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Encountering the oneness paradigm: An exploration of Christ Church Deal

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Abstract

There is now an abundance of studies which demonstrate the positive impact spirituality can have on health outcomes, particularly in the realm of mental health. Moreover, contemporary legislation and guidance requires health and social care professionals to consider service users' spiritual needs. Nonetheless, there is also a plethora of studies which have highlighted that some service users feel their spirituality has been 'overlooked' or their spiritual experiences 'pathologised'. It seems, however, that health and social care professionals are 'uncertain', apprehensive' and 'divided' about whether (and how) spirituality should be included as a recognised component within the provision of services. Given the disparities between research, experience, guidance and practice, it is not surprising that, to date, there is no obvious consensus as to what spiritually-competent health and social work practice is or what particular model would adequately address this, although there has been a call for a 'new paradigm'.

In an attempt to address this conundrum, I explored the work of a unique community, Christ Church Deal (CCD), using focus groups with members of CCD and the principles of grounded theory as a framework for analysis. I discovered that this community, or what I term the oneness paradigm, is, in many ways, the antithesis of current health and social care services in the West. The oneness paradigm adopts an ideology parallel to deep ecology and Indigenous communities that view spirituality as integral to everything. That is, the individual, their social relationships, and their relationship with the environment. It also has the ability to facilitate a particular type of transformational change resulting in new ways of 'being' and becoming. I propose that the oneness paradigm offers a powerful critique of contemporary (and historical) health and social care services and, perhaps, one answer to the paradox of incorporating spirituality into practice.

300 words

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Contents

Introduction

> *'"You must walk it. It is a long journey, through a country which is sometimes pleasant and sometimes dark and terrible"* (said the Witch of the North)…
>
> (Dorothy) closed the door, locked it, and put the key carefully in the pocket of her dress. And so, with Totto trotting along soberly behind her, she started her journey.
>
> There were several roads nearby, but it did not take her long to find the one paved with yellow bricks'
> (Baum, 2011: 30).

There is now an abundance of studies which demonstrate the positive impact spirituality can have on health outcomes (Koenig, 2010), particularly in the realm of mental health. In this context, it has been demonstrated that spirituality plays a significant part in both preventing mental health difficulties and enabling recovery from them (Copsey, 1997, 2001; Cornah, 2006; The Mental Health Foundation, 2007; the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE), 2003). Coupled with this, several pieces of legislation and guidance now place a requirement on professionals within the health and social care sectors to consider their service users' spiritual needs such as the Children's Act 2004 (Department for Education, 2004), the Mental Health Act 1983 Code of Practice (Department of Health (DoH), 2015) and Religion or belief: A practical guide for the NHS (DoH, 2009). There is also a stipulation that people should not be discriminated against on the grounds of their religion or belief, for example, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010 (Equality and Human Rights Commission & Government Equalities Office, 2010).

Despite this, however, there is also a plethora of studies, which have highlighted that service users within mental health services feel their spirituality has been 'overlooked' or 'undervalued' (Social Perspectives Network, 2006; Coyte, Nicholls & Gilbert 2007). Others have reported mental health professionals have, at times, actively 'pathologised' their spiritual experiences, conceptualising them as the cause of their mental health problems

and/or perceiving them as symptoms (Copsey, 1997; Swinton, 2001; Mental Health Foundation, 2002, 2007).

Given the disparities between research, experience, guidance and practice, several attempts have been made to examine the attitudes of health professionals regarding spirituality (Lawrence et al., 2007; McSherry et al., 2008). These identified that professionals were 'uncertain', 'apprehensive' and 'divided' about whether this component should be included within the provision of health care, and if so, how. A similar picture has been found in social work (Gilligan & Furness, 2006; Holloway, 2007; Gilbert, 2009; Holloway et al., 2010, Horwarth & Lees, 2010). Added to this, the training social workers have received about spirituality has been found to be 'inadequate' or 'non-existent' (Furman et al., 2004; Holloway, 2007). Considering this, it should not be surprising that spirituality has been described as the 'last taboo' (Kung, 1986 as quoted in Dein, 2004: 287) and the 'forgotten dimension' (Swinton, 2001) of mental health services.

To some degree, the landscape outside the United Kingdom (UK) is different as there has now been an 'explosion of interest' in spirituality in recent years in the United States of America (USA) (Gilligan & Furness, 2006: 619; Canda & Furman, 1999) to the point that 'spiritual distress' has now become an official mental health diagnosis (Hoffert et. al., 2007: 66). A similar story has also emerged in Canada (Nash & Stewart, 2005; Coholic, 2003), Australia (Gray, 2008) and other parts of Europe such as Sweden (Koslander et al., 2009). Thus, there now exists 'a chorus of voices calling for the expansion of the notion of culturally competent practice to include an understanding and an appreciation of the impact of faith and belief' (Gause & Coholic, 2007: 2).

Nonetheless, there still appears to be a significant gap in the health and social care literature because, to date, there is no obvious consensus as to what spiritually-competent social work practice is (Gilligan & Furness, 2006; Gilbert, 2009) or what particular model would adequately address this (Furness & Gilligan, 2010: 2188). So, in an attempt to address this conundrum, I have carried out, what Stake (2000) describes as an 'instrumental' case study. In other words, I explored the work of a unique community, Christ Church Deal (CCD) – a place which offers a radically different approach to engaging both the issues of spirituality and the experience of mental distress - to 'provide insight' into this issue (Stake, 2000, as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 437). Given this, my initial research question was

‘Research on the development of a spiritual competent practice model for the human services professions by examining a case study of a therapeutic faith community’. However, as a result of what I discovered from my journey through the literature, I realised this was the ‘wrong’ the question from the ‘wrong’ place and, therefore, I simplified my research question to simply ‘What is CCD?’

So, this thesis is about a community and, most particularly, about the significance of ideology and culture in the context of shaping who we are. Some members of CCD experienced mental health difficulties and struggled to survive before encountering CCD. In this place, which I am calling the flat world paradigm they found the Western, binary, fragmented, oppressive, and pathogenic (sickness-causing) ideology only added to their problems. This left them feeling, misunderstood, judged as “not-good-enough”, and despairing. They subsequently tried to cope by creating a mask or fake persona. But they are not alone, as others have also identified these features in different faith communities (Clinebell, 2005; Cook et al., 2009), mental health services (Nicholls, 2002; Lindridge, 2007), and social work (Henery, 2003). Some, like the deep ecologists, have argued it is time for or even past time for a new paradigm (Zapf, 2010: 30).

These members went in search of healing and, along the way, did encounter a new paradigm, which was a total contrast in every way to the flat world paradigm they had previously experienced. I have named this the oneness paradigm because everything commingles to create a harmonious whole here. Encountering this new paradigm produced a change in these members that was radically different from anything they had known before. I was one of these fellow travellers who has been fortunate enough to experience this journey of change and become a member of this community. So, in this thesis, I also tell my own story.

Alongside the discovery of this new oneness paradigm, this thesis is as much about my research journey as it is about the end result. It is a journey that not only took my research on a different path than I expected but changed me in so many ways, not least at the point of writing up this thesis. Richardson (2000) points out the process of writing up is not just a ‘mopping-up activity’ at the end of the research. Instead, she argues it is ‘a dynamic, creative process’ and a way of ‘knowing’ in its own right that enables the researcher to develop a new relationship with their research. (Richardson, 2000 as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 923 & 924). I found this was certainly the case for me. Both the experience of the research and

then the writing about it was at times a joy and, at other times, a profoundly emotionally challenging process, which will become clear as the work develops. An example of this creative 'knowing' has been my use of poetry. I have written poetry for several years at key points in my life and have found the practice very therapeutic. I have tried to capture each step along my research journey and have included a poem at the end of the relevant chapter.

I acknowledge this approach might be perceived as a significant shift from the 'norm' of a traditional thesis in the social sciences. Indeed Spry (2001) highlighted that poetry and emotion are regarded as 'scholarly treason' (Spry, 2001: 709) whilst Lorde (1984/2007) identified that 'feelings were expected to kneel to thought as women were expected to kneel to men' (Lorde, 1984/2007: 39). I have discovered, however, that I am not alone in choosing to subvert what might be termed traditional approaches to writing up a thesis as Ellis and Bochner (2000) have championed 'the journey over the destination', recommended for researchers to openly express their vulnerability and desired for the text to call upon the reader to have an emotional response (Ellis and Bochner, 2000 as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 744 & 747). So, this is my very real, raw, sometimes undeniably messy, account of CCD and, from a personal perspective, how this research journey has fundamentally changed me.

I have continued this theme of merging art with science (Ellis and Bochner, 2000 as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 761) or 'blurring of genres' (Geertz, 1980, as quoted in Speedy, 2008: 12) by incorporating extracts from fictional children's literature and television programmes, at the beginning of each chapter. Re-discovering these enchanting stories was quite serendipitous and was the inspiration for several of my poems. I had been given the complete work of Winnie the Pooh as a gift by a friend and found the process of reading these simple stories and beautiful illustrations enabled me to wind down after a day of intensely writing. This was another journey in itself as I came across Robert Ingpen who is an Australian illustrator and has re-produced a whole collection of classic children's books. I quickly became addicted to them but also because I discovered they helped me to 'know' and relate to my material in a new way. I had also hoped to use a variety of fonts and spacing to be a further expression of this creativity but such deviations from university guidelines and 'prevailing norms of scholarly discourse' are still very much frowned upon (Ellis & Bochner, 2000 as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 734).

This research journey led me to simultaneously explore and grapple with the issues, questions, and contradictions of religion and/or spirituality, particularly in the context of being an insider and/or outsider researcher. Surprisingly, I discovered and then re-discovered Aoki's (1996) 'dwelling place' or the 'third space' paradigm, which I found resolved both these paradoxes for me by opening up 'a generative space of possibilities, a space wherein in tensioned ambiguity newness emerges' (Aoki, 1996 as quoted in Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 318). It felt to me as if I had come home. I would not, though, wish to infer that my journey to this point has always been a smooth path or an exciting adventure. At one point I discovered I was so deeply connecting with my data because of my insider status that the whole research process was very nearly de-railed. I realised I had travelled further into auto-ethnography than I had intended to go on this journey; a journey which continually challenged me to express my feelings and expose my vulnerability (Ellis and Bochner, 2006: 441). I am certain, though, that, without taking this path I would never have found a way forward.

Interweaving narratives

‘the poor ugly duckling that had been the last to hatch was pecked
and pushed about and the other ducks and the chickens all made
fun of him…the poor duckling didn’t know what to do. He was
very sad because he looked so ugly and was the laughing-stock
of the whole poultry yard…everything went from bad to worse
…even his own brothers and sisters were spiteful to him…
And the mother duck said, *“Oh dear, I wish you weren’t here!”*...
So he ran away…

It would be too sad a story to tell you about the hardship and
misery the duckling had to suffer that hard winter…

he flew down on the water and swam towards the magnificent
swans…what did he see there in the clear water but his own
reflection? He was no longer a clumsy, dingy grey bird,
awkward and ugly. He had grown into a swan himself…
He was wonderfully happy…

He remembered being despised and persecuted and now he
heard everyone say he was the loveliest of all the beautiful
birds.’
(Andersen, 1843/2021: 11, 27, 30 & 32).

Christ Church Deal’s story crisscrossing with Deal’s

Christ Church Deal (CCD) is situated in the beautiful town of Deal on the south coast of Kent where on a clear day it is possible to see the French coast. Wenders (2005) makes the observation that most stories could take place anywhere as the place is often only viewed as the background to where the story happens (Wender, 2001: 6). But he also argues that a place should also be seen as a character and just as much playing an important part in any story

(Wender, 2001: 8). Wender drew on the ideas of indigenous cultures, which also treasure the significance of place as Basso (1996) expresses:

> 'Wisdom sits in places. It's like water that never dries up. You need to drink water to stay alive, don't you? Well, you also need to drink from places. You must remember everything about them. You must learn their names. You must remember what happened at them long ago. You must think about it and keep on thinking about it… selfhood and placehood are completely intertwined' (Basso, 1996: 127 and 146 as quoted in Indigenous Knowledge Commons, 2016).

With this in mind, I believe the town of Deal and its history have been key in our story and so it was no coincidence that CCD was birthed in this place. With its motto, 'Adjuvate Advenas' (Befriend the Stranger) Deal lies at the end of the A258 so, as one member of my focus groups said, "(its) not a town you'd find by accident" (Charlie-2-4). This is also what the locals say and as one fisherman put it "no one passes through, people only come to Deal for a purpose" (Emms, 2016 as quoted in Weekender, 15.06.2016). Although, more recently Deal's remoteness is something that is changing. With the introduction of the Javelin high-speed train and being voted 'High Street of the Year' (Stanford, 2014 as quoted in The Telegraph, 04.01.2014) as well as number one of the 'Twenty best places to live by the sea in Britain', "Deal is no longer a secret retreat" (Rowlinson, 2017 as quoted in The Times, 16.03.2017). Given this, and its magnificent Tudor Castles of Walmer and Deal, it is not surprising it has more recently also been the location for several television dramas. Likewise, for some members of CCD, myself included, our journey of trying to find help for our mental health difficulties had been difficult. So, by the time we discovered CCD, it felt we had reached the end of the line, as one of my participants puts it CCD is "the place you could go when no one else could help you" (Ellie-1-1). In this way, our emotional journeys seemed to mirror the geographical journey to Deal, which is also the end of the line.

Historically, Deal was a place of healing for the sick as the Royal Naval hospital was established here in 1800. For me, this is another striking parallel with CCD as its declaration of intent was, 'to be a safe place for hurting and damaged people in this part of Kent' (Charitable Trust Terms of Reference - CCD, 1999: 1). Also, several members experienced words and visions in the prayer meetings during its first year, which contained a recurring

theme of a field hospital. Cook (2019) has written extensively about these spiritual experiences. The following are examples of these pictures:

> 'I saw a hospital ward and all the folk in the church in hospital beds… Outside in the casualty department, there was a great deal of activity, with ambulances coming and going. People were coming from all over to get well….
>
> I saw a field hospital with one great tent peg holding the tent in place. There were great storms all around and it was only just giving enough protection' (CCD, 28.10.1999)

So, the members of CCD decided to take this theme of a field hospital up as a vision and purpose for the church to help those who feel they are like wounded soldiers.

Deal is also a place which has known significant loss and trauma. In 1785, the Prime Minister, William Pitt, carried out a well-coordinated destruction and 'burning of the boats', as it became known, in response to the smuggling in the town (Smuggler's Britain, 2017). Also, in 1989, Betteshanger colliery was the last coal mine to close in the United Kingdom (UK) when it is said Deal not only lost its 'community spirit' but also its identity (Deal Museum, 2017). Added to this, in the same year the Royal Marines School of Music, which had previously been the Royal Naval hospital was bombed by the Provisional Irish Republican Army. Eleven Marines were killed, a further eleven were injured and the Royal Marines were later re-located to Portsmouth. One local resident described this horrific event as when the heart of the town was ripped out (Walmer Web, 2017). A memorial bandstand was built on Walmer Green opposite where I live with the names of the eleven men killed on the eleven sides.

Similarly, there have been many who have come to CCD over the years (and again, I include myself) who have struggled to find a way to let go of their historic loss and trauma. Also, it could be argued that CCD itself was birthed from loss and emerged out of the ashes. Several of the founding members were all employed in the same company in environmental biotechnology including Dr Peter Holmes and Dr Susan Williams. They had relocated from London to Deal but shortly afterwards the company came to an unexpected end. This 'close-knit team' had also all benefited from the help they had received for their mental health from

Peter's unique therapeutic model (Williams, 2002: 109). He has since outlined his therapeutic discipleship model, in the book Becoming More Human: Exploring the interface of spirituality, discipleship and therapeutic faith community (Holmes, 2005). This team along with Mary, Peter's wife, and others who had received help from Peter who lived locally established a new church together in October 1998. So, there were twenty-five adults (twelve men and thirteen women) and eleven children in all (Williams, 2002: 109). I have used Peter, Mary, and Susan's real names with their permission but a pseudonym for all other members. Also, although the founding members named the church Christ Church for as long as I can remember it has been referred to by its members as Christ Church Deal. The Trustees have permitted me to use its real name and location, and I will refer to the wider community as 'the town of Deal'.

At the same time that CCD was formed Peter and Susan also launched Rapha workshops. The Hebrew word Rapha means to 'heal, cure or physician' (Holmes, 2004: 147). These were weekend conferences for around twenty-five participants, which were 'designed to help promote a personal journey into wholeness' and were based on Susan's journey of healing (Williams, 2002: 4). They have now been renamed Rapha Journey. Originally, they were not advertised but, rather, were recommended through word of mouth by those who had already benefitted from them. Since then, thousands of people have undertaken these workshops which have been held in various parts of the UK, the USA and other countries. Hence, just as Deal was previously tucked away and relatively unknown but has now increased its notoriety over the years, so too has Rapha Journey.

As CCD and Rapha came into being simultaneously and both were spearheaded by Peter and Susan there has always been an understanding among some members of CCD that they are inextricably linked. In part, this was because it was, indeed the original intention, as an extract from an inaugural meeting highlights:

> "You have responded to wanting to be involved with CCD and Rapha. The way the Elders view it, there is no distinction in the Holy Spirit between CCD and Rapha – it is all one. I assume that you will want to be involved on the same basis and you will not distinguish between work that is helping out the church and work that is helping out Rapha. You may find that you are helping out the church by kid sitting for someone in the church and that person, is going off to help out on a Rapha workshop.

