. Mary allows herself to be pushed almost beyond endurance before her anger kicks in but once it does, there’s no going back. Does fear of its expression prevent Mary from addressing her anger at the earlier stages when it is less ferocious? Does she recognise her anger before it becomes explosive? The build up and subsequent release of anger enables Mary to find the power that escapes her otherwise. Was she able to survive because she suppressed her anger and didn’t confront her abuser or because it enabled her to tap into a power she otherwise couldn’t access?

104m. Mary doesn’t hold on to memories of those areas where she has found resolution. Once dealt with, it disappears from her consciousness. It is like she is cutting a swathe through the thicket and once behind her, it remains felled. Other people describe this as peeling off the layers of an onion and moving deeper into the process. For Mary, it appears her journey is more linear.

**Theoretical Memos - Rachel**

2r. Instinctively able to determine own healing path.

4r. Psychodrama as a therapeutic approach to taking control and setting boundaries.

4r. Saying ‘no’ to abusers. Representative power/control. What other ways are there of enabling this to happen? Letter writing/burning, Gestalt therapy, voice dialogue.

16r, 17r, 18r, 19r, 20r. In this part of the interview, Rachel acknowledges that the importance she placed upon God was wrapped up in her need for acceptance. Reflecting back to this time, she also says that God was ‘clearly a projection of her own need’. It seems that she is reviewing the status she gave to God retrospectively; however, his role ‘as a person’ who loved and accepted her was clearly significant in her childhood.

21r, 22r, 23r, 24r. Abandonment – not so much fear of abandonment, but coping with being abandoned. ?psychology of this?

21r-26r. There is a ‘survival’ instinct or ‘capability’ that others often pick up in victims of abuse. A sort of strength that makes people feel that they can push them to their limits and
somehow, it won't matter, they will cope and survive.

27r, 28r. This has emerged time and time again. When a child of the abused reaches the same age that the abused was when the abuse/trauma/crisis happened, it acts as a trigger for the process of healing – so that it won't happen to their children in the same way that it happened for them.

29r. This feeling that something is wrong but not being able to determine what it is seems to emerge quite frequently in the interviews. An instinctive feeling that things are somehow not 'right' which causes disquiet and confusion.

30r-33r. **Seeking approval** from husband by trying to get thin. **Seeking external validation** from others through having affairs. Aiming to re-marry – from the frying pan into the fire! – Even though she acknowledged that 'he was a horrible man on one level' she was in total need on another. Desperately seeking something outside herself to 'solve the problem'. Denial? Displacement activities? Not wanting to face the disquiet she felt inside.

40r, 41r, 43r. **Disassociation?** Coping but not coping – coping on two levels. This has occurred in other interviews.

44r. **Academic pursuit** seems to be a common way of those who have been abused finding something of themselves. All of the interviewees have sought academic achievement and or training of some sort. Self respect? Measurable achievement? Set-up? Making meaning?

51r, 52r. ? Psychosis. Depression.

75r, 76r. Transference?

79r. FDI – find out about this.

78r, 82r, 83r. In spite of finding that she was gay, she subsequently fell in love with a man. She clearly found this odd but transcended the logic of it and decided to live with the contradiction **dichotomy** of being gay in a heterosexual relationship and subsequently, living as a threesome with her new lover and his wife. Emotional/logical dissonance?

84r. This is a most powerful and significant realisation. A **metaphor** for the abuse in the form of masses of wine being contained in goblets and not spilling out everywhere – and it would stay there until she was able to drink it; slowly, not all at once. The idea of 'stuff spilling out' is one that has come up a lot. This seems to mark the beginning of being able to 'cope' with the enormity of the abuse and being optimistic that things will get better. **Containment**.

87r. **Being heard** seems to be critical in all the interviews and must be a core concept.

90r, 91r. ?Emotional development arrested at the time that the abuse started? Find out about this. ?Healing tasks, Kepner? – others?

97r. Another important realisation. In the same circumstances that her abuse happened, she occupied the powerful role and realised that the abuse was not her fault. Pupils had to do what they were told. Archetypes? Power relationships?

100r. Identification with those in similar circumstances to those she was in as a child.

102r. Seeing the patterns in her life and using metaphors to describe them, **deepen understanding and extrapolate meaning**.

107r. Recognition of the ongoing nature of the process.