And there is just a huge messy overlap" (CCD, 1999:1)

Also, this commingling was practically reinforced by the fact that in the early years the role of the office manager was shared between the two organisations and their joint office was based at 'Waterfront', which is the home of Peter, Mary, and Susan. Despite various changes to this set-up, which I will elaborate on shortly, for some members this "messy overlap" between the two has remained part of the fabric of CCD. The significance of this will become clearer in the chapter **Revisiting the Salugenic Place: A community of change, which is constantly changing and yet, remains the same.**

My story knitted together with Christ Church Deal's

I first encountered CCD in December 1998 when I visited my long-standing friend, Tara who was also a founding member. It was following a violent storm, which had caused some trees to fall across the A258 leaving it blocked. So, what should have been a relatively short drive from Dover of approximately fifteen minutes for the last leg of my journey took me well over an hour. As I wound my way through the country back lanes, I too was in no doubt it wasn't somewhere you found by accident!

Before this, in 1991, I had qualified as a social worker and went straight into my chosen specialism working with people who were experiencing mental health difficulties. After a couple of years and after completing specialist training, I also became what was then an Approved Social Worker and later became an Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP). This role enabled me to carry out some key functions under the Mental Health Act 1983 (Amended 2007) (MHA). As much as I loved my job after only six years, I felt 'burnt out' (Maslach, 1982) and resigned. Although, at the time, this condition of emotional exhaustion wasn't really talked about in social work it has now been recognised by researchers as occurring among other mental health social workers and AMHPs (Evans et al, 2006; Hudson and Webber, 2012) in addition to a host of other professions. But, given this career was all I had ever wanted to do since I was a teenager, resigning was not a decision I made lightly. Moreover, at the point I walked away, I also couldn't envisage ever going back.

Over the next few years, my mental health continued to deteriorate and despite trying various forms of help, I found nothing worked. So, by the time I reached Deal that day in 1998, I was resigned to the fact I couldn't change. However, during my visit, two significant things happened that gave me hope. The first was when Tara and I visited Waterfront - I felt an overwhelming sense of peace, which was incongruous with the inner turmoil I was constantly grappling with. The second was the undeniable tangible change I could see in Tara since the last time we had met, which was approximately six months previously. I couldn't quite make sense of it all, but I knew whatever 'it' was that was happening here I wanted to be a part of it. So, with renewed hope, I took the step of attending the next Rapha workshop, which happened a few weeks.

Throughout the workshop, I felt I had discovered the answers I had been looking for. So, before it had even finished, I had decided to move from Bristol, where I was living at the time to CCD. I was offered a bed in a house shared by some other members of CCD very much like the way the Brown family took in Paddington (Bond, 1958/2017: 12). When I arrived a few weeks later with only a couple of suitcases, several boxes, and an enormous amount of fear I too 'wasn't quite sure what to expect' (Bond, 1958/2017: 25). Although the one thing I did know for certain was I now had hope of change.

During the past twenty-four years, CCD has changed in nearly every way possible and in one respect it hasn't, which will become clearer in the following chapters. I will attempt to outline some of these changes and how my story connects. Firstly, it has fluctuated in size. As I mentioned previously it began with twenty-five adults, then nearly doubled each year in the first few years until it reached its peak in 2006 with a hundred and fifty-four adults (sixty-five men and eighty-nine women) and sixty-four children. By 2014, when I carried out my focus groups the membership had dropped back down to sixty-six adults (twenty-two men and forty-four women) and twenty-one children. Then, as I am writing this in 2022 it has dropped again to forty-three (thirteen men and thirty women) and eleven children.

However, from the very beginning, the issue of membership has been a paradox for CCD. Even though at the first Annual General Meeting back in 1999, it was noted, "we need a statement that defines what a member is" (CCD, 1999: 2) CCD has struggled and, in some ways, resisted doing this. This is because it has always wanted to have (as far as possible) a very inclusive approach to membership. The leadership team at the time were tasked with

exploring what other denominations had done but they felt these were too restrictive for example requiring a letter of recommendation from the individual's previous church or requiring the person to publically confirm their commitment to their statement of faith. So, the position adopted was simply, 'anyone who attended regularly for several months was asked if they wanted to be on the address list' (Williams, 2002: 2). This included young people who had reached the age of sixteen years who were also individually consulted. Given the rapid growth of the community during its first few years, this list was updated every three to four months (Williams, 2002: 95).

Alongside this list of active members, there has also, from the outset, been a list of associate members. Initially, these were individuals and couples who had supported the work of Peter and Susan over the many years they had known them and wanted to be in some way affiliated with CCD. With time this expanded to include some individuals who had stayed for a short period in order to receive intensive support or those who had been regular attendants of Rapha workshops and again, wanted to stay connected. It has also consisted of those who were members, then for a variety of reasons moved on, but still felt CCD was their spiritual home. Many of these associate members are living in different parts of the UK and all over the world. This group has grown considerably from ten to over seventy.

Additionally, as time went on some members began to take 'time out' from being active members. Some of the reasons for this will be explained more fully in the chapter **A new me and a new spirituality.** These members still wanted to remain on the address list, though and continued to have significant relationships with other members and, from time to time, would attend social activities. They became affectionately referred to as the 'fringe'. Grant who was one of my participants recounts his experience:

> *"I stayed pretty much away for about three years… although I wasn't making myself part of the church that I found there is still a journey here…Matthew at that time did 'homework' with me bits and pieces and I found I could find healing"*
> (Grant-2-1 & 3-2).

I should point out that the term 'homework' is used by CCD members to refer to when they are applying the therapeutic tools of the Rapha journey. This can be done, individually or with another person supporting or in a wider therapeutic group setting. I will elaborate further

in the chapter **A new way of living in a new world.** Also, the quotations from my participants have been referenced using a pseudonym, followed by the question number and then their response.

Over the years, there has been a fluid movement back and forth between CCD's active membership and its fringe, which as I noted above, has become quite extensive. An example of this was one member who had been on the fringe, for several years who jokingly remarked that he had been deliberately attending all social gatherings as a way of "loitering with intent" to help him come back to be an active member. But, it has also been a common observation amongst the members that some disgruntled members have initially moved to the fringe before finally deciding to leave without formally notifying the community. So, the fringe has to some extent become ambiguous and for this reason, also emotive.

At the time of my data collection in 2014, the fringe was comprised of as many people as there were active members. Using this definition, I too would be considered on the fringe since 2020 when Covid-19 struck as I have also been unable to attend regularly whilst I took care of my parents and managed their affairs in addition to writing up my PhD (though I have periodically written an update for the whole community to ensure they are aware of the changes in my life and, of course, the progress I am making with my PhD).

The other aspect of membership that has been challenging for CCD is the issue of newcomers. Partly, this has been because it is ultimately self-defined. But also because of the variety of ways in which someone can have contact with CCD, such as through a friend or family member who is already associated with CCD, receiving individual help from Peter and/or Susan, a Rapha Journey workshop, the CCD website or even simply walking into a Sunday morning service. So, for those like myself who came burnt out, with significant need and re-located to Deal from other parts of the UK it was acknowledged that the process of joining may take a lot longer than for those who live locally. To help with this it quickly became an adopted practice that newcomers would not be expected to help out in activities such as the Sunday morning service rota for a period of six months. My understanding was newcomers were free to choose whether to adopt this principle or not. But this wasn't Alison's experience as she explains:

> *"the breaks were so difficult because I didn't know how to go and talk to people, and no one came and talked to me. So, I'd be sitting there on my own… and that was really hard and so I asked if I could do a job like washing up or making tea or something and umm. But the rules at the time were you had to have been here six months before you could do any of that. So, I couldn't even do that, and it was quite excruciating (laughs) sitting in the break at church on a Sunday"* (Alison-2-1).

Also, some newcomers have experienced joining CCD as a challenging experience. The reasons for this will become clear in the chapter **Encountering the oneness paradigm.** This has resulted in them joining for a short period of time, leaving abruptly without notifying the community, and then later returning. In fact, one member who had lived homeless for many years went through this process on more than one occasion. So, although this occurrence has become thoughtfully termed a 'false start' it hasn't been without its difficulties. What's more, all these aspects have meant that CCD has in one sense been like an amoeba and the actual membership at any one point in time is necessarily shifting and opaque.

Linked to this factor is the second way that CCD has changed namely, its profile. Of the original twenty-five founding members (excluding Peter, Mary, and Susan) there are only two remaining, one being my friend, Tara. CCD's ethnic composition has remained predominately white British with a small number from minority ethnic groups and other nationalities. In this way, it very much mirrors the population of the wider local community. But given its mission statement, it is not surprising that it has always had a disproportionate number of members who are experiencing mental health difficulties or have done so in the past compared with other churches. Also, its gender balance has varied considerably. For instance, in the first few years, the number of men and women was equal. But once it had reached its peak, there began a trend of more women than men, which has continued. So, by the time I collected my data in 2014, there were twice as many women as men, and by 2022 that ratio is higher still. Given Peter's significant relationship with the men, it has been a common theory amongst the members that one of the reasons for this substantial loss of men imbalance was Peter moving to the USA between July 2008 to August 2015 and again, in 2020.

Alongside this, the average age of the members changed from most being in their twenties to forties in the first few years to now where the majority of members are in their fifties to

sixties. Given the lack of growth, and the length of time some members have been part of CCD this is probably not surprising. Also, in the early years, just over half were married while, now, the ratio has swung to just over half of the members are single. But one trend, which has been quite unusual has been the number of members who have undertaken some form of learning over the years. Nearly every member has ventured to adopt this lifelong learning approach whether this has been through formal education, a radical change of employment, attending the University of the Third Age, taking up a new hobby or learning a new language. The list is extensive and covers every possible aspect of life. But it has also been interesting to observe how many members have moved into health, social care, or education. I am also one of those who have taken up this challenge by returning to mental health social work and then subsequently completing all six modules of the post-qualifying competency and training framework. Alongside this, I have also achieved a diploma in management (Level 5), my MSc in Mental Health Social Work and, of course, undertaking this PhD.

A third way in which CCD has changed is in its structure. It could be argued that, alongside membership, this has been one of the most challenging issues CCD has had to deal with. In part, this has been due to its requirement to adapt to the needs of an ever-changing community. In the beginning, the leadership team consisted of a small group of three men, who were appointed by Peter and Susan to work alongside them to be Elders. But as the community rapidly grew the model radically changed to become a leadership team of ten men and ten women who were voted in by the members. This included two 'wild cards', which the outgoing leadership team appointed (CCD, 2003: 3). Although they couldn't serve for longer than a year, they were able to be re-voted back in. Each member of this team chose certain areas such as worship, newcomers, or finance to take responsibility for overseeing. I also had the opportunity of serving on the leadership team for a few years during this period and for a while also held the responsibility of Trustee.

Then, in 2005, just before Peter left for the States a new two-tier model was introduced. This consisted of a combination of teams that had different functions, for example, a management team, a pastoral team, a preaching and teaching team, and a worship team. Each of these teams were overseen by a small team of Elders. But as the numbers of active members gradually dropped, these teams disbanded, leaving only a very few Elders. So, in response to this, another radical approach was taken. This time the expectation was that every member in

the community would serve on the leadership team at some point. Members could volunteer when the time was right for them, and the team was made up of three men and three women. This Enabling Team as it was called, worked on the idea that they would encourage other members to take responsibility for certain areas in the life of the community.

While Peter was in the USA, he became ordained as a Minister in a Wesleyan tradition and therefore, upon his return, the members invited him to also become their Pastor. He then re-launched a leadership model based on Elders, who were appointed by him. This initially consisted of four men and four women including Susan. Over time some stepped down for various reasons but more recently, the decision was made to no longer replace them. So, the same two men and two women have now served on this team for several years meaning that in a way the leadership structure has almost gone full circle.

A fourth significant change to CCD has been its location and use of places to meet. When CCD was first formed the founding members met for their weekly Sunday morning services at Waterfront. This was a Victorian house which at one point had been a residential care home for older people, but Peter, Mary, and Susan had renovated it and turned it back into a residential dwelling. By the time I arrived six months later, the number of members had already grown rapidly, so they moved their meeting place for Sunday morning services to a local theatre, which was rented. During this time the members still used Waterfront for its office, many of its other meetings, and as a drop-in. A few years later the office relocated to a small converted house in the centre of the town along with the custom of a drop-in. Because the church continued to expand, it had soon outgrown the theatre and, therefore, started to rent various rooms within the Landmark Centre, otherwise referred to as simply 'the Landmark'. This building is an old Victorian church that was converted into a community centre and is managed by a local charity, the Deal and Walmer Community Association (DWCA).

When the membership dropped, so too did its finances and consequently, the office for CCD returned to Waterfront. At this time, I was fortunate to start renting another Victorian church called the 'Boatmen's Rooms'. It was originally designed as a reading room and a safe place for destitute sailors but later became 'The Mission to Seamen' with its own minister. Given the space and versatility of the rooms, I was able to host the majority of CCD's regular meetings including the early Friday morning prayer meeting, leadership team meetings,

worship team practice, two women's discipleship groups, a monthly open house breakfast, and various different types of community meetings - I will explain the various kinds of meetings shortly. Alongside this, I also accommodated the Rapha Journey workshops, which during this period, were held every few months. Over the years I have attended several of these as a participant, but I have also been a member of the team and taught some sessions when they have been held in various parts of the UK, Germany, and a few times in Turkey.

After a few years, when my tenancy at the Boatmen's Rooms ended Waterfront resumed its role as the main focal point of CCD other than the Landmark. This has been the place where some have encountered CCD for the first time. It has also been a safe place for members to come together in a crisis or if they are struggling. Given its history and significance to the community, it is not surprising that some, like myself, have felt it is our second home to the point that we have identified 'our' mug and know where the biscuit tin is. When Mary is in residence it can also mean that if you hang around long enough for a second cup of tea, you are likely to be offered a job to do.

In 2014, CCD was approached by some of the members of the DWCA, as it had run into financial difficulties, which had placed the Landmark at risk of closing. Following an Annual General Meeting, a number of members of CCD were appointed as Trustees. Since then, CCD has been instrumental in obtaining a loan, which in turn, enabled it to pay off significant debts, refurbish two of the bars and carry out essential repairs. CCD members have also worked as volunteers to help renovate the building, manage the bars, caretake the facilities, as well as serve in the café. I was struck when an ex-member of CCD said to me at the time "if anyone can save the Landmark it is CCD".

CCD's efforts to save this historic building and essential community centre have been a significant contribution to the wider community. In this way, I believe the members have adopted Närhi's (2004) approach of giving a voice to, and acting for, the marginalised as well as bringing this building and its land to the round table of negotiations (Närhi, 2004: 60). But CCD's vision for this place extends further than this, however, which Peter summed up at a community meeting:

> "there is not anyone who could walk in through that door at the Landmark Centre and take a cup of coffee and start talking, where we would not be able to find people in

> this community to sit down with them and look them in the eye and say, 'I so understand! I was there five years ago, and I am so sorry you haven't been able to find help elsewhere'… Men coming for a drink (in the bar)… and we have a beer or two and just talk" (CCD, 01.07.2014).

Another change to CCD has been the format of its meetings. Initially, the men and women met together in discipleship groups, which were a forum for members to share what had recently happened in their journey of healing. But quite early on this changed to gender-exclusive groups, and this has remained a core characteristic of CCD's therapeutic support. These groups met weekly and were facilitated by nominated members. I have had the opportunity to facilitate several over the years. The women chose to meet in groups of eight whilst the men met as one large group or in 'troika', which are groups of three or four without a facilitator. More recently, the women's discipleship groups have disbanded, and the women opted to also support each other in troikas. Alongside these, there were intermittently open meetings for all the women and another for all the men called Ladies' night and Men's night respectively. These tended to discuss issues that impacted the wider community and how to best support one another.

In 2013, I formed and facilitated a new mixed-gender group initially called Back to Basics (and subsequently re-named Moving Forward Together) in response to feedback from the community. This group was created to help members better understand CCD's culture and the Rapha teaching principles but has since changed to become more like a discipleship group and each member now takes a turn to facilitate. At the same time, a new community meeting was launched which provided a forum for members to discuss business aspects of the community in addition to annual projects, for example, the Christmas service and summer carnival. This year, the community also held its first Away Day.

The sixth change to CCD has been its affiliation with outside organisations. At the inaugural Annual General Meeting (AGM), the members decided against the advice of the leadership team to not become affiliated with any particular church denomination. This might have been influenced by some of the members having harmful experiences in their previous churches, which will be explored more fully in the chapter **Life before going through the door.** Instead, the members decided to remain an independent Evangelical church (CCD, 1999: 2) but with an affiliation to the Evangelical Alliance. This is a network of thousands of

individual Christians, churches, and organisations across the UK. More recently, the leadership team decided to withdraw its membership for financial reasons.

It was also following this first AGM that the whole community embraced the custom of opening up their homes and offering accommodation to someone in need, as I had experienced first-hand. Peter later discovered during his doctoral studies that this model mirrored the Geel community in Belgium, which has a long tradition of caring for people with mental health difficulties within a family environment dating back to the year 600 AD (Aring, 1974; as quoted in van Bilsen, 2016: 208). Susan also identified in her own doctoral studies of CCD that this practice 'proved foundational to the emerging therapeutic community dynamic' (Williams, 2007: 37). Some members of CCD have either rented or bought a house on the basis that there is a spare bedroom for this purpose. Where this has not been possible, they have used a variety of different spaces in their homes to double up for this purpose. As this was such a significant experience for me, I have been very passionate about adopting this habit myself. Over the years I have had the privilege of accommodating numerous people some of whom have then become very good friends.

This practice of members sharing what they have to meet the need of others has, though extended way beyond simply offering a bed. It has included passing on furniture, clothes, and cars. Also, when some members have moved out of a rented property, they have recommended to their landlord or letting agency for the lease to be taken on by other members of CCD. So, in this way, even houses and flats have been handed down through the community. In addition, members have house sat, dog or cat sat, and baby or child sat. All of this has worked together to create an ethos of family as one of my participants epitomises:

> *"I think for me it's home, umm home. I think this is where people understand you, I guess? Yeah, to belong but to, umm yeah (sighs) to belong, umm. And know it in a, to be known in it and accepted (sighs). Known for who you are, umm and still accepted (laughs), which makes it a place of rest doesn't it?."* (Nina-6-1).

Moreover, when members have helped each other out in this way and, in particular, to move house these events have often been life-changing moments and enabled relationships to be formed or strengthened. Sometimes they have even found their way into the folklore of the community. Thus, I believe that CCD changed from being simply a church (Williams, 2002:

109) to more of what Miller (2013) calls an 'intentional community' (Miller, 2013: 1). He defined this as a community where:

> 'members share a common vision; they have some degree of economic sharing; the community consists of at least five adults not biologically related to one another; and the members share living spaces' (Miller, 2012: 2, as quoted by Madden in Miller, 2013: 15).

In response to the rapid growth of the community in the early years, the leadership team invited Dr Sara Savage, who was a Senior Research Associate for the Psychology and Christianity Project at the Divinity Faculty, Cambridge University to meet members of the community and advise the leadership team how best to manage this going forward. She identified that members adhered to a number of 'social rules', in other words, 'unwritten relationship guidelines designed to reinforce the therapeutic dynamic' of the community (Williams, 2002: 5). Some examples of these social rules are 'it will hurt like hell, but it is worth it', 'cut the crap', 'it's a journey, not an event', 'feeling is healing', and 'honour one another'. Sara also made the observation that "I have never met such a group of dysfunctional people in one place, all turning that dysfunctionality into an asset" (Williams, 2007: 37). Her recommendation was for the leadership team to undertake further research.

Acting on this guidance Susan carried out an ethnographic study of CCD using six focus groups and a reflective questionnaire to explore what the meaning of CCD was to its members (Williams, 2002: 8). She discovered 'the focal question in the community at the time was how can I change?' (Williams, 2007: 4). Susan went on to further analyse her data as part of her doctoral research. By adopting critical realism as a theoretical framework, she identified CCD as a 'salugenic Place…(which) could be treated as a 'structure' generating Change in its members' (Williams, 2007: 44). Given the significance of Susan's research and similarity to mine I will refer to Susan's work throughout.

Peter also went on to complete his doctoral thesis drawing extensively on Susan's data from 2002. He explored the history of the church, the history of therapeutic communities (TCs) and compared these to CCD. In doing so, he concluded that CCD was very similar to a TC and formulated a theoretical framework for a new type of congregation namely, a 'therapeutic faith community' (Holmes, 2004: 29). Following this revelation CCD joined the Association

of Therapeutic Communities, which later became The Consortium for Therapeutic Communities (TCTC). Several members of CCD have been on the Board and presented at the annual conference. Also, when the TCTC was formed CCD as an organisation took on responsibility for its administration.

Given this new identity CCD also chose to become a member of and participate in the Community of Communities (CoC) network and quality standards programme for TCs. This is part of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, which 'supports members to meet the highest standards of TC practice through a process of self-review and peer review' (CoC, 2022). CCD was categorised as a non-residential open faith TC. It was referred to as open because unlike other TCs there is no formal referral or application process, no specified time limit, no financial cost, and there is an unlimited number of places. Additionally, there is no onus on anyone to undertake the Rapha therapeutic journey of healing or a requirement to have a Christian faith or in fact, any type of faith. Several members of CCD have supported this work by being part of a peer review team visiting other TCs and becoming lead reviewers. Furthermore, CCD has been instrumental in shaping the core standards for TCs. I have also had the opportunity to be part of these teams and therefore, visited prisons and various NHS Trust settings. I have also project managed our own self-review and peer review day. Lately, the leadership team decided for CCD to no longer be part of this programme as financially it was no longer viable.

Miller (2013) also recognizes the importance and impact of a charismatic leader on an intentional community. I believe Peter and Susan have assumed this role for CCD and the change to their role over the years is the seventh important change to CCD. It was, after all, Peter's therapeutic model, which the founding members had all benefited from (including Susan) that, in essence, brought about CCD's existence. Also, the Rapha Journey workshops were designed to teach the basic principles of this model and its practical application using Susan's journey of healing as an example. In addition, Susan documented her journey including the use of these principles in the book Letting God Heal: From emotional illness to wholeness (Williams and Holmes, 2004). Many members of CCD have joined, and numerous people have visited either through the Rapha Journey workshops or from having read Susan's book. They have also taught in various forums within CCD including preaching on a Sunday morning and leading the men's and women's work. In conjunction with this, they have, of course, supported members on their journey of healing. So, from the outset, Peter and Susan

took on a central role and adopted what became known as an ‘elder statesman’ role. This took the form of them guiding and supporting the leadership team but handing over the day-to-day management of the community. This was primarily because it had always been recognised that they had a wider role outside of CCD (CCD, 2004: 1) in part because they were not paid staff.

One of the roles that Peter and Susan have adopted alongside CCD has been to share their teaching with churches in the USA and, in particular, they have formed an ongoing relationship with Journey Church in Bozeman, Montana. Given this, there have always been periods when they have been away from CCD, even though they remained very much involved. In 2007, Susan essentially withdrew to write up her PhD and, shortly afterwards, in 2008, Peter and Mary emigrated to the USA. Their loss was profound, and the prolonged absence of Peter was especially felt, which it is thought contributed to several long-term members leaving. What was significant about this subsequent loss was not the number of members who left but, rather that they were prominent ‘culture carriers’ in other words they embodied the values of CCD.

Not surprisingly, when Peter and Mary’s returned to the UK in 2015 it resulted in a gradual resurgence as he was instrumental in re-establishing relationships with former members and associate members who all became actively re-involved. By this time Peter and Susan had both become Pastors in the USA and were on the leadership team of Journey Church. So, although Peter also became the Pastor for CCD, they both continued to split their time between the two communities. When Covid-19 struck, however, Peter, Mary and Susan remained in the USA and Peter stepped down from the leadership of CCD. Since then, both have had little contact with CCD, although they still provide therapeutic support via their virtual gender-exclusive Rapha Journey question and answer forums. On the one hand, I believe the loss of them is still very much felt by the community but, on the other, their legacy continues, as one of my participants summarises “Peter and Susan have set the bar so high in terms of by example showing how much change and redemption and growing the new is possible” (Howard-7-4).

Given the many different roles, Peter, Susan, and I have had over the years it is not surprising that they have also had an enormous impact on my life. They have been my church leader, my manager and had a therapeutic role by supporting me with my journey of healing. More

recently, because of Susan's own doctoral research and expertise in grounded theory she has also helped me to navigate my way through my own PhD journey.

Although each one of these changes has been critical in the story of CCD there have been some events that have acted as a watershed. One such landmark was when the members rented a topless double-decker bus to drive around the town for their first Christmas. The worship band played and sang Christmas carols and songs on the top whilst those walking went door to door giving out sweets, and an invitation to their carol service. It is something that very quickly became a tradition, but little did they know the impact this would have. Over time CCD became known as 'the church with the bus' and it is something that adults and children have come to look forward to. The members also rent the same bus for the summer carnival procession and, one year, were invited to lead the procession.

Another of these turning points was in 2001 when nine adults (eight of them were founding members) and five children went to plant a therapeutic faith community in Maadi, Cairo. The aim of this project was to explore whether CCD's principles and culture could be transferred to another culture. Over the next few years, a number of other members joined this new community, and many visited for a short period. Although this disbanded a few years later it was a life-changing experience for all those who were a part of it.

Furthermore, another significant milestone was when the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) filmed a documentary in CCD. This came about because the BBC was planning to produce a series on addictions and a couple and a young man independently contacted the BBC to share their stories. They also pointed out that they were all just about to relocate to CCD to see if this would "reverse the damage" (BBC, 2005). Paddy Wivell, the producer, was so surprised by this coincidence that he decided to explore this unique community further. The impact of these programmes, seemingly overnight, publically exposed CCD in a way it had never known. So, the speed at which people arrived for help from all over the UK and the level of need they came with became overwhelming for the community. It was a far cry from its early roots of being a small, relatively unknown, church in a remote part of Kent.

Something else that acted as a crossroads, which followed this explosion of growth, was the sudden and unexpected death of a prominent member by suicide who was also a very close friend of mine. Again, the impact of this event was extensive not just for the community but,

also, for me personally. So, it goes without saying that these were difficult and challenging times. But Madden (2013) identifies one of the factors which contributes to the survival of an intentional community, this being the extent to which it can successfully use a crisis as a healthy point of, and for, change (Madden, 2013; as quoted in Miller, 2013:17). I believe that CCD has tried to adopt this approach and has endured because it has been willing to change as one of my participants tries to depict:

> *"I mean nothing, nothing is ever going to change the, it's like the core of us. It's our spiritual home. It's that capstone isn't it, sort of thing? The everything you know, brokenness, devastation and then, we've kind of been rebuilt. And actually, that's been part of the rebuilding, hasn't it? So, wherever we go, if we stay or whether we go, CCD is always going to be you know, a special place"* (Emma-6-6).

I think it is fair to say that there are too many changes and turns in the road to mention, which have shaped this unique community. Also, it is important to acknowledge that CCD is not without its faults and has made some mistakes along the way. Some are clearly discussed by my participants, and some have resulted in a few unhappy members leaving. Without minimising the importance of this for those individuals I believe there has also been a huge amount of good which has resulted in many changed lives. Parallel to this, there is also the story that the wider community would tell. This seems to have moved from a place of initial fear, misunderstanding, and, for some, a perception of CCD as a cult, to a place of growing acceptance for 'the church with the bus' that has somehow saved the Landmark Centre.

I wrote this poem for the celebration of the life of one of our founding members who had passed away. He was a retired ex-miner whom I grew to have a great affection for. I felt it captures the importance of our relationships within the community and how these develop through very simple day-to-day interactions such as giving someone a lift.

Goodbye Mr Frank

While I was thinking about you the other day
I suddenly realised,
I actually can't remember the first time I ever met you.
But I can remember very clearly the first time

I heard the words:
"You've forgotten Frank!"
I'd like to say it was the first and the last
But we both know it wasn't.

I had no idea at the time the significance of what I'd done.
I did know it wasn't because you always escorted Maureen's cakes.
Although, I could be forgiven for thinking that
In view of how much they're appreciated.
I also knew it wasn't because I'd forgotten to collect just anybody
Because I'd done that before.
No, this was different.
I understood the emphasis was on **"Frank"!**

That was for me the beginning of my journey
Of discovering the importance of you, Mr Frank.

What always amazed me about you was
When I finally did arrive to collect you
You'd look right through me with your piercing blue eyes
So that I knew I had no hope of pretending,
"I just got held up!" or something?
Somehow you always appeared more pleased with yourself
That you knew what had **really** happened
Than ever minding that it had happened.
Suddenly, you'd smile the biggest smile from ear to ear
Because you wanted me to know
That you had already forgiven me
Before you very proudly declared
with a twinkle in your eye
"You forgot me!"
Then, like a gentleman, you would kiss me on the cheek.
You showed me grace, Mr Frank.

To start with in my arrogance
I used to let you hug me.
Because somehow, I thought it benefited **you.**
But gradually, over the course of time,
For twice a day, two times a week and once on Sundays,
(Not counting Sundays off of course)
Without me even realising,
Something changed.
I don't know **when** or **how** exactly
Because I'd certainly never intended it to happen
But I'd got hooked on "a hug from Mr Frank".
It had become something that I looked forward to with anticipation
"Today's Tuesday Mr Frank's coming!"
And something that I missed if you didn't come
Because everything didn't seem quite right somehow
Without you.

Until eventually, if I was having a really, really, bad day
And "**no way** was I going to church today!"
It somehow became possible
Because I knew, my efforts would be rewarded at the door
By a hug from Mr Frank.
You see you had this gift
Of letting yourself **'in'** past the barriers.
I'd let you love me, Mr Frank!
It doesn't surprise me that the one and only time
I got 'one up on you' was when you were in hospital
And therefore, not at your best.
By a miracle, I'd found a plant you'd never seen.
You tried so hard to hide your shock.
But eventually, you had to laugh
And nodded your head in approval
As you said, "I've never grown one of them!"
Mr Frank - one hundred, Catriona – one.

I know if I were to tell you
That when Mrs Dove left for Egypt
She had recently discovered for herself
The importance of you, Mr Frank
As I know others have because I've met them.
You would simply raise your eyebrows as you do
And try to appear very disinterested.
Then say, "I'm going for a fag".

But if I waited long enough
I would see you turn back
And underneath the surface
There would be this grin.
Because I know it would actually quite amuse you
To think there are people all around the world
Who care about you.
But there are you see, Mr Frank.

I panicked the other day,
I couldn't remember what you used to call me
"My love", "my dear?"
Except, that it did begin with "my".
Maybe it's not important now?
All that does matter is that you are
And always will be, **very** important to me.
And that I was in some way, **"yours"!**

You seemed to have this way of thinking
That someone, somehow, **belonged** to you.
Maybe it's not so funny?
Peter would probably say, "Quite right!"
And you'd smile with satisfaction, as you do.
Goodbye Mr Frank.

Literature Review: An unusual adventure

> *'"You must walk. It is a long journey, through a country that is sometimes pleasant and sometimes dark and terrible"* (said the Witch of the North)…
>
> (Dorothy) closed the door, locked it, and put the key carefully in the pocket of her dress. And so, with Totto trotting along soberly behind her, she started on her journey'
> (Baum, 1900/2011: 27 & 30).

The beginning

As outlined in the introduction my starting point for this research was the apparent gap between theory and practice about spirituality, in other words, the 'how-to' apply spirituality to practice (Gilbert, 2009; Holloway, 2007). Gilligan and Furness (2006) also highlighted this by saying that within the UK there is 'no obvious consensus around how to actually achieve 'spiritually-competent' social work practice' (Gilligan and Furness, 2006: 633).

Four years later, the same authors confirmed this position by asserting:

> 'despite policy rhetoric, there has to date, been no particular model that ensures that issues arising from religion and belief are adequately addressed in social work and social care assessments or interventions arising from them' (Furness & Gilligan, 2010: 2188).

In one sense, this should not be surprising as Holloway (2007b) has also identified the lack of progress within social work for over more than a decade to introduce the spiritual dimension (Holloway, 2007b as quoted in Holloway et al, 2010: 16).

Finding this vacuum led me to ask the question 'What might the 'ideal' model look like?'. In doing so, I was drawn back to my experience with CCD. This community had supported me with a complex combination of mental health difficulties and spiritual needs, and simultaneously and seamlessly helped me resolve these. Therefore, I believed some of the

answers lay within it, so I decided to focus my research on this unique community. To begin, I mapped out all the possible terrain within the literature which linked spirituality, communities, mental health, social work, and place. I then chose to look at models of spiritual care that enable practitioners to apply theories of spirituality in the everyday contexts of care (Holloway et al., 2010: 31). The underlying assumption of all these models is that people are intrinsically spiritual (Sulmasy, 2002: 25). This is a view supported by Holloway et al. (2010) who suggested 'we all have something to hold on to' even if people do not recognise this as spirituality (Holloway et al., 2010: 74).

Initially, I examined a broad spectrum of literature across several different disciplines and found there was an abundance. Indeed, when Holloway et al. (2010) carried out a systematic review of spiritual care in end-of-life settings between 2000 and 2010, they identified two hundred and forty-eight sources by authors from seventeen different countries (Holloway et al., 2010: 2). They categorised these into five different types of models. Firstly, 'conceptual' models which explain why particular groups hold specific views about religious and spiritual belief and their impact on practices. Secondly, 'competency-based' models which identify different levels of competency required to deal with spiritual concerns. Thirdly, 'whole person-synergy' models which regard individuals as a 'whole' people, in other words, the body, mind, and spirit. Fourthly, 'interdisciplinary' models which highlight the need for all health care professionals to work together when dealing with patients' spiritual needs. Finally, 'organisational' models which ensure there is a focus on spiritual care within and across organisations (Holloway et al., 2010: 29-32).

Alongside these models, Holloway et al. discovered a plethora of tools designed to assess spiritual needs (Holloway et al., 2010: 2). I therefore decided to start with these and recognised there are several which have developed questionnaires using an acronym, for example, Anandarajah and Hight's (2001) 'HOPE', Puchalski's (1999) 'FICA' and Maugans' (1996) 'SPIRIT'. However, I was aware these tools seemed to fragment an individual's spirituality into different components such as, 'spiritual beliefs', 'spiritual or religious community' (Puchalski, 2006: 153) and 'spiritual practices' (Anandarajah and Hight's, 2001: 87). Although I didn't fully appreciate the significance of my observation at the time intuitively, I felt this approach was fundamentally at odds with the very essence of spirituality. Reed (1992) supports this view by arguing that '…there is a danger of reducing the concept of spirituality to different components thereby fragmenting the concept…' (Reed,

1992 as quoted in McSherry and Draper, 1998: 686). In addition, it remained unclear as to how practitioners would develop the necessary skills to apply these tools and there was, therefore, the possibility they could be misused by simply being a tick box exercise.