108r. Seeking sustenance from a spiritual life, something outside herself to enable her inner resources to be built. Not feeling judged. **Spirituality? Philosophy behind the twelve step...**
programme – seeking something outside yourself?

110r, 111r, 112r. Further use of the metaphor to describe her spiritual approach and her journey.

117r, 118r. Shame, guilt in abuse. Motivation for wanting to be healed. What is it that drives people down the healing journey which can be so traumatic in itself?

116r, 117r. Gentle touch.

123r, 124r. Being witnessed and being heard has emerged again as it has done in virtually every interview.

132r. Bracketing physical health with emotional and mental health. This mind/body connection has emerged before. (Kate, Vicky, Emma)

134r. Recognising that she was ‘bipolar’ before undertaking her journey of healing. – Living on two levels. This has come up for many as it has previously in this interview. Split personality? – not in the clinical sense but being able to compartmentalise.

135r. Expressing herself on two levels. What is true to herself and what is socially acceptable?

143r. Having the abuse affirmed and stating the importance of this implies that Rachel feared either that she had made it all up or people would accuse her of having made it all up. Need to find out more about this dynamic. It also came up in Claire’s interview.

155r. Controlling the energy she gives to imagery that is not helpful. Not indulging memories any longer. Not giving them any power.

157r. Putting abuse into perspective.

160r. Rachel said that she enjoyed the interview but a few weeks later I got a letter from her saying that she had been depressed and some things had come up for her which were hard to deal with. There is always something........

165r. Living as a ‘new’ person with no history yet there was still the ‘old’ me in there – living on two levels.

163r. Had the memory of abuse but had no language to communicate that memory

167r, 168r. Abuser went senile and died a jibbering wreck. Another example of this phenomenon.

**Theoretical Memos - Vicky**

45v. Mind, body, spirit link – a physical manifestation of a psychological state? Paralysis, autism.

65v. Seeing herself grow in surrogate family settings through the phases that she would have grown through in a healthy family. Adolescence.

64v. Not existing in the face of authority. Losing herself.


59-65v. Is childhood development arrested at the point at which the abuse occurred? Recurring theme.
66v, 69v, 70v, 71v, 72v and 73v. Recognising different perspectives, different states of being. Eg victim.

68v. Seeing purpose in her life story in respect of helping others. I think a lot of people deal with trauma in this way, by transmuting it into something that someone else can be helped by.

75v. Dichotomy between feeling justified in remaining financially dependent on parents and recognising that it was 'buying' her silence. Both these are victim stances.

77v. At a critical stage of letting go of her dependence on her parents and 'flying free' for the first time. Vacillating in her decision and arguing to accept the unknown for the sake of improving her chances for her and her children.

77v, 78v. Anticipating her next step of being 'really free' by dropping all dependence on her parents. Does this symbolise her intuitive understanding of her journey and the next steps that are looming. Inner knowing of process?

77v, 78v. In the teeth of the next transformative step?

81v, 84v, 85v, 86v. Again, reference to the 'next steps' indicating an intuitive understanding of the process and taking responsibility for, or choosing, further healing, in spite of the inevitable difficulties and uncertainty it will bring. Courage.

86v. Vicky has drawn parallels between the natural development of a child in a family and the circumstances she finds herself in as an adult – finding a family and getting through adolescence (Steiner School), leaving 'home' and growing into adulthood. (Cutting the ties with her mother.)

87v. Vicky is putting her life into a much broader context than her abuse and the struggles she has had as a result of it. She talks about the 'purpose' of her life, why 'did I come here', (why was she born?)

90v, 92v. Vicky talks about 'spiritual awakening' as a new way of looking at life – this is the transformative effect – a new perspective, a new paradigm, a broader context.

94v. Healing as an intuitive process – an innate wisdom?

97v. Seeing the abuse as a learning experience.

98v, 99v. Seeing the challenge of the next learning – forgiveness and justice – but recognising she hasn't 'got there' yet.

101v, 103v. Often interviewees say 'it is difficult to think about it now because I feel so different'. It is like the memory belongs to someone else. Distancing.

104v. Vicky talks of 'becoming conscious' implying that she was 'unconscious' before her
awakening. This reminds me of others saying things like ‘the fog has cleared’.