Moving on to whole person-synergy models, an instance of this being Sulmasy's (2002) 'Biopsychosocial-spiritual model for the Care of Patients at the End of Life', in which he advocates there are four specific features of a person, these being the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual. He goes on to say that no one aspect can be separated from the whole and each one interacts and influences the others (Sulmasy, 2002: 27). Although Sulmasy (2000) attempted to provide a 'whole person' approach, Holloway et al. (2010) found this model again fragmented the different aspects of the person and, therefore, judged it to be reductionist (Holloway et al., 2010: 78).

Continuing with interdisciplinary models Stirling (2007) is one of those who have championed this approach. He proposes that all members of a multi-disciplinary team:

> 'are involved to some extent or other –personally/professionally, implicitly, or explicitly in the provision of spiritual care. This is because physical, social, psychological, and spiritual interventions can all alleviate spiritual distress and sustain spiritual well-being. They are woven together' (Stirling, 2007: 22).

However, Stirling also highlighted other research which undermines this model. This included Milligan (2004), McSherry (1998), Narayanasamy and Owens (2001), and Kuupelomaki (2001) who identified that nurses are unsure how to carry out the spiritual element of their care (Stirling, 2007: 24). Similarly, Beagan and Kumas-tan (2005) discovered occupational therapists 'do not think of their practice in the language of spirituality' (Beagan and Kumas-tan, 2005 as quoted in Stirling, 2007: 24). So, again, I felt I was back to the increasingly evident gap between theory and practice.

Pressing on, I turned my attention to competency-based models, including Marie Curie Cancer Care (2003), and Smith (2006). In contrast to all the above, these focus primarily on the relationship between the practitioner and the service user. Narayanasamy and Owens (2008) identified four different levels of competency for nurses but, again, concluded that there was 'confusion' over their roles, the result being that care was 'delivered haphazardly'

(Narayanasamy and Owens, 2008: 454). Conversely, Smith (2006) introduced the 'American Association of Critical-Care Nurses Synergy Model for Patient Care' (Hardin and Kaplow, 2005, as quoted in Smith, 2006: 41). This model comprises the matching of eight nurses' competencies with eight characteristics of patients, producing 'something more than the sum of the parts' and a synergy (Smith, 2006: 43). She also refers to Kociszewski (2003) and others (McEwen, 2005; Vance, 2001) who argued that nurses who are aware of the spiritual realm are more able to deliver spiritual care than those who are not (Smith, 2006: 44).

For the first time, I felt my explorations of these divergent models meant that I was making some progress, and this led me to come across a particular body of literature, which I hoped would continue to cast some light on applying spirituality to practice for me, namely 'cultural competence' which I will define and explore in more detail shortly.

Going round in circles

'Pooh was walking round and round in a circle, thinking of something else…
"Hallo!" said Piglet, *"what are **you** doing?"*...
"Tracking something," said Winnie the Pooh very mysteriously.
"Tracking what?" said Piglet, coming closer.
"That's just what I ask myself. I ask myself, What?"
"What do you think you'll answer?"
"I shall have to wait until I catch up with it", said Winnie-the-Pooh'
(Milne, 1926/1994: 36).

There is now an abundance of reports outlining inequalities in health care and, in particular, mental health care, based on a person's racial or ethnic origin (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2002; DoH, 2003; NIMHE, 2003, 2004) including the more recent Independent Review of the MHA (Department of Health and Social Care (DoHSC), 2018). These have identified a notable over-representation of individuals from ethnic minority and migrant communities who have been detained under the MHA to the point that they are four more times likely to be detained than those who are white British. They are also more likely to have a longer period of detention, be placed in a secure unit and be re-admitted. In

addition, those with black African and Caribbean heritage are eight times more likely to be subject to a Community Treatment Order than those with white British heritage (DoHSC, 2018: 11). This picture has not changed over the past thirty years and has been well documented in the literature including in the Independent Review of the MHA.

The concept of cultural competence offers a way of addressing some of these inequalities (Betancourt et al., 2003: 293). There are several definitions of cultural competence, but one offered by Sue et al. (1992) includes:

> '(a) developing the appropriate beliefs and values to engage culturally different worldviews, (b) knowledge of a culturally different worldview, and (c) developing skill sets and intervention strategies that are relevant and sensitive to a culturally different worldview' (Sue et al., 1992 as quoted in Hodge, 2007: 287).

But the authors also stress this is an ongoing process that will never reach a conclusion (Sue and Sue, 1990: 146 as quoted in Sue et al., 1992: 481). Harrison and Turner (2011) have also observed that cultural competence has become increasingly important in the 'caring' professions as it now constitutes a 'core requirement' for mental health professionals in the UK in social work education in the USA (Harrison and Turner, 2011: 334).

Additionally, there are numerous models of cultural competence. Furness and Gilligan (2010) have suggested these fall, largely, into two types. The first is 'reflective models' which focus on developing relevant skills and awareness for the practitioner, the other being 'assessment models' which aim to gain a better understanding, in the context of social work, of the service users' strengths, needs and circumstances (Furness and Gilligan, 2010: 2187). Purnell (2002) and Campinha-Bacote (2002) have both put forward an example of a reflective model which identifies certain 'domains' (Purnell, 2002: 195) or 'constructs' (Campinha-Bacote, 2002: 182) that the practitioner must address. Campinha-Bacote's constructs, for instance, include 'cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, cultural encounters, and cultural desire' (Campinha-Bacote, 2002: 182).

But, again, it has been acknowledged that there is a need to further clarify how practitioners can apply these models in practice (Purnell, 2002: 196). In fact, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (1999) recommended that if social workers are to undertake cultural

competency in practice, then it is important to be able to measure these constructs (NASW, 1999: Standard 10 as quoted in Hodge, 2007: 288). Hodge (2007) recognised that these measures are 'comparatively rare' and not developed for social work so went on to develop his own 'Spiritual Competence Scale' for this purpose comprised of several foundational beliefs or values that he says are essential for culturally competent practice (Hodge, 2007: 288, 289 & 293).

However, Hodge (2007) noted that a high score on the belief dimension did not necessarily equate to the practitioner having the skills or knowledge associated with spiritual competence, so he too had to acknowledge the gap between theory and practice still existed (Hodge, 2007: 289). This limitation has also been levelled at cultural competency per se as Betancourt et al., (2003) noted that simply learning a set of 'facts' about any particular group does not necessarily mean the practitioner will be effective in caring for them and, further, that this approach could lead to stereotyping (Betancourt et al., 2003: 298). Moreover, Isaacs and Benjamin (1991) observed there is a tendency for practitioners to want 'a 'how to' or 'cookbook recipe' approach' but, given the complexity of cultural competence, 'a cookie-cutter solution' is not feasible (Isaacs and Benjamin, 1991: 17). The outcome of this brief exploration of the concept of cultural competence as applied to spirituality was that, not only did it feel to me as if the solution to this paradox was still elusive, but also that I was going round in circles. Given my professional background I decided, therefore, to return to models of spiritual care, but this time to focus solely on social work.

Can't see the wood for the trees

> 'Toward evening they came to a great forest, where the trees grew so big and close together that their branches met over the road of yellow brick. It was almost dark under the trees, for the branches shut out the daylight, but the travellers did not stop, and went on into the forest.
>
> *"If the road goes in, it must come out,"* said the Scarecrow*…we must go wherever it leads us."'*
>
> (Baum, 1900/2011: 41).

Firstly, I began with Furness and Gilligan (2010a) as they had been the ones to initially inspire me. They developed a framework that could be applied at all stages of practice in the hope of filling this gap between theory and practice (Furness and Gilligan, 2010a: 2188). It consisted of nine key principles, which are all interdependent and included:

> 'Are you sufficiently self-aware and reflexive about your own religious and spiritual beliefs or the absence of them and your responses to others?...
>
> Are you listening to what they say about their beliefs and the strengths and needs which arise from them?...
>
> Are you approaching this piece of practice with sufficient openness and willingness to review and revise your plans and assumptions?' (Furness and Gilligan, 2010a: 2188 & 2189).

Furness and Gilligan (2010a) recognised that it is not practicable for practitioners to carry out separate assessments based on any issues arising from the service user's religion and belief and, moreover, that service users would be unlikely to welcome this approach either (Furness and Gilligan, 2010a: 2188 & 2189). So, their expectation was that this framework would become integrated into any existing assessments. Furness and Gilligan (2010a) found one of the benefits of this framework was that it helped the practitioner to develop 'greater self-awareness'. They went on to argue, that not only do social workers have a responsibility to cultivate this awareness, but that it is also essential for 'sound culturally competent practice' (Furness and Gilligan, 2012: 12 & 4). Although, saying that, they also acknowledged that busy practitioners find it difficult to take time out for reflection and personal development. So, they concluded this placed greater importance on social work training to offer models of reflection and cultural competence to help develop this much-needed self-awareness (Furness, 2003, 2005 as quoted in Furness and Gilligan, 2010a: 2199).

Secondly, Hodge (2005) reviewed several assessment methods including 'oral spiritual histories' (Hodge, 2001a as quoted in Hodge, 2005: 316), 'spiritual life maps' (Hodge, 2005b as quoted in Hodge, 2005: 316), 'spiritual genograms' (Hodge, 2001b as quoted in Hodge, 2005: 319), 'spiritual ecomaps' (Hodge, 2000 as quoted in Hodge, 2005: 319) and 'spiritual

ecograms' (Hodge, 2005a as quoted in Hodge, 2005b: 322). Although each of them had its strengths in general he found them to be 'time- consuming', 'inappropriate' and 'ineffective' (Hodge, 2005: 319). So, as an alternative, he developed a new framework for assessing spirituality made up of two components (Hodge, 2001). The first was an 'initial narrative framework' that allowed the service user to tell their 'spiritual life story' (Hodge, 2001: 207 & 203). The second was an 'interpretative framework', enabling the practitioner to clarify the spiritual strengths of a service user (Hodge, 2001: 207 & 209). Hodge (2001) makes the point that one of the reasons why this model is effective is because telling one's story and highlighting one's spiritual strengths is a powerful intervention in itself (Hodge, 2001: 209). Hodge (2001) simultaneously cautions, however, that social workers should not assume the role of a 'spiritual expert' by advising service users concerning their spirituality (Hodge, 2001: 210). Interestingly, he went so far as to say that some practitioners who hold strong values should not undertake spiritual assessments with individuals who hold very different values (Hodge, 2001: 210).

Thirdly, Holloway and Moss (2010) have developed a 'fellow traveller model', which is comprised of four stages of intervention that enable the social worker to accompany the service user on their spiritual journey as far as they feel 'comfortable and competent' to do so. Holloway and Moss (2010) name the start of this journey 'joining', which involves the social worker being able to recognise those service users who value spirituality. Although they believe every social worker should be able to achieve this, they also acknowledge that some may find this difficult (Holloway and Moss, 2010: 112-114). This stage is followed by 'listening' which involves a 'preliminary assessment' of the individual's spiritual issues. But Holloway and Moss (2010) suggest that the social worker's ability to engage with the spiritual dimension depends on their empathy with, and level of knowledge of, spirituality so, even at this stage, not all will be able to achieve this (Holloway and Moss, 2010: 114 & 115). The next stage is 'understanding' which requires the social worker to have 'a strong awareness of their own spiritual identity and journey' in order to express empathy to the individual, given the issues they are dealing with (Holloway and Moss 2010: 115). The final stage Holloway and Moss (2010) call 'interpreting'. This is when the traveller enters difficult terrain and is therefore reliant on the 'knowledge, experience, and expertise' of the social worker who is themselves a 'wounded healer'. The authors acknowledge that, given this requirement, there are probably few situations where it would be appropriate for the social worker to take on this role. Moreover, there may be few who are 'able and willing' to do so

(Holloway and Moss, 2010: 116). Saying this they conclude with the caution that if social work:

> 'is to be truly responsive to the service user need, and is to rise to the challenge of anti-discriminatory practice, every social worker should be prepared to go some way along the road of spiritually sensitive practice' (Holloway and Moss, 2010: 121).

Considering the limitations with these models, it felt as if the answer to applying spirituality to practice still lay out of reach. That was until I found not just a completely different perspective, but a radically new paradigm.

Discovering the significance of Place

> 'In silence (Rat and Mole) landed and pushed through the blossom and scented herbage and undergrowth that led up to the level ground, till they stood on a little lawn of marvellous green, set round with Nature's own orchard-trees – crab-apple, wild cherry, and sloe.
>
> *"This is the place of my song-dream, the place the music played to me,"* whispered the Rat, as if in a trance. *"Here, in this holy place"'*
> (Grahame, 1908/2017: 122).

Some of those who offer a radically alternative model to Western social work are Gray, Coates, and Heatherington (2006; 2007) who call for 'eco-spiritual social work' (Gray, 2008: 175). They define this by making the distinction between 'ecological social work' which adopts an 'anthropocentric stance' by focusing on human interests and the social environment and 'ecosocial work' which 'draws on deep ecology' (Besthorn, 1997; Coates, 2003 as quoted in Gray et al., 2007: 56). Gray et al. (2007) adopt the latter approach which they see as:

> 'a welcoming and inclusive context enabling the celebration of diversity, and the sharing of knowledge. The expanded understanding of person-in-environment to

> assume an interdependence and relatedness to the Earth, the importance of place and the openness to more traditional Indigenous forms of healing and helping are a refreshing 'welcome mat'' (Gray et al., 2007: 56 & 57).

Furthermore, the authors agree with the Critical theorists who have highlighted that minority and Indigenous voices have been 'silenced' within the 'dominant social work discourse' by being expected to 'fit in with mainstream culture' (Gray, et al., 2007: 55 & 57). They also use several case examples to illustrate how Western social work's emphasis on 'professional detachment' and the 'individualized' nature of relationships and helping is not only 'perplexing' for Indigenous communities but also at odds with their values and ideas of 'connecting'. An illustration of an alternative approach applied in Tonga involves the social worker using a considerable amount of self-disclosure (Mafile'o, 2004 as quoted in Gray, et al., 2007: 63). Gray et al. (2007) go on to advocate that social work must move away from a binary way of thinking which separates 'professional knowledge' from 'lived experience', and belief systems that refuse to see Indigenous perspectives as 'legitimate and credible' (Coates, et al., 2006: 7). But, they go further by suggesting:

> 'to Indigenous people, globalization is just a new form of colonialism…(because it) …reaffirms the West's view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of civilized knowledge (Smith, as quoted in Hart, 2002: 29 as quoted in Gray, et al.,2007: 57 & 56).

They also point out that by social work using inappropriate theory and practice models with Indigenous communities, the profession has acted as an 'agent of this colonisation'(Coates et al., 2006: 2) and therefore conclude that what is needed is a 'new paradigm' (Gray, et al.,2007: 60).

Someone else who advocates for a new paradigm is Zapf (2005a; 2005b; 2006; 2010). He also criticises the Western paradigm for reducing spirituality to an 'internal quality' of the individual and social relationships which, in turn, has resulted in the loss of relationships with the environment (Zapf, 2005b: 3). Given this, Zapf (2010), therefore, proposes 'that it is time (or past time) for social work to move beyond our conventional metaphor of person-in-environment towards a new paradigm' (Zapf, 2010: 30). He puts forward an idea of what this might look like by drawing on Aboriginal culture and deep ecology. This new approach

would replace ‘environment’ with ‘place’ as Zapf sees this as a far more ‘interactive and holistic concept’ that will be more meaningful and have more emotional significance for people. Likewise, he would change ‘person’ for ‘people’ in order to have a more communal image rather than a focus on individuals. Next, Zapf (2010) suggests that the word ‘in’ not only conveys the idea that person and environment are ‘two separate entities’ but also, that they have a ‘dominant/subordinate relationship’ and one which puts ‘place’ in the background. So, instead, he recommends using the term ‘as’ because this better communicates ‘unity and holism’. When all these aspects are put together, he declares that the new metaphor will be **‘people as place’** (Zapf, 2010: 39, emphasis in the original) and if social work were to adopt this then its new vision or purpose would be ‘what does it mean to live well as this place’ (Zapf, 2005a: 8). However, he remains pessimistic as he thinks it is unlikely that mainstream social work is likely to make the shift to this new paradigm (Zapf, 2005b: 639).

Having discovered this new paradigm I was intrigued to explore further some of the ideas that had influenced Zapf. The link, for example, between identity and place which Suopajarvi (1998) summed up as ‘I’m not in the place but the place is in me’ (Suopajarvi, 1998: 3, as quoted in Zapf, 2005a: 56). Also, the connection between the land and spirituality which Holst (1997) tries to capture:

> ‘at the heart of the religion of hunting peoples is the notion that a spiritual landscape exists within the physical landscape…Nature provides the people with a psychic milieu through which to link with the divine…the earth’ (Holst, 1997: 150).

Building on this idea of a ‘living landscape’, Zapf (2005a) explores ideas from others who view parts of this landscape as holding more ‘spiritual energy’ than others and who use healing practices which evolve from this ‘profound connection with the land’ (Zapf, 2005a: 6).