106v. Seeing relationships as a means of helping free oneself. This implies Vicky sees herself as having an inner and outer being. She values the inner being and seeks to have her freed. Jung – The Undiscovered Self?

109v, 110v, 111v, 112v. This is all about finding her own sense of self, of trusting ‘who she is’ and allowing her instincts to guide her in spite of the contrary opinions of others.

18v. Being open to new opportunities, not contracted against them. Letting go of ultimate control.

123v. Creating a hierarchy of feelings. Being proud is one rung below having humility and compassion.

125v. I notice how often the perpetrator gets a disease or goes senile prematurely. My abuser died of cancer aged 21.

125v, 126v. Debating whether she should confront her father before he dies or find the compassion to let it go – but is that collusion? Moral dilemma.

128v. Learning to live with uncertainty and ambiguity. A mature place to be? Ericsson’s levels? Humanistic Psychology?

Theoretical Memos - Sue

5s. ‘Becoming conscious’ implies that she was ‘unconscious’ beforehand. Working on different levels.

9s, 10s. Buried memories so deep that they did not surface until the crisis happened – total memory loss. PTSD? Denial? Total disassociation?

24s. Head exploding, literally going ‘bang’ when something shifts in the brain. What is this?

25s, 26s, 27s. Many triggers coming together at the same time.

38s. Bringing the unconscious into the conscious realm.

40s. Intimating that forgotten childhood incidents still lurk somewhere inside.

52s. Fear of success – complex psychological pattern.

53s. Needing a hero. Needing to be saved.

59s-62s. A collective set of milestones seen as hugely important in the process.

63s. Seeing the initial stages of the process being externally driven.

79s, 80s. Looking for happiness outside herself – in another relationship.

81s, 82s, 83s. Outgrown the need for her husband to act as a carer. No desire to care for him in his depression.

84s. Wanting to break away from the safety of home, to find herself, to know herself.

85s. A star is born?

106s, 108. Many dichotomies at this stage in her process.

109s. Implies she is frightened by her own courageous resource? Sees this as very powerful, perhaps to the extent that she could put herself in challenging situations deliberately? The heroine?

117s, 118s, 119s, 120s. Operating on two levels. Knowing that she needed protection but not
knowing why. Instinctively finding support to protect her from delving too deeply into what was going on. Collusion in the dysfunctional dance?

121s, 122s. **Seeing next stage of the process** as wanting to take care of herself.

123s, 124s. It seems that there is a hierarchy of abuse in families and that one person may feel as if she is protecting the others by taking all the abuse herself. Then, when they reveal their abuse, she denies that it could have happened to them, perhaps because the futility of her role becomes apparent and it proves to have been 'not worth it'. This must kick up all sorts of dynamics about not being an effective 'lightening rod' for the abuse, and not having the gratitude of others. Find references about this if relevant?????

125s. Feelings of jealousy between the abused.

126s. Feeling special to have been the one chosen for the abuse.

131s. Putting herself in a situation where she entered the trauma of a sexual encounter with an unknown man.

**Theoretical Memos - Claire**

1c. Feels so different now that it is almost as if the abuse didn't happen. **Disconnected from the memory. Distancing.**

2c, 3c, 4c, 5c, 7c. Claire is making the distinction between 'active' and 'passive' memories of abuse. It seems like her memory is dependent upon what prominence she is giving the abuse at any time?

2c, 3c, 4c, 5c, 7c. Recognition of a process when the memories are 'active' and believes she will be able to manage the process having been through it before.

10c. Recognition that you can never say it is all worked through but believes that she has. Sense of arrival? **Ongoing, never ending process.**

11c. Memories buried so deeply they were not in Claire's consciousness at all until the trigger happened. This is also the case with Sue's story.

14c. It seems that many of the women I interviewed embarked on their process in their thirties. I wonder if this is significant.

16c. The feeling of 'madness' was also what Sue experienced when she was asked the question 'Who taught you about sex?'

18c, 19c, 20c. **Claire sought reassurance from her therapist that her abuse had in actual fact happened.**

21c, 22c, 23c. **Claire sought validation from an astrologer that her abuse did in fact happen.**

24c, 25c. Needing to know that it happened.

26c, 27c. **Piecing things together** is a common theme in most interviews. Talk of things becoming clear. It indicates a pre-stage of 'unclarity' and perhaps chaos.
28c. Claire is still reassuring herself that she couldn’t have made it up because the story was too elaborate. This need for validation is coming through strongly, even though she opened by saying that she does believe it happened.