I continued to wander through deep ecology and expanded my search to other Indigenous communities in various parts of the world Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and America as I became increasingly fascinated by this new paradigm. I met eco-feminists who regard themselves as ‘deeper than deep ecology’ (Salleh, 1984: 339) because they provide a critique of deep ecology which, as I have explained, is already a critique of the Western dominant

paradigm. Also, as I meandered through this landscape, I stumbled across the work of Aoki (1996) for the first time, who was a Canadian and was later going to prove to be very significant for me. He uses the binary imaginary of Western and Eastern cultures to allow him 'into the space between "East and West"' (Aoki, 1996, as quoted in Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 317). Aoki also points out that the terms 'East' and 'West' suggest a binary of two distinct separate cultures which can be bridged or brought together with an 'and'. He goes on to say that this imaginary has not only dominated but has also, been 'deeply ingrained' in the works of Western historians and anthropologists (Aoki, 1996, as quoted in Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 315). Aoki (1996) continues to explore this concept of 'and' by using the image of a bridge in an Oriental Garden. He views this as:

> 'aesthetically designed, with decorative railings, pleasing to the eyes… But on this bridge, we are in no hurry to cross over; in fact, such bridges lure us to linger… a site or clearing in which earth, sky, mortals, and divine, in their longing to be together, belong together…They are dwelling places for people. (Aoki, 1988)' (Aoki, 1996, as quoted in Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 316).

He borrows Bhabha's (1990) term 'third space' to describe this space which he sums up as:

> 'the tensioned space of both "and/not-and" is a space of conjoining and disrupting, indeed, a generative space of possibilities, a space wherein in tensioned ambiguity newness emerges' (Aoki, 1996, as quoted in Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 318 & 319).

Discovering this new paradigm was a eureka moment for me, which was to change everything because, as I reflected on my approach so far, I realised I too had fallen into the trap of adopting this Western fragmented binary perspective. This had led me to treat mental health and spirituality as two distinct separate entities. So, even though I tried to find a connection between them while I searched through the literature, I had inadvertently reinforced this fragmentation. I concluded I was asking the 'wrong' question from the 'wrong' paradigm. From this new place, I decided my new question was 'what is CCD?'

Before I came across this new paradigm, I felt very lost in 'the wood' of the literature about social work models of spiritual care and wrote this poem to express this.

I am because we are

As I walked through the woodland
I admired and touched each tree.
I appreciated its uniqueness
As well as its contribution to the landscape.
But as I went from one to another to another,
I turned and turned and turned.
Each brought life
And yet, I was no clearer.
At that moment I understood the true meaning of
"Can't see the wood for the trees!"

I looked back at the path I had taken
Away from the trees to outside of the wood altogether.
I could still see it on the horizon.
The place, which had made me who I am today.
Like looking through old photographs
I stood remembering, the good and the bad.
I smiled.
It enchanted me as much as the first time I arrived.
There lay the answer
And yet, somehow it was also *inside me!*

Methodology

Re-discovering the new paradigm

'"How nice it would be if we could only get through into the Looking-Glass House!.. Let's pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so we can get through. Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! It'll be easy enough…" And certainly, the glass *was* beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist…

In another moment Alice was through the glass, and had jumped lightly down into the Looking-Glass room…
Then she began looking about, and noticed…the rest was as different as possible. For instance, the pictures on the wall next to the fire seemed to be alive'
(Caroll, 1871/2015: 19 & 22).

Whilst I was meandering through the literature on social work models of spiritual care, I also unexpectedly embarked on another journey of transformation concerning my identity. This was not just in terms of my role as a researcher but also, as a member of CCD and my professional role as a mental health social worker. This journey was initiated and facilitated at each stage along the way by the literature surrounding the paradox of a researcher adopting an insider and/or outsider status.

Taking an insider position first, Kanuha (2000) has referred to this as 'conducting research with communities or identity groups of which one is a member' (Kanuha, 2000: 440). She goes on to describe this type of researcher as a 'native researcher' who:

> 'is grounded implicitly and situated at all moments in the dual and mutual status of subject-object; she is both the subject of her study and the participant object being studied' (Kanuha, 2000: 442).

Brannick and Cohen (2007) also advocate for insider researchers and describe them as a 'complete member' in other words, someone who not only undertakes research 'in and on their own organization' but also, remains a member after their research is complete (Brannick and Cohen, 2007: 66). Given these definitions, I regarded myself as an insider although I was always conscious this was not the whole story, which will shortly become clear.

However, this is not to say that my role within CCD has not changed over the years. As I mentioned previously in the chapter **Intertwining narratives**, I arrived at CCD to receive help from the community shortly after its' birth and in significant need due to the difficulties I was experiencing with my mental health and my faith. Whilst I undertook my journey of healing, however, I have also held various responsibilities which again, I outlined in the chapter **Interweaving narratives.** So, when I turned to the literature on ethnography, I was delighted to discover that I already 'grasp(ed) the native's point of view, his relation to life (and) realise(d) *his* vision of *his* world' (Malinowski, 1922/1966: 25, emphasis in the original). In fact, it was precisely because I was already familiar with the 'imponderabilia of everyday life' in other words, things that cannot be precisely determined, measured, or evaluated (Malinowski, 1922/1966: 24), that I initially considered participant observation as my prime method in undertaking my PhD. Moreover, far from being a methodological weakness, like so many who have adopted this approach such as the Chicago School and Feminists such as Oakley (1981), I learned that my shared identity, language and 'peculiar history' with CCD's members were an advantage (Schuetz, 1944: 502). Also, I had already built a foundation of trust with the community which potentially meant members would be more open with me and, in turn, this would give greater breadth and depth to the data I gathered (Kanuha, 2000: 444).

I was also encouraged by Brannick and Coghlan (2007) who have argued in defence of this approach that one of its' greatest strengths is uncovering important knowledge, which might otherwise not be possible (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007: 72). They go on to examine the question of 'what is knowledge?' and put forward Peter & Olsen's (1993)'s theory that it is the:

> 'Researchers' epistemological and ontological perspective (which) determines what they consider as a valid, legitimate contribution to theory irrespective of whether we

called it development, confirmation, validation, creation, building, or generation (Peter & Olsen, 1993)' (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007: 62).

Although Hayano (1979) has cautioned that 'an insider's position is not necessarily an unchallengeable 'true' picture' but rather represents one possible perspective (Hayano, 1979: 102, as quoted in Kanuha, 2000: 443).

Because Susan (Williams, 2002; 2007) had carried out her research on CCD (which wasn't, it should be stressed, without its own difficulties and dilemmas), her experience offered potential insights for my own work. She found, for instance, that her leadership team role, which she had held from the inception of CCD, could have resulted in her participants saying only what they thought she wanted to hear (Williams, 2007: 40). Moreover, she was mindful that her therapeutic and pastoral care roles had led her to adopt a 'deliberate policy to avoid most routine social events within the church'. This meant that she was always 'one step removed from its day-to-day activities' and therefore, had she begun attending, it would have changed the naturalistic environment (Williams, 2002: 17 & 2007: 41). What is more, Williams (2007) identified five roles that impacted her research 'author, narrator, investigator, gatekeeper, and former client (by virtue of the therapeutic process used within the community)' This, in turn, created such a sense of role confusion for her that she found it unmanageable. Coupled with this, was the fact that the potential power issues this raised were too serious (Williams, 2007: 39, 40 & 2002: 16). Given this, Williams came to the conclusion that she was less of an insider than she first thought (Williams, 2007: 41 & 16).

This highlights a common concern levelled at those who adopt an insider position is that of 'being too close, and thereby, not attaining the distance and objectivity deemed to be necessary for valid research' (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007: 60). Someone who took up this critique is Schuetz (1944) who advocated for research to be carried out by an outsider or as he refers to them, a 'stranger'. He characterised this stranger as someone who does not share the same basic assumptions as the members of the group, but, rather, becomes 'the man who has to place in question nearly everything that seems to be unquestionable to the members' (Schuetz, 1944: 502). Schuetz (1944) saw this type of research as 'an adventure' which leads the stranger to not only inquire into the 'that' but, also, the 'why'. Thus, his unique position provides him with an objectivity which means he is 'not bound to worship the "idols of the tribe"'. Additionally, the stranger's stance gives him a 'clear-sightedness' which in turn,

enables him to examine 'with care and precision what seems self-explanatory to the in-group' (Schuetz, 1944: 506 & 507).

However, several authors have responded to this critique of insider research including Brannick and Coghlan (2007). They have suggested that one solution to these possible weaknesses is the 'process of reflexive awareness'. In other words, the researcher making their values 'conscious, specific, and explicit (Myrdal, 1969: 55)' (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007: 60). This gave me some reassurance, as critical reflection and reflexivity have been techniques applied in social work for years (Fook, 1996; 2002). Thus, I was not only already very familiar with them, but had also adopted them in my own practice.

As I grappled with these issues and the ethical dilemmas involved, I was reminded of a time when the BBC filmed a documentary in CCD as previously mentioned in the chapter **Interweaving narratives.** With the consent of the leadership team, Paddy Wivell, the producer, came to live as part of CCD for six months to build trust with the members. In one sense, Paddy was an outsider attempting to become an insider, but the leadership team agreed to this with one caveat, this being that filming could only take place during certain meetings which would be advertised in advance to the members. This enabled members to opt out of attending if they so wished.

Remembering this experience increased my understanding of the complexities involved in carrying out this type of research both ethically and practically. It also caused me to reflect on how the members of CCD might view me. For instance, although I was not employed as a mental health social worker when I arrived at CCD, I was conscious there had been moments when my professional background had caused a few members of CCD some anxiety. Usually, this had been whilst they were therapeutically working through their unhelpful history with mental health services and/or social services. It had also been during the period when I was employed as CCD's office manager so in other words, when I had a certain level of authority within the community. However, my relationship with them was quickly restored once they had worked through their historic issues with health and social care services.

I was also mindful of Brown's (2014) experience who had also carried out research on CCD and had encountered this same tension due to her role as a pharmacist in mental health services. This, coupled with her longstanding position on the leadership team led to some of

her participants falsely assuming she had the legal authority to detain them under the MHA. Brown (2014) later discovered that this had contributed to her participants being fearful of her and having a lack of trust in her during her baseline assessment of them. This, in turn, resulted in them 'conceal(ing) their real feelings and thoughts and one participant claimed she lied' (Brown, 2014: 207). So, Brown (2014) concluded her professional role outside CCD seemed to take precedence over her insider status as a member (Brown, 2014: 211, 207 & 208). Although this cautioned me unlike Brown, I have not had an extensive period on CCD's leadership team. Also, I have experienced a couple of episodes over the years when I have been in considerable need as a result of dealing with some specific trauma from my history. These periods have resulted in me having intensive support from some of the other members and I have always openly shared my journey of healing with the wider community during these times. So, on reflection, I felt these opportunities had enabled me to deeply connect with other members. Also, even though there was a six-year period when I was employed as an AMHP, this never seemed to be an issue or provoke the same response in CCD members that Brown experienced during her research.

Whilst I continued to reflect on my roles, I recognised another contradiction with my insider status was, of course, that of being a researcher. As previously mentioned in the chapter **Interweaving Narratives,** I have undertaken several post qualifications during my time at CCD. So, when I first started my PhD, initially it hadn't felt any different but, very quickly, I became conscious I had in some way stepped back from the other members. This sense grew more acute when I started to consider this paradox of insider and/or outsider and the possibility of carrying out participant observation. It felt as if I was observing myself who in turn, was observing other members of the community, which created a disconnect between myself and the other members in a way I had not previously experienced.

There was another significant moment for me when I discovered the complexity of my roles as an insider and/or outsider. As a requirement of my PhD, I had to complete a presentation of my research. Coincidently, during this period, CCD had been invited to participate in a conference for mental health professionals who had an interest in therapeutic communities. I was fortunate enough to be asked to represent the community and present my research. Although I was there in my capacity as a member of CCD, I realised I was also an insider to this group, as they were my professional peers. However, whilst I was recounting the story of how I came to CCD and my journey of healing, I suddenly realised this was the first time I

had so publicly disclosed my history of mental health difficulties to this audience. In that moment, it felt as if I had come to a crossroads where all the various insider and/or outsider aspects of my identity and contradictions simultaneously came into play. It was a profound turning point for me, which fundamentally changed my perception of myself. Given this, I decided to return to the literature where I discovered a wealth of authors who advocated for being both an insider and an outsider – it seemed I was not alone in how I felt. First, I came across Merton (1972) who claimed it is 'sociologically fallacious' to propose ''either' the insider 'or' the outsider has access to the sociological truth' (Merton, 1972: 40, emphasis in original). He goes on to question the foundational premise of the 'total insider' by suggesting if it really is the case that 'you have to be one in order to understand one' then this would lead to the conclusion that 'only women can understand women – and men, men' (Merton, 1972: 15 & 13). Merton (1972) continues to critique this assumption which is based on Rudolf Carnap's (1928) epistemology of solipsism in other words, 'the belief that all one 'really' knows is one's subjective experience' (Merton, 1972:14, emphasis in original). He maintains that this ideology ignores the concept of 'group membership' and, by doing so, fails to take account of who has access to knowledge and who does not. Merton (1972) also stresses, ''one' is not a man or a black or an adolescent…'one' is, of course, all of these and…much more' (Merton, 1972: 24). Additionally, he proposes the antithesis of this assertion, namely 'knowledge about groups, unprejudiced by membership in them, is accessible only to outsiders' is just as equally flawed (Merton, 1972: 31). Instead, he asserts the boundaries between insider and outsider are 'permeable' and advocates for each perspective to be taken seriously so that 'we begin to consider their distinctive and interactive roles in the process of truth-seeking' (Merton, 1972: 37, 40 & 36).

At this point, I felt Merton's (1972) idea of permeable boundaries and holding both positions was moving in the right direction, but it still didn't feel it quite answered the complexity of my situation. I then found Banks (1998) who goes on to develop this idea further. He identifies the researcher as having two different types of relationships with the community they are studying namely, 'indigenous' and 'external'. Coupled with this, he recognises the researcher's perspective can alter to be either 'insider' or 'outsider'. By combining these two factors Banks outlines four possible viewpoints the researcher can hold:

> 'the **indigenous-insider** (who)… is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member who can speak with authority about it…

> **The indigenous-outsider** (who)…was socialized within his or her indigenous community but has experience of high levels of cultural assimilation into an outsider or oppositional culture...the indigenous-outsider is perceived…by the community as an outsider…
>
> **The external-insider** (who) was socialised within another culture (but)…rejects many of the values, beliefs, and knowledge claims within his or her indigenous community and endorses those of the studied community. (They are) viewed by the new community as an 'adopted' insider…
>
> **The external-outsider** (who) is socialised within a community different from the one he or she is doing research. (They have) a partial understanding of and little appreciation for the values, perspectives, and knowledge of the community he or she is studying and consequently often misunderstands and misinterprets the behaviours within the studied community' (Banks, 1998: 8, emphasis in the original).

He goes on to say that researchers are likely to fall within each category at some point depending on the context and situation, for example, an indigenous-insider may become distanced from their community whilst undertaking their research training at university (Banks, 1998: 15).

Despite having recognised the subjective elements of knowledge, Banks (1998) cautions this 'does not mean that we abandon the quest for objectivity' and implores researchers to continue to strive for it 'even though it is an unattainable, idealized goal' (Banks, 1998: 6). But he makes the point that objectivity is not the same as neutrality and there is a danger in researchers who do not hold a framework of values, which fosters democracy and equality, as this would make them 'morally indifferent' (Banks, 1998: 15 & 16). Although Banks' categories seemed to add a new dimension to this paradox, I felt it was still too compartmentalized. However, he draws on Patricia Hill Collins (1986) and other Black Feminist writers, so I decided to explore these further.

Authors such as Collins (1986), bell hooks (1981) and Patricia Bell Scott (1993) all offer a radical alternative to this contradiction, which I think not only grasps more fully the

complexities involved, but also resonated with my own experience. Still, even more than this radical alternative, it gave me a new insight into my identity, which profoundly changed me. Collins quotes Smith (1983) who aptly sums up this viewpoint:

> 'the concept of the simultaneity of oppression is still the crux of a Black feminist understanding of political reality and…is one of the most significant ideological contributions of Black feminist thought (Smith, 1983: xxxii)' (Collins, 1986: s19).

Collins (1986) goes on to say that this Black feminist perspective provides a critique of the black civil rights movement and the women's movement whilst simultaneously acknowledging the additional oppression of the class structure. She refers to Truth's (1976) example of this:

> 'there is a great stir about coloured men getting their rights, and not coloured women theirs, you see the coloured men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as before' (Truth, in Loewenberg, James and Bogin, 1976: 238, as quoted in Collins, 1986: s19).

Collins (1986) then argues that the experience of black women 'at the intersection of multiple structures of domination' has given them a clearer view of their subordination (Collins, 1986: s19). So, rather than the focus being on race or gender or class oppression, she highlights the significance of this holistic perspective in the way it pays attention to 'the interlocking nature of oppression' and the interaction among these multiple systems (Collins, 1986: s20). Moreover, Collins (1986) suggests that, by doing so, this approach simultaneously provides a critique of the 'either/or dualistic thinking' or, as she refers to it, 'the construct of dichotomous oppositional difference'. She encapsulates this construct as:

> 'the categorization of people, things, and ideas in terms of their difference from one another. For example, the terms of dichotomies such as black/white, male/female, reason/emotion, fact/opinion, and subject/object gain their meaning only in **relation** to their difference from their oppositional counterparts' (Collins, 1986: s20, emphasis in the original).

Collins (1986) goes on to cite hooks (1984) who claims this construct 'is the central ideological component of all systems of domination in Western society' (hooks, 1984: 29, as quoted in Collins, 1986: s20). Given this, she then champions the view of the 'outsider within' and again quotes hooks (1984) who provides what I think is a profound description of this:

> 'living as we did – on the edge – we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside and in from the inside out…we understood both (hooks, 1984: vii)' (Collins, 1986: s14 & 15).

She continues by explaining how the process of reflecting on their own personal and cultural experiences changes the outsider within, which, in turn, results in them occupying 'a special place'. But Collins (1986) also points out that some still struggle with this tension and therefore, attempt to resolve it by either leaving or suppressing their difference. In contrast, she offers an alternative approach, one which endorses the outsider within. By doing so, Collins (1986) suggests they will 'learn to trust their own personal and cultural biographies as significant sources of knowledge' rather than attempting to become unbiased and objective (Collins, 1986: s29).

I felt that, so far, Collins had most closely captured the solution to this paradox - namely, the freedom to be both different and, yet, part of something (Collins, 1986: s30). So, for the first time, I felt as if my situation made sense and, with renewed excitement, I decided to continue my search. I then came across Acker (2000) who attempted to apply Bank's typology when she had carried out research in her professional field but had found it was 'too limiting' because the categories of external and internal 'may not be mutually exclusive' (Acker, 2000: 7). Instead, she puts forward the argument:

> 'we are none of us always and forever either insiders or outsiders. Our multiple subjectivities allow us to be both insiders and outsiders simultaneously, and to shift back and forth, not quite at will, but with some degree of agency… with plenty of allowances for work at the borders of the boxes and the presence of tunnels that allow crawling around from one to another' (Acker, 2000: 8 & 11).

Acker (2000) concludes, therefore, that the question of insider-outsider cannot ever be fully resolved but will remain one of the troubling issues for research (Acker, 2000: 11).

However, someone who expands further on this idea of 'work at the borders of the boxes' is Fine (1994) who provides a strong critique of qualitative research. She argues it has reproduced a discourse of 'Othering' and illustrates this by saying:

> 'when we look, get involved, demur, analyze, interpret, probe, speak, remain silent, walk away, organize for outrage, or sanitize our stories, and we construct our texts in or on their words, we decide how to nuance our relations with/for/despite those who have been deemed Others…When we write…as if **they** were a homogeneous mass…and as if we were neutral transmitters of voices and stories' (Fine, 1994 as quoted in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 74, emphasis in the original).

For Fine (1994), Self and Other is not just a 'simple binary opposition' but rather she sees them as 'knottily entangled' and that researchers are 'always implicated at the hyphen'. Nevertheless, she points out researchers fail to recognise the hyphen, deny it, or hide under 'a veil of neutrality or objectivity' and make themselves transparent by carrying 'no voice, body, race, class, or gender' (Fine, 1994 as quoted in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 71-75). Fine (1994) goes on to suggest an alternative approach which she referred to as 'working the hyphen' which she characterises as the process when:

> 'researchers probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations…creating occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is, and is not, 'happening between', within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence' (Fine, 1994 as quoted in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 72, emphasis in the original).

Fine (1994) also highlights that working the hyphen will result in researchers revealing more of themselves and playing with 'blurred boundaries', which, in turn, produces '*better* data' (Fine, 1994 as quoted in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 72, emphasis in the original). Like Acker (2000), she concludes 'our work will never 'arrive' but must always struggle 'between'' (Fine, 1994 as quoted in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 75, emphasis in the original).

I particularly loved Fine's (1994) approach of working the hyphen and the imagery she used of seeing Self and Other as 'knottily entangled', but I was greatly surprised and delighted when I discovered Buckle and Dwyer (2009). They also challenge this dichotomy of insider and/or outsider by suggesting that to portray these concepts in a dualistic manner in other words, either/or is too simplistic. Their argument for this is that 'membership in a group does not denote complete sameness within that group. Likewise, not being a member of a group does not denote complete difference'. Instead, they adopt Fay's (1996) notion of a 'dialectical approach' which does not see these concepts as absolute nor does it view their relationship as antagonistic (Fay, 1996: 224 as quoted in Buckle and Dwyer, 2009: 60). Also, they point out that 'as qualitative researchers, we have an appreciation for the fluidity and multi-layered complexity of human experience' (Buckle and Dwyer, 2009: 60). Buckle and Dwyer go on to build on Fay's (1996) theory and propose 'the notion of the space between' insider and outsider. They advocate that foundational to this is the idea that:

> 'To be considered the same or different requires reference to another person or group. Fay (1996) noted that each requires the other: 'There is no self-understanding without other-understanding' (Fay, 1996: 241)' (Buckle and Dwyer, 2009: 60).

What I found so exciting about Buckle and Dwyer's (2009) approach was that they continue by drawing on the work of Aoki (1996) and his 'third space' paradigm. Using his theory, they claim:

> '*insider* and *outsider* are understood as a binary of two separate pre-existing entities, which can be bridged or brought together to conjoin with a hyphen. This hyphen can be viewed not as a path but as a dwelling place for people. This hyphen acts as a third space, a space between, a space of paradox, ambiguity, and ambivalence, as well as conjunction and disjunction' (Buckle and Dwyer, 2009: 60, emphasis in the original).

Buckle and Dwyer (2009), therefore, conclude 'There are complexities inherent in occupying the space between' and, given this, maybe researchers 'can only ever occupy the space between' (Buckle and Dwyer, 2009: 61).

Re-discovering Aoki's (1996) 'dwelling place' and 'third space' paradigm, I felt as if I had come full circle. Suddenly it made sense to me that, once again, the question of insider or

outsider or even insider-outsider was situated in, and being examined from, the Western fragmented binary paradigm. Whereas Aoki's (1996) 'tensioned space of both 'and/not-and'' opened up 'a generative space of possibilities, a space wherein in tensioned ambiguity newness emerges' (Aoki, 1996, as quoted in Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 318). I felt as if I had come home. But despite this, nothing could have prepared me for what was to come next.
This was a poem I wrote when I started to explore the qualitative research literature.

Through The Curtain

I turned the page.
A simple action.
It only took a moment
And yet, it changed everything.

It was like peeking behind a curtain.
No one saw me.
No one heard me
Not even my Westie, asleep.

Gazing at the words no, staring!
Captivated by the ideas.
But gradually, it turns into an addiction,
Another page turned, and another.

The words washed over me
Like cool raindrops on a hot spring day.
I lifted my head and opened my mouth.
Now, they were in me, a part of me.

Disciplines crossed; genres blended.
Discourses blurred; categories disappeared.
No one told me, no one warned me.
There's no going back now!

Researching a storytelling community

> *"Come, let's hear some of **your** adventures."* (The Gryphon added).
> *"I could tell you my adventures – beginning from this morning,"*
> said Alice a little timidly, *"but it's no use going back to yesterday,*
> *because I was a different person then."*
> (Carroll, 1865/2017: 146, emphasis in the original).

Focus groups have been defined as 'a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research' (Powell et al, 1996: 499, as quoted in Gibbs, 1997). But Morgan (1997) has pointed out that the distinction between focus groups and group interviews is the former relies on the interaction that takes place between the members of the group (Morgan 1997: 12, as quoted in Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups have also been used in a variety of ways within research, as part of a mixed-method approach or as a stand-alone case study. Morgan and Kreuger (1993) have identified that they are 'particularly useful…when the everyday use of language and culture of particular groups is of interest' (Morgan and Kreuger, 1993, as quoted in Gibbs, 1997).

There was already a precedent for using focus groups in CCD, as Susan had adopted them in her research and noted that the data produced by them was 'surprisingly rich' (Williams, 2007: 13). She also highlighted the importance CCD members placed on the use of narratives, as she found that, although the leadership team had encouraged members to tell their story, they had subsequently come to value this (Williams, 2002: 52). But, more than this, Susan discovered:

> 'individuals chose to 'tell my story' as a way of introducing Christ Church, rather than speaking directly about the church itself…and the impact the community had on their own lives' (Williams, 2002: 51, emphasis in the original).

Likewise, Clarke (2010), who had also carried out some research on CCD ('how everyday social interactions facilitate personal change in the lives of a therapeutic community'), corroborated the value CCD members placed on storytelling. But more significantly still, she

identified how the practice of storytelling contributed to the process of personal change (Clarke, 2010: 1). I will expand on this in the chapter **How change happens.**

At the time I carried out my research there were a variety of groups and forums held within CCD as I mentioned previously in the chapter **Interweaving narratives** and all of them enabled members to share their stories. Alongside this, as Susan mentioned, members tended to share their stories with newcomers or visitors as a way of introduction and they regularly shared their testimonies on Sunday mornings. Given all of this, I was confident that the members would feel comfortable having these small group discussions and as Susan identified focus groups suited 'the *modus operandi* of CCD' (Williams, 2002: 119, emphasis in the original).

However, I was aware that by the time I was carrying out my focus groups most members had been part of the community for several years and some for over fifteen years. This meant that over the years the members had engaged in numerous 'everyday practices of care and emotional investment' which Gabb identifies as one of the factors that constitute a family (Gabb, 2009: 37). This can be epitomised by the fact that we had 'grown up' together, lived together, become partners, and supported each other in getting married, having children, and getting divorced. We had cared for each other's children and pets, we had fallen out with each other, had reconciled, had supported each other in moving house and we grieved lost ones together. We celebrated together all of our significant life events together like the first day at school or university as well as, our smaller achievements and our birthdays. We cried together, laughed together, danced together, helped each other with our past trauma, ate together, washed up together, drank tea or coffee together (lots of it!) and, of course, had changed together. This, coupled with the fact that some members had significant damage from their biological family meant that it wasn't surprising that many frequently referred to CCD as their family. This was also my experience and perspective. But Sharma (2012) discovered this same phenomenon when she looked at 'the ways geographies of family and religion intersect' and found how people create meaning and belonging during personal change (Sharma, 2012: 828). In particular, she identified how some 'experienced intimacy typically associated with immediate family' (Sharma, 2012: 822).

In view of all of this, I realised I was not only looking at a completely different landscape from when Susan had conducted her research but also, one in which I was fully immersed.

This was most clearly illustrated by the fact that she had changed one of her groups because the 'members had a history together and (she) didn't want the 'friendship pairs' (Morgan, 1988: 44) to influence the discussion' (Williams, 2002: 119). Whereas conversely, I was conscious that given the changes and complexities of the members' current relationships it would be impossible for there not to be an emotional 'messiness' within the room (Gabb, 2009: 37). Also, Millward (2012) has highlighted that there is a debate within the social sciences as to 'whether members who already know each other produce better quality data than a group of strangers' (Millward, 2012 as quoted in Breakwell et al., 2012: 418). She takes the view that a shared history can facilitate openness by offering validation (Millward, 2012 as quoted in Breakwell, 2012: 425). So, I felt reassured that rather than this being a problem this history and messiness could, in fact, be an asset and I was in good company.

Having recognised the relationships between the members were complex and woven together I turned to the literature on research with families. Gabb (2010) has written extensively on this and provides a critique of the idea that this type of research causes 'harm'. She argues that the terms such as 'harm' and 'distress', have been fundamentally misunderstood by 'cojoining' them (Gabb, 2010: 11). Gabb supports this perspective by referring to Holloway and Jefferson's (2008) claim that 'talking about emotionally significant events can be highly distressing for some individuals but that being distressed in this way is quite distinct from being harmed' (Holloway and Jefferson, 2008 as quoted in Gabb, 2010: 11). Gabb (2010) goes on to dispute that the participant has been put 'at-risk' by recalling events they have experienced. Instead, she cites Holloway and Jefferson (2008) to argue it can be 'reassuring and therapeutic to talk about any upsetting event in a safe context' (Holloway and Jefferson, 2008: 87 as quoted in Gabb, 2010: 6 &10). But she does recognise this type of research is not without its' problems, in particular, confidentiality as, 'it is extremely difficult to conceal the identity of someone from those around them – those who know their story' (Gabb, 2010: 8). Clarke (2010) also found this to be the case in her research on CCD (Clarke, 2010: 33). Despite its issues Gabb (2010) still puts forward a defence for this type of research by saying:

> 'participants are not powerless in research: they can choose to delimit disclosure, close down streams of thought, steer away from personal stories and redirect the narrative' (Gabb, 2010: 11).

Reflecting on this I felt that CCD members were very practised at talking about upsetting events in a safe context and even those situations that some may regard as less safe such as CoC peer reviews and Rapha workshops. In fact, some members of other TCs who had visited us for these peer reviews had often commented on the courage and vulnerability of members who had shared their stories simply by way of introduction. I was also encouraged by Kitzinger (1994) who found there were additional advantages to participants who already knew each other which other groups didn't have such as they were able to:

> 'relate each other's comments to actual incidents in their shared daily lives. They often challenged each other on contradictions between what they were professing to believe and how they actually behaved' (Kitzinger, 1994: 105).

Whilst Valentine (1999) identified the benefit of the dynamics within family groups is that they 'can encourage spontaneous further discussion, providing richer, more detailed, and validated accounts'. She also observed that they 'corroborate each other's stories or challenge what they consider to be inaccuracies in the other's response' (Valentine, 1999: 146). So, again I felt I was on firm ground going forward.

How I selected my sampling frame

The first thing I did was to decide how to select my sampling frame. At the point of my data collection, I was very aware that CCD was in a transition period. It had recently formed a working party to review its membership, which had for the first time in its history written a new membership policy. Given how radical this was from its organic roots the leadership team had decided to continue to operate the old criteria whilst also concurrently adopting the new policy for a period of time. As mentioned in the chapter **Interweaving narratives,** the original practice had simply been to be on the address list. Consequently, I felt uncomfortable relying solely on either method. Also, as previously mentioned in this chapter there was the 'fringe' but given the complexity of this group the Trustees requested that I not include them. So, in the end, I decided to construct my own sampling frame criteria. Given the amount of movement from those arriving, leaving, and shifting backwards and forwards to and from the fringe it meant the membership was in a constant state of flux. I knew, therefore, that this would be no small task.

After a lot of consideration, I opted for those who were on the address list but who were also attending the Sunday morning service. I felt this combination more accurately reflected those who were 'active' members even if they hadn't chosen yet to formally join under the new policy. Also, I believed it resolved the issue of any newcomers who were regularly attending but again, hadn't decided yet if they wanted to be on the address list. Although this reduced my total sampling frame to forty-seven it had allowed for an additional eight who had not committed themselves to the new policy. I appreciated that by creating this criterion it would possibly skew the results toward a more positive perspective of CCD, but I felt this was less of an issue for me as my focus was on what makes CCD work. I was, of course, also obliged to respect the Trustees' request to not contact any potential former members. Added to this, although several of the children and young people have publicly told their stories of the significance of CCD and how it has helped them to change, I chose not to include them. This was primarily because they do not engage in the formal therapeutic processes or other community meetings but rather are provided with separate age-related activities and/or individual support.

Once I had selected my sampling frame, I attempted to encourage everyone to attend by carrying out a power-point presentation during one of the Sunday morning services explaining the background to my research. I also carried out a further presentation during one of the community meetings and hand-delivered a personal invitation requesting them to reply as soon as possible. As a result, one member didn't respond, three initially accepted but then were later unable to make the actual dates, and two declined. Of those that declined one was due to their mental health difficulties and the other felt they were still too new to CCD. The rest were happy to accept. Alongside this group of members, I also decided to include a group of associate members living in the Midlands which had been well-established for several years. One couple had known Peter and Susan before the birth of CCD and had been associate members from its inception. Two other couples had previously lived as part of the community for approximately five years and then moved for better employment opportunities. The other couple had visited numerous times and had a long-term association with the community. Added to this, all the women were part of the local Rapha Journey support group which met once a month and contacted each other outside of these meetings. They were also in regular contact with other members of CCD. Over the years, the couples had intermittently socialised with each and therefore, the men knew each other even if not as well as the women. Although I was aware they were not involved in carrying out everyday

practices of care for each other I believed the depth with which they had shared their journeys with each other was equivalent to substantial emotional investment. I, therefore, formed them as their own focus group.

How I managed my focus groups

So, having established how I was going to select my sampling frame I then decided how I was going to manage these groups. Initially, I thought I would conduct the groups as self-managed just as Susan had (Williams, 2002: 119), but during my research of the literature, I had been struck by Kanuha's (2000) experience. She noticed that each time a respondent knowingly implied that she understood what they were talking about she would ask them to clarify or elaborate which in turn, 'uncovered richer and more intricate analyses' (Kanuha, 2000: 443). Similarly, I was mindful that CCD had in some respects its own language. Because of my inside status as a member, I was obviously familiar with this but also, given my outsider status as a mental health professional I had often been asked to translate certain terminology for members of other TCs during peer reviews. So, on reflection, I chose to adopt more of a moderating role as I felt this would allow me to clarify any unique phrases and concepts. Also, Morgan (1998) makes the distinction between those groups where the researcher is only regulating the questions and those groups where the moderator is managing the group dynamics. He goes on to point out that 'groups can be structured on the one axis and unstructured on the other' (Morgan, 1998 as quoted by Toll, 2013). So, I decided I would adopt a combination of the two by, on the one hand, choosing the questions and clarifying terminology whilst on the other hand, not intervening to manage the group dynamics.