29c. The fact that she started to have **body memories** reinforced her view that it had happened. She saw it as a very sure sign. At this point she is not able to moot the word ‘fantasy’. ‘I became more sure that, you know, this is not, you know....’

46c, 47c. Implication that she lived with a cloud of shame all her life, although, not consciously. It only appeared that way once it had been lifted.

48c, 49c, 50c, 51c, 52c. Using her knowledge of the process as validating her own. Engaging in a relationship that could not ‘be’ – which is typical, indicates knowledge of behaviours that are typical of those that have been abused. **Controlling boundaries?** Is she still looking for validation? Does she really believe it happened to her?

55c. Is she still convincing herself that she had been abused because she started having flashbacks. ‘This is one of the things that happens.’

56c, 57c, 58c. Still looking for signs that the abuse really happened. Finding these through mediums who report her father presenting her with a bunch of white flowers, representing her virginity.

56-64c. The further down the path she goes in the belief that she has been abused and in the process of healing, the more is at stake if she is making it all up therefore, it is important to receive **validation** from every source possible. Is this always the case when memories have been buried so deeply that they can’t be recalled until a trigger happens? Or is this false memory syndrome. She knows the language of recovery, the phenomenon of shame, the symbolism of the images, the jargon of the abused – but the others don’t talk like this. It makes me question.... (although I feel guilty questioning!)

Feeling further ‘down the line’ implies the linearity of the process and movement along the path.

65c. In this sentence, Claire is indicating that she may have had some part in the abusive experience – ‘whatever I did or didn’t do’. She states that as an adult, her father should have known better.

66c. Claire does not condone the act of abuse but separates this from her father, for whom she can find forgiveness.

67c. The fact that Claire saw her father’s shame seems to be important. This was also verified by a medium who transmitted messages of apology and reinforced the fact that he felt shame.

68c, 69c. **Forgiveness as a means of finding freedom** – but only genuine, feeling, forgiveness.

70c, 71c. Disentangling herself from the experience. Being able to ‘let it go’.

73c, 74c. Claire is speaking abstractly and in the third person. She talks quite objectively about the process but doesn’t seem to be personally engaged. This is very different from the
other interviewees who used metaphors to describe their process and were personally very engaged with their story. Claire does neither of these things. It’s a bit like her process has been textbook learned! – OR she is truly healed and really has distanced herself from the memory.

75c. Although Claire theorises about the need to rebuild boundaries, she then goes on to say that she didn’t actually do this herself. It seems as if she is talking about a theoretical process and not her own process.

76c. Claire talks of getting the whole thing into perspective and I wonder what that means. However, it does suggest a distancing from the experience which is consistent with what other interviewees have said.

77c. Claire noticed that her father became haggard after perpetrating the abuse. This has been mentioned by many of the interviewees; that the perpetrator becomes old, ill or senile before his time.

78c. Seeing again the importance of having a witness.

79c, 80c. Claire talks of a visit her father made to her and her children, in spite of them not communicating. However, although tempted to mention the abuse to him, she didn’t because she didn’t want to upset him. I wonder when the switch happened from anger at the abuse to protecting him.

81c. Claire seems to enjoy receiving messages from her father and reflects that if she had tackled him, she wouldn’t be receiving this communication from him.

88c, 89c, 94c. Behavioural trigger – father’s shouting brought back by someone with whom she was in close relationship.

92c. Confusion about boundaries between herself and her father and herself and her therapist. Spoke of working out her paternal relationship with her therapist in the same breath as saying that she fell in love with him and wanted to go to bed with him. Was she in love with her father? Boundaries.

92c, 93c. Some complex issues of transference of feelings towards her father onto the therapist. She wanted the therapist to find her attractive but reassure her that he wouldn’t sleep with her just as she wanted to hear that her father found her attractive but wouldn’t sleep with her. Is this what a father would normally say? Is this considered healthy?

93c. Does, as Claire says, every daughter behave seductively towards their father so that he will say how attractive she is? Claire talks of the role of a father who finds his daughter attractive yet encourages her to face the world ‘because she is worth having’. This example was given to illustrate how a daughter finds a partner in the normal course of things.