However, my experience with the first group namely, the associate members in the Midlands, caused me to fundamentally rethink my strategy. In the beginning, I was very aware of their language and so clarified certain words and phrases such as, "cult", "chaotic", and "it's a safe place". I also used follow-up questions to try to encourage them to expand their ideas for instance, in response to "I found the women at CCD bloody scary!" (Nicholas-5-1) I asked, "what was scary about them?". But despite my best intentions like Kanuha (2000), I also soon found my inside status was a challenge. She had later identified times when she hadn't required respondents to clarify specific phrases because she knew implicitly what they were referring to (Kanuha, 2000: 442). I discovered I too had fallen into the same trap, for example, the members assumed correctly that I understood the terms 'baggage', 'living in the real world' and, 'doing homework' and I did not ask them to qualify what these meant.

When I later reflected on this group, I recognised this ‘knowing’ (Kanuha, 2000: 442) had resulted in a significant reduction in my participation, which in turn, appeared to change the dynamic in the group. The members became more obviously relaxed and started to interject and build on each other’s ideas. They even at one point engaged in their own spontaneous discussion, which in fact became quite heated. So, it looked to me as if the more I withdrew, conversely the more animated the group became. I, therefore, felt on balance the advantages of the group having the freedom to develop their own dynamic without my intervention far outweighed the disadvantages. Consequently, I decided to change my approach and to self-manage the other groups.

Once I had decided on my approach, I then had to consider the size of the groups. I was aware there is a debate in the literature about what constitutes a focus group's right size. Millward (2012) has pointed out that although the average is nine some advocate the ideal size is between six and eight participants (Millward, 2012 as quoted in Breakwell et al., 2012: 425). Morgan (1997) on the other hand, prefers to treat focus groups as ‘a broad umbrella or a big tent that can include many different variations’ (Morgan, 1997: 6). I had, originally, opted for eight groups of approximately eight participants in each as this was the size of the women’s discipleship groups so I felt confident the members would feel comfortable with this. Although six were not able to attend on the day and a further six were unable to make their particular time slot so I had to make some adjustments. In the end, I had two groups of seven, three groups of six, two groups of five, one group of four and one group of three. Susan had used groups of seven and four but found the smaller ones were more effective because ‘they listened to each other more carefully, asking questions of each other and giving more protracted answers’ (Williams, 2002: 121). Given this, I was hopeful that even my smallest group would be useful.

Next, I had to choose the composition of the groups. Even though, historically, there had emerged within CCD a culture of gender exclusiveness in relation to its therapeutic process at the time I held my focus groups there were not any discipleship groups for women and nearly all other community meetings were mixed. So, I resolved to hold my focus groups as mixed believing this mirrored the culture of the community. But I observed during my first group that the men appeared to be more dominant than the women. Jordan et al. (1992) also found this for example the men were ‘more likely to be overbearing or to interrupt’ (Jordan et al.,

1992 as quoted by Arksey, 1996). Likewise, Milliard (2012) draws on Stewart & Shamdasani (1990) to also acknowledge this trend:

> 'There is mounting evidence that males and females interact differently in mixed-sex as opposed to same-sex groups and this has prompted some to suggest that focus group sessions should be homogenous in terms of gender (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990)' (Millward, 2012 as quoted in Breakwell et al, 2012: 424).

So, taking this into account, I re-structured my other groups to be gender exclusive which gave me five groups of women and two of men.

Following on from this, I had to establish whether to randomly select or structure my participants. As previously mentioned in the chapter **Interweaving narratives,** I was very aware that for several reasons there had been a significant watershed in the history of CCD in 2005 and immediately after. Some members had discussed in community meetings the differences in their experiences before and after this period with those who had come after 2005 feeling, that there had been less support available for them. This, in turn, had left them feeling it had been harder to make progress on their journey of healing, and they had struggled to feel they belonged to the community. Also, I found at the beginning of the first focus group the discussion seemed hindered as they had had their first contact at significantly different times which gave them little common ground. Given this disparity, I decided to structure the groups according to when they first had contact with CCD and/or Rapha and/or Peter and Susan. The first group I selected I referred to as the 'founding mothers' as it included women who were instrumental in the birth of CCD or who arrived within the first two years. The second group comprised primarily of the next generation of women dating from 2000 up to 2004. The third group consisted of the remaining generations dating from 2004 up to the present. I also had two groups of men, one parallel to the women containing the 'founding fathers' and the other incorporating those from 2003 up to the present. Alongside this, I had two other groups of women whom I did not rank chronologically. One group combined all the women who had taken 'time out' for a significant period but unlike the fringe, they had now fully re-connected. My rationale for this was to know how their 're-entry' impacted them if at all. The other group incorporated women who had connected with CCD but then chose to commute some distance over several years before making the move to

Deal. This unique experience again made them substantially different from the other groups which I believed was worth exploring.

Afterwards, I addressed the practicalities. I was aware that the location was going to be key to helping the members feel at ease and so other than the first group I choose Waterfront as the venue. As I mentioned in the chapter **Interweaving narratives** the members were well used to meeting there for meetings, individual sessions with Peter and Susan and social gatherings. For the first group I elected to use the house belonging to one of the couples because again, it was a familiar place to all of them. It was where the women held their discipleship group meetings each month and where all the couples socialised together from time to time. Also, I aimed for the whole discussion to take approximately two hours as I was conscious that Bloor et al. (2002) warned about the dangers of going beyond this time limit. They noted that the fatigue of the participants meant the likelihood of any useful information being produced beyond this point was significantly reduced. Likewise, Susan had found in her groups that the participants wanted to finish after ninety minutes (Williams, 2002: 105).

Additionally, I planned to record the sessions and transcribe the tapes later even though I was aware Glaser (1998) fundamentally disagrees with this method. He argues the many deficits 'far outweigh any benefits' for example, the researcher being overwhelmed with unnecessary data, time wasted whilst the taping is transcribed and verified for accuracy, the researcher's observations are lost as the focus becomes the words of the participants, and it acts as a block to creativity (Glaser, 1998: 107). In essence, Glaser's view of taping is that it is counterintuitive to grounded theory, as the goal is to generate theory rather than 'producing the verbatim, accurate data for verification of the descriptions' (Glaser, 1998: 113). But I was, of course, acutely aware of my insider status and my priority was to distinguish between the members' stories and my story. Also, because I had planned to hold the groups in Deal one after the other to prevent contamination, I knew there wouldn't be time for me to write any field notes immediately after each one. So, there was no easy solution as there were risks with either approach.

Finally, I then designed my topics and questions. I chose four different themes or topics and then within each section I had two or three questions, so in total, I had ten questions. I ordered them in a way that followed a typical progression of someone's journey through CCD from their initial experiences to their choice to stay. The first set focussed on when

someone was arriving or having their first contact and therefore covered their expectations, initial impressions, and in particular the differences between CCD and their previous churches. Whilst the second set looked at what were their more favourable and difficult experiences for example, what they valued about CCD, what they had found hard, and in hindsight what they would like to have known before they arrived. Also, given the importance, the members placed on change in Susan's research the third set explored what had helped them to change and what role if any the teaching had played in this. Furthermore, I had one specific question tailored to each of the two groups that were not ranked chronologically which focussed on their impressions and experiences either following their time out or before they moved to Deal. Lastly, I was conscious that in Susan's research someone from one of her focus groups had pointed out that the discussion had only focussed on the positive aspects of CCD (Williams, 2002: 120) so I added in what they would like to change about CCD. But after the first group, I realised that the questions about change had assumed that the members had changed so, I altered this to when and how did CCD impact you. Also, given how much the discussion evolved it took significantly longer for them to answer all the questions than I had anticipated so I reduced the number to seven. Despite all this planning, nothing could have prepared me for what came next.

Taken by surprise

> *'"Which is the more important,"* asked Big Panda, *"the journey or the destination?"*
> *"The company,"* said Tiny Dragon'
> (Norbury, 2021: 12).

Reflections on group 1

When I undertook the first focus group, I believe I was more nervous than any of the other members although it later became apparent it was a hesitant start for all of us. Initially, they seemed to address their responses directly to me almost as if I was conducting individual interviews. Yet, by the second question, they appeared to have got into the swing of things and I was struck by how quickly a 'group consensus' (Kitzinger, 1994: 109) developed. They were obviously nodding their heads in agreement, commenting "that's right" and interjecting

with similar thoughts. Also, throughout the discussion, several of them used humour although at one point this turned into wisecracks. But again, this was something they participated in together by sparring with one another and didn't seem in any way to be detrimental to the group's cohesiveness. Additionally, there was an occasion when one of the members cried and although I offered them some time out, they were happy to continue. They even expressed the notion that they had grown accustomed to CCD's culture of members openly expressing their feelings within groups.

Over time it became obvious that the group had grown its own synergy and the members felt comfortable posing their own questions to each other. Also, they were not afraid to disagree with one another and at one point there developed quite a heated debate. Although on the one hand, this made me feel slightly uneasy, on the other, I was pleased with how quickly the group appeared to have generated a life of its own. However, what took me by surprise was the impact on me from some of their more challenging experiences of CCD, for instance:

> *"it was the honesty in the relationships umm that people were just so brutal (they all laugh) for want of a better word in, in just saying it how it is. But you know it wasn't always, sometimes you did get the honesty without the love or the grace that could be very painful"* (Jeremy-4-2).

This scenario was not unfamiliar to me, as during the CoC annual review process and in some of CCD's community meetings, there had often been lively and passionate discussions about some of the flaws and mistakes that had been made. Also, I couldn't disagree with what these members were saying, far from it as much of it resonated with me from my own experience. Yet, there was something about this context that threw me. All of them were describing the rawness of how they had been hurt but, in that moment, I realised as I had been a part of CCD at that time, I had played a part in this. So, they were in effect talking about me! Suddenly, it felt like any part of me that was an outsider looking on vanished, revealing only me as an insider and even that person was now fully exposed. I became extremely self-conscious, embarrassed, ashamed, and of course, remorseful, confronted about my contribution to all this. These were, after all, my friends; my family whom I had deeply hurt. It seemed as if this research focus group had somehow transformed into a reconciliation meeting where the victims were now telling their stories to their abuser.

When I think back to that turning point, I guess it was the years of experience from practicing as a social worker that enabled me to somehow continue without alerting others. Even though I felt I had just been rocked to my core there was still a job to do. I regained my composure and struggled to find within me whatever part of me was the researcher. What struck me was these members recounted this aspect of their experience no differently than any other part and even reflected on it with some amusement. Likewise, whilst I was still reeling, they behaved towards me as if nothing had happened. Far from it, they were all extremely positive about the whole experience. It seemed to me as if I was somehow in a parallel universe where I was the only one left shocked, confused, and saddened. So, what I had hoped was going to be a beautiful moment, had now been tinged by this other raw reality.

It took me quite a while to process all of this but, then, that was not the end of it. Following this, I set about transcribing the tape. I had hoped if I could analyse the results to enable me to be better informed to conduct my other groups and best understand where to focus my questions. But whenever I re-listened to the recording it felt as if I was emotionally back in that room and reliving the experience all over again. I felt like Scrooge being led back in time by the Ghost of Christmas past to watch my former self (Dickens, 1843/2021: 46) and now having seen this new perspective I couldn't unsee it. I could no longer listen to their stories and celebrate along with them the positive impact CCD had had on us let alone, listen to them through the eyes of a researcher and see my data. Every time I heard it, I felt the same shock and was overwhelmed by the same feelings even though I now knew what was coming. I was still jolted by the same disturbing reality – they are talking about me! So, over, and over it felt like the same accusations were being hurled against me, and again and again I felt the same guilt, remorse, and sadness.

Once more it took me some time to process this and during this period, I felt a disconnection from CCD. Suddenly, it was as if the insider part of me was in a head-on collision with the outsider part and even my insider self was in conflict with itself. But for the first time since I had been at CCD, I wasn't able to share this trauma with fellow members. Although I was fortunate enough to have a friend that I could talk to whom I had deliberately not included within my sample because she had been so involved with my research from the outset and knew too much to be part of my focus groups. Also, Susan had been appointed by the Trustees to have oversight of my research on behalf of the community and therefore, was an additional support for me.

Given how emotive this material now was to me it shouldn't have been a surprise that once I had transcribed the tape, I discovered I couldn't analyse it and yet, it still was. I will expand on why and this part of the process more fully later in the chapter on **Finding a way through** but for now, I will address how the rest of my focus groups went. Saying that it is important to note in the months that followed I was significantly impeded from continuing my research at all for various reasons relating to my job and my family. Consequently, it was well over a year before I was able to carry out the remainder of my groups. When I did get to conduct them, because of the length of time in between it felt to me as if I was coming to the process afresh, which might account for my second surprise.

The next two groups included the women from the first few generations. Each had a couple of members who couldn't attend their time slot on the day, so I swapped them over, which in the main seemed to work. Although in one of the groups there was a point when this slight difference seemed to jar. One of the other members in the group had referred to a scenario and the two members I had slotted in reacted sharply and in unison, "I wasn't here for that". Despite this, the group appeared to get over this bump quickly and overall, there was great camaraderie between them and lots of times of laughter.

Interestingly, only about five members of the focus groups explicitly referred to the fact they were part of a research process. One was clearly the most nervous, felt uncomfortable talking about other members, and at one point commented she didn't want something to "go on tape". Also, a few members alluded to it jokingly such as, "we'll have to wait for the PhD to be printed to really get our heads around it". Whilst another member appeared to ask follow-up questions and clarification from time to time to remarks that they would have known the answer to. By contrast, one member seemed to overlook the context completely, so, when they were struggling to describe a situation, they turned round to me and said, "you know what I'm on about don't you?" This completely threw me, so I struggled to reply. But, in general, my observations were that most members were not conscious of the research process once the discussions evolved.

One of the biggest differences I noticed between the men's and the women's groups was that one woman became quite emotional in nearly every group. These members were supported at the time by the others in the group and one group chose to have some time out for a while to

enable the person to compose themselves. These women along with others also made use of talking with either myself or my friend who acted as extra support immediately after the group. These moments always seemed to be triggered by the person recounting how difficult their life was just before arriving at CCD. Against these poignant moments, all the groups engaged in times of banter and laughter. Although those that had a long history together encountered significantly more laughter and banter than the other groups. Mostly their hilarity occurred when they reminisced about shared past situations in CCD or from their previous church experiences. During these times, each person in the group would chip in to add another dimension to the story. Alternatively, often someone would laugh at how their former self was before they changed. Coupled with this, in all the groups the members were not afraid to challenge each other and offer conflicting perspectives.

However, again, what took me by surprise was when some of the members recalled their experiences with the community, they were quite negative. We have often discussed some of CCD's flaws and mistakes as a community, so it was not that in itself. It was more that they were clearly talking about some of the others in the room, including myself. I felt saddened for those who had gone through such a difficult experience and on a couple of occasions, other members responded with this same sentiment "I'm so sorry! If I'd known that, you'd have been so welcome (to come to my house)". But I also felt deeply uncomfortable for the others involved and for my part in any unintended distress. I was conscious that it must have been difficult for those re-telling their distressing stories but, coupled with this, I felt for those who had been involved, as it must have been challenging for them too. Another example of a disjoint within the group was caused by my flexibility with the timeline, which meant I had slotted a couple of members in from a slightly different generation. Amazingly, this too resulted in some of them talking about the other members from a different generation even though they were sitting next to each other. I had not fully appreciated the impact this change would have when I constructed the groups. So, afterwards, I felt a sense of responsibility for having created this disjoint and for possibly opening Pandora's box. Some members chose to receive support from me and my supporter immediately after the group discussion to help them process what had happened. But, I also sought advice from Susan as to whether I should follow up on these conversations. She re-affirmed the condition the Trustees had given me namely, that my research was not to interfere with the community's processes. This meant that, in line with the ethos of CCD on the person taking responsibility,

it was, therefore, for the person concerned to seek out additional help for themselves if they felt they needed it.

Looking back, and given what happened in the first group, it is strange that I was equally ambushed by the other groups. Maybe it was because of the distance between them, or because my focus had been taken up by other priorities, or because so much good had also emerged from group one, or I was just caught up in the moment. But, being faced with the reality that these members were at times talking about me nevertheless provoked all the same emotions. More than this, because of my role as a researcher I wasn't in a position to stop the group and respond to these members in the way that I would have ordinarily wanted to. So, it felt like the part of me that was an outsider was trying to silence the other part of me that was an insider. Also, not forgetting that of course, I had the additional difficulty of then transcribing the tapes and re-living this trauma over and over. So, unlike Scrooge, it felt like I was repeatedly visited by the Ghost of the past. This experience had a significant impact on me, but little did I know what was yet to unfold.

Finding a way through

> 'after going a few yards along the path, and turning several sharp corners… *"how curiously it twists! It's more like a corkscrew than a path!"*(said Alice to herself)...wandering up and down, and trying turn after turn, but always coming back to the house…
>
> So, resolutely…she set out once more down the path determined to keep straight on till she got to the hill… she was just saying, *"I really shall do it this time - "* when the path gave a sudden twist and shook itself… *"Oh, it's too bad!"* she cried…
>
> so there was nothing to be done but start again… she thought she would try the plan, this time, of walking in the opposite direction. It succeeded beautifully.'
> (Carroll, 1871/2015: 34, 35 & 39).

I had decided when I changed my research question that I was going to use Glaser's (1992, 1998) method of grounded theory to analyse my data. Although I did appreciate that I had already moved away from this in its purest form as Glaser recommends that the researcher should not review any of the literature within the area under study (Glaser, 1992: 31). I also resolved not to use a software package but rather to code by hand and to do so line by line 'closely examining phrases, words, or sentences' as Glaser recommends (Glaser, 1992: 48). Saying that I did briefly explore Charmaz's (2009) technique, but I found her principle of having to use an 'action' word to be too restrictive for example, 'feeling forced to live one day at a time' and 'concentrating on today'(Charmaz, 2009: 48 & 58). So, I adopted a more unstructured, instinctive, and creative approach which is more in line with Glaser's approach.

Unfortunately, my analysis was interrupted for a while due to some family issues. But when I returned to focus on my data again just like before I discovered that whenever I read the transcript, I was suddenly emotionally back in the room. I realised I was having to revisit the trauma all over again and felt I could not face it. Given this predicament, it was not surprising that I couldn't code. "Code? Really? What is a code?!" The content of my data was too overwhelming and too confusing. Inside me, there was just a cacophony of voices – the members' voices in addition to all the different parts of me all jumbled up together. Sometimes I would stare at the words and understand exactly what they were saying. They resonated so strongly with me that it felt like they were my words. This deep connection between the members and me reminded me of the moment in the film 'E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial' when Elliot feels whatever E.T. is feeling to the point that he starts acting this out (Spielberg, 1982). Whilst, at other times, it felt like I could not focus on what they were saying because what they said had such a profound impact on me. Still, at other times what they said jarred with me as they talked about me or the others in the room. It felt like the discord that happens in jazz music when the melody is suddenly interrupted by syncopation. In the same way, the 'us' that existed between the members and me was abruptly separated into a 'them and me'. Each time I was jolted out of my seat!

No matter how hard I tried I just couldn't speak this new language of coding and translating the meaning of the members' words. Somehow my relationship with my data had become so 'knottily entangled' (Fine, 1994: 72) I was now at an impasse. No matter how much of an

asset my inside status had been to me so far, it was clear to me it was now an obstacle. But I was not alone as mentioned previously in the chapter **Re-discovering the new paradigm** Kanuha (2000) had a similar experience (Kanuha, 2000: 443). On the one hand, I was deeply connecting with my data whilst, on the other, I was simultaneously backing off both emotionally and analytically. It was just too confusing being bombarded by all my different responses on so many levels. I felt like I was continually banging my head against a brick wall and couldn't see a way forward. I was extremely frustrated and, in my despair, felt like giving up.

Once again, I sought help from Susan who identified that what I was doing was trying to silence all my different voices so I could hear my participants' voices. Methodologically, to obtain rigorous objective analysis this was the right thing to do. But Susan suggested a radically contrasting approach which required me to listen to each of my voices and how they were interacting with my data. It felt like I was almost treating myself as an additional participant. Also, now I knew the exercise was to fully climb back into my data I decided to re-listen to the recordings of the focus groups rather than simply read the transcript. This helped me to deeply connect emotionally not only with my data but with myself.

Using this new technique felt to me like I was homing in on one instrument at a time within an orchestra. Firstly, the violin, then the piano, then the drums and so on. I was then able to discover that one of my selves was the person who was experiencing mental health difficulties and came to CCD for help. Another one of my selves was the friend in the story a participant was talking about. Another was the self who was on the leadership team at the time when a certain situation happened to which the participant was referring. Likewise, another was the self who was on the workshop team during the period the participants were talking about. Another was the self who is a mental health social worker and therefore, implicated by association with the participants' negative experiences of mental health services. Finally, there was the self who was a researcher consciously observing and analysing her friends, her 'family', and herself at the same time.

Each one of my voices added another layer of complexity until all I could hear was the noise of them interacting together. It was almost as if all the different voices inside of me wouldn't let me move on until each one of them had been acknowledged and listened to. Giving my various voices permission and an outlet by using memos brought them all out into the open

for me. Memos are simply writing down anything which captures an idea from a few words to a whole paragraph or page so that the idea is not lost (Glaser, 1998: 178)

It undid the confusion and emotional logjam within me that had caused me to shut down. Buckle and Dwyer (2009) also identified the impact analysis can have on the researcher:

> 'we are firmly in all aspects of the research process and essential to it. The stories of participants are immediate and real to us; individual voices are not lost in a pool of numbers. We carry these individuals with us as we work with the transcripts. The words, representing experiences, are clear and lasting. We cannot retreat to a distant "researcher" role. Just as our personhood affects the analysis, so, too, the analysis affects our personhood. Within this circle of impact is the space between' (Buckle and Dwyer, 2009: 61).

From this new place, I was then able to code all my memos which included participants' voices, my voices, and the interaction between all these voices. As I moved on, it felt as if I now had the capacity to interact with my data in a whole new way. However, the new problem this caused for me was the volume of data and the length of time it took me to carry out this method. But, as time went on, I was able to more clearly recognise each of my voices and better manage my reactions to their voices, which meant I didn't always need to stop to write them down. I only reverted back to this method if I hit another logjam or if I felt that my reaction or my own experience within CCD, which it was connecting with, was particularly pertinent to that code.

I hope I made it clear in the previous chapter **The adventure** that it had never been my intention to have my personal experience as the central focus of this research. Although I was, of course, aware that by virtue of my inside status as a complete member and studying my 'own people' this research sits within the genre of autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner, 2000 as quoted in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 734 and 739). Yet, the journey this new approach took me on was far more reflexive than I had initially anticipated that it felt to me as if I had tumbled into a new place by accident rather like the way Alice unexpectedly found herself in the middle of a chess game (Carroll, 1871/2015: 46). The challenges of looking far more deeply at myself and the interactions between myself and the other members have been eloquently expressed by Ellis and Bochner:

> ‘The self-questioning auto-ethnography demands is extremely difficult. So is confronting things about yourself that are less than flattering…honest autoethnographic exploration generates a lot of fears and doubts – and emotional pain…Then there’s the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you have written or having any control over how readers interpret it…And the ethical issues’ (Ellis and Bochner, 2000 as quoted in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 740 & 738).

This was a significant crossroads for me and my PhD, as I moved from one path which could have potentially derailed my PhD to this new path. I discovered I enjoyed this world of autoethnography so much I even considered momentarily putting my data to one side. But, after some further reflection, I concluded this would be denying my participants their voice which did not sit comfortably with me. Also, having found the key to unlock this door to my data (my memos) and being able to uncover all the ivy that had hidden it for so long (my voices) somehow it felt unsatisfying to not then explore the secrets that lay beyond (Hodgson Burnett, 1911/2018: 68).

It could be argued that this approach is entirely compatible with grounded theory as Glaser (1998) views ‘all is data’, which includes the researcher’s observations, experiences, and biases (Glaser, 1998: 8). So, having found a way through my logjam, I discovered that my ‘core category’ was the ‘doorway’ to CCD as there seemed to be a ‘pattern of behaviour’ for my participants which occurred before they had contact with CCD and a completely different pattern afterwards. Crossing this threshold seemed to have a significant impact on them as it was so fundamentally different from anything they had known before. For some, this was an encounter at one moment in time, whilst for others, it was a more gradual process. But this seemed to be their ‘main concern’, in other words, the problem they were trying to resolve was the transition from the way they had known life before CCD and a completely different way of life they encountered after. For example, the contrast in the type of change they experienced and how change was approached between CCD and their previous church experience. I, therefore, started to carry out ‘selective coding’ by only focusing on the participants’ responses that related to their experiences before or after this threshold. Some of the members’ answers to these questions overlapped each other, which wasn’t surprising as that is the nature of stories, they are not tidy and do not fit in a box. I carried on until I

reached the point of ‘saturation’ which is the point when the theory is ‘complete’ (Glaser, 1992: 75, 1998: 116 & 157).

One of the characteristics I have discovered about myself over the years is that I respond very well to visual and kinesthetic learning styles, meaning that I have learned, by pictures and doing an activity (Vaishnav, 2013: 1). So, once I started to form some categories from my codes, I translated these onto small cards and colour coordinated them. I then stuck them to my dining room wall, which enabled me not only to see them pictorially but also to grasp the bigger picture. I would freely move the pieces, again and again, making new connections between the codes as I gradually formed my theory. But sometimes I would have a eureka moment and see it from a whole other angle. Quickly, I would dismantle the structure to form a whole new picture. My dining room wall became like an artist’s canvas, which I interacted with and became deeply connected to. So, as much as I was excited to discover a new perspective part of me also felt the loss of the old. Also, I could easily see this wall whilst I sat by my desk, and I had to pass it every time on the way to my kitchen. So, every day, and throughout the day, I would see a new piece that I could add or change something to improve it. It felt as if it was a living, breathing organism which was somehow also a part of me. My wall and I had become one with all of its history and stories dating back from 1870.

I wrote this poem, to sum up, this period in my life. I am very fortunate to live right by the sea and I found very early on in my PhD that swimming in it not only helped my thinking but also inspired my poetry. So too did walking my dog, Brodie, first thing in the morning on a golf club near me up on the cliffs. These were the places or spaces (Massey, 2005) where I most felt a profound connection and that ‘I’m not in the place but the place is in me’ (Suopajarvi, 1998). Where, now and again, I would be surprised by a seal as it popped its head up. These were the places where this thesis was written, just as much as it was on my wall or at my desk.

Discovering the path to coding

I had heard stories of this place
Where people spoke their own kind of language
“Codes” and “categories” and “memos”.

I often wondered what it would be like
But somehow, I always managed to miss the boat.

The more I stared at the horizon, longing.
The more I heard about it, read about it, imagined it
The more my heartache grew
Until I couldn't even bear to hear those words.
I covered my ears with my hands and screamed, "stop!"

Then a friend took me down to the shore.
She invited me to take my shoes off and dip my toes in.
Almost immediately a wave completely covered my feet.
The shock of the cold wet water was exhilarating.
As quickly as it had arrived, so it departed.

I stood fascinated
Allowing the sea to come and go of its own free will.
After what seemed an age, I tentatively stepped out
Deeper and deeper with each footstep.
Now I was conscious of the pebbles beneath.

Some, so smooth it was like walking on a palace's marble floor.
Some, so rough the pain was excruciating.
But undeterred I walked slowly on
Deeper and deeper, knees, thighs, waist.
Sometimes stopping, just take it all in.

Not knowing what was ahead
But also knowing I had come too far to stop now.
With a mixture of excitement and all of my courage
I took a deep breath, reached forward, and glided.
Suddenly, I was submerged.

Looking back, it seems obvious now

But somehow at the time, I hadn't realised
This path could also lead me "there".
It wasn't the way others had gone
I was "in" it, part of it, at one with it

Findings and Theory

Revisiting the Salugenic Place

A community of change, which is constantly changing and yet, remains the same.

"What sort of people live about here?" (asked Alice).
"...mad" (the Cat said).
"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.
"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: *"we're all mad here.*
I'm mad. You're mad."
"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.
"You must be," said the Cat, *"or you wouldn't have come here."*
(Carol, 1865/2017: 88 & 90).

As mentioned in the chapter **Interweaving narratives**, CCD has, over the years changed in nearly every way possible which was encapsulated by Belinda:

> *"I think the thing for me is with CCD is that it's a church of change**.** That the minute, the minute we as a group feel we're stagnating there's, there's this response from everybody,"What's happening in CCD something's not, right?!" And, and so, we go through another wave of (everyone laughs), umm transformation (laughs). And, umm you know, sorting it all out and change, again…*
>
> *It feels so nothing ever stays the same and that we've got used to that. And although it gets tricky at times actually, I think we'd rather that than suddenly fall into a rut of, 'This is how we always do it'"* (Belinda-4-2).

Surprisingly, however, I discovered there was one very important way that CCD had remained constant.

I had not set out to do a longitudinal study but, by strategically selecting members for my focus groups according to when they first arrived at CCD or when they had their first contact,

I had inadvertently grouped them chronologically. What emerged from this serendipity was quite interesting. There were two very distinct responses to encountering CCD which appeared across all the groups and therefore, over all the different generations of the members. I will characterise these two responses later in the section **A tale of two communities.** This similarity in responses within each of the groups was quite striking given the diversity of the sample in relation to several categories. There was, for instance, a significant difference in their ages which ranged from twenty-six to seventy-four years old. Both groups included men and women, although the ratio was twice as many women to men. In addition, there were diverse ethnic groups represented for instance dual heritage Romani, White German, White American and dual heritage albeit, the predominant group was White British. Moreover, there was a variety of marital statuses which included single, married, divorced, cohabiting, single parents and widowed. Also, even though the majority had a long church history, they came from a variety of church denominations, for example, the Church of England, Catholic, Baptist, Independent Evangelical, Messianic Judaism and Pentecostal.

Moreover, this congruity pertained, despite the size, profile and the meeting places of CCD having changed quite considerably over the years. From the small nucleus in the beginning:

> *"Yeah, for me it was, umm...it was right at the very, very beginning when people were being called together to meet at Waterfront. And I just felt, umm… I just want to belong to that. I so want to be a part of that"* (Suzanne-1-1).

To a couple of years later:

> *"when I joined the church there was the men. There was a fifty - fifty spilt in numbers between men and women. So, it felt very much like a male church if you like"* (Jeremy-10-4).

And then when CCD had reached its peak in terms of numbers of members:

> *"And when I came here, we were big then. And we were down, not in the hall we're in now but in the next one down… After the Astor… And we were massive"* (Mandy-4-4).

Also, this consistency in their initial responses seemed incompatible with the radical changes to CCD observed by those who had time out. When they later re-engaged with the community, they felt they were experiencing a completely different community from the one they had known before. Karen explains the impact on her because of the change in membership:

> *"while I was gone all my friends left (laughs). So, when I came back, I had to build a whole 'nother network of friends. 'Cause they weren't even* ***here!*** *(laughs). So, it was like, starting completely again"* (Karen-5-1).

Whilst Anthony takes a more holistic and philosophical view of the changes:

> *"I enjoy the aspect that the church is always evolving as a whole. Almost like an organism, it grows, it moves forward like, umm like, seeking. It's hard to describe, you know. I haven't been here very long but even I have seen minute changes or felt it at least, within the church as a whole. Whether that's seasonal or growth I don't know?…remember, my experience within church is limited…*
>
> *Within six months I've already felt a season change here and come back in another six months. But also, that felt like, when I'd come back the season was actually, different from the season before. Because we as people had changed therefore, the church had changed and felt better. If that makes any sense at all?"* (Anthony-5-6).

It would seem this phenomenon continues to be the case. Some members who had moved away from Deal several years previously recently returned and expressed their *"shock"* at how CCD has changed.

Equally unusual to this uniformity of these members' responses was the fact that they were not crossing just one physical location at one point in time. Instead, they were crossing a complex array of thresholds and at different times such as Waterfront, the Astor Theatre, the Boatman's Rooms, and the Landmark Centre. More compelling still, for many of them, the threshold was not necessarily even a physical location but, rather, might simply be meeting a person, for example, a friend or family member who was already associated with CCD or Peter and/or Susan. Another twist was that, for some, the threshold of CCD was attending a

Rapha workshop. So, for them, CCD and Rapha were interchangeable with CCD, as Howard explains:

> *"So, my first contact with CCD was in connection with my first Rapha workshop at Waterfront…sorry to keep saying the Rapha word but I can't separate the two*" (Howard-1-1 & 6-1).

Although the formal discourse also viewed these two entities as inseparable, as Susan made clear as previously mentioned in the chapter **Interweaving narratives,** what was intriguing about these members' responses was that they would not have been aware of this at their first point of contact. Hence, crossing the threshold, or going through the door into CCD as I termed it, became my first theoretical code.

So, despite the magnitude and the multiplicity of changes which CCD has undergone over the years, somehow the place or at least the essence of it, has remained largely unaltered. From the perspective of my inside status, it seemed intuitively obvious to me that there was a quality of CCD which had remained the same even if it was simultaneously, constantly changing and evolving. It was, after all, still able to somehow facilitate change which had, of course, been the inspiration for my research. I will outline what this quality is later in the chapter on the oneness paradigm. More than this, it was clear that the character of the place was somehow so tangible it could be experienced from a single encounter with a community member.

A tale of two communities or the story of one community from two perspectives

'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,
it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,
it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity,
it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness,
it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair'
(Dickens, 2003: 1).

Although there was conformity to members' responses over time, as mentioned above these responses fell into two very distinct groups. Once I mapped these on the wall, this became even more evident, and for me, it was shocking to see the evident contradiction between them. The first group I initially termed the sick selves, as this was how they described themselves. Ellie illustrates this:

> *"And then I moved down here once I got sick. Well, extra sick"* (Ellie-1-5).

This was understandable given the struggle they were having because of significant areas of damage in their lives. This, in turn, impacted their ability to function. Edmund portrays this:

> *"I needed help in areas…areas I'd kind of given up on, never been able to understand before"* (Edmund-1-3 & 2-3).

Many of these sick selves had sought different types of counselling and/or were taking medication. Whilst others were in a similar position to Nancy:

> *"I was having a nervous breakdown then"* (Nancy-2-1).

They were, therefore, either receiving some form of help from mental health services or were on the cusp of doing so. I was aware this self-perception conformed with CCD's official discourse which draws on the biblical perspective that 'we are all fragmented' which, in turn, has meant none of us have reached the 'full potential of our own personhood' (Rapha Journey, 2019: 3). These members seemed to have adopted this teaching. Alex depicts this:

> *"the difference between CCD and any other church I've been into is that we recognise