99c. Seeing her father as ‘clever’ because, in spite of raping her, she remained in tact for her first sexual experience. ???????????

100c, 102c. Beginning to get some clarity on her behaviours. Starting to see – post fog phase. Piecing together her own story – post fragmentation phase.
103c, 104c, 105. Again the need for being heard and having witnesses.

110c-116c. Claire often espouses current wisdom rather than telling her own story. Perhaps she thought I didn’t know anything about sexual abuse and I deliberately gave her no steer on my own past but it all seemed a bit ‘empty’ to me.

114c. Perhaps this is a construction of her vivid imagination?

115c. I believe there is still doubt in Claire’s mind about whether or not the abuse actually happened. She keeps hedging her bets and explaining that it really doesn’t matter if it did or did not happen, yet she is keen to have her ‘memories’ validated. This seems to be a recurring dilemma throughout the interview.

116c. Being heard.

118c, 119c. Again, this issue about being believed is emerging. It seems to be a central theme in this interview whereas in the interviews, being believed was either not mentioned or was a passing theme. I guess it was because the memory wasn’t conscious.

120c. Role of the therapist as ‘holding’ the process.

121c. Claire talks of the importance of getting rid of anger throughout her healing process.

123c. She was driven to get rid of her ‘virginity’ and have a sexual experience – even though she was raped by her father at 14. I wonder what this was about. To overlay her negative experience with a more positive one, one where she was in control and could make the choice?

122c. At this point, Claire was not ‘remembering’ her abusive background, rather exhibiting behavioural indicators that she didn’t understand. Looking back, she identified this as being ‘psychotic’.

126c, 127c. Using a physical metaphor to describe how she felt – crippled and paralysed. This led to her needing to ‘leave her body’.

131c. It is not clear what helped Claire see what she was doing in acting out her past sexually, but she came to a point where she could ‘see’ what she was doing and made different choices.

132c, 133c, 134c. Claire goes on to explain the dynamic of her rejecting phase in terms of incest creating a feeling of rejection in the victim. She is implying that she was reflecting that rejection in her own behaviours by rejecting men.

139c, 130c, 131c. Claire uses the term ‘acting out’ as a means of bringing her experience into the present and dealing with it.

135c, 136c, 137c. Claire is very wrapped up in her story. I’m not sure what it is but there is a different ‘quality’ about the way she relates her experiences to that of the other interviewees. It is almost like she is revelling in the extent of her victimhood. Can this be so? Is there something in her psychological make up that feels she needs to have a tragic story in order
for her to feel 'important'???


138c, 139c. What does this mean? Living in the moment?

140c. Metaphor of building bridges to describe how to make links between current and past experiences.

142c. Using very extreme examples to describe her mother’s behaviours. Myra Hindley assisted in the murder of children after sexual abuse. Is there some inclination to get attached to the drama of the victim story – sex dripping down the walls; being raped by the atmosphere in the house. These are very rich descriptors. Perhaps there is something else going on here. Another process weaving in and out of the healing process?

143c. Analogy of the jigsaw puzzle.

144c. Fragmentation.

145c. Many interviewees talk of the chaos, fog, mess that characterises the early stages of the process.

146c. Trigger.

148c, 149c. Claire’s fear of her father lasted six months beyond his death, until a large marble slab was place on top of him. Then she felt he couldn’t get out and get her anymore. This seems to be childlike – although very understandable. Is this a signal that her emotional development stopped when the abuse took place as some theories suggest?

150c. Nightmares seem to be a common thread in the healing process. Working things out subconsciously?

152c, Comparing her behaviours before and after healing, Claire can see that her early relationships were more aggressive, perhaps subconsciously ‘acting out’ her relationship with her father. This was later resolved.

153c. Feeling whole, integrated after the healing journey. This is also a common theme.

156c, 157c, 158, 159c. Indications of an internal process going on with little outward manifestation in respect of having relationships with men.

160c. It is interesting that Claire talks of her mother as castrating her father yet she had received the same feedback when she was in her ‘Women’s Liberation’ phase.

161c, 162c. Claire talks very sympathetically of her father’s situation. In fact, the underlying message throughout the interview seems to be about hating her mother, not her father. She describes her mother in pretty poisonous terms yet she is quite ‘soft’ about her father.

163c. Piecing the whole thing together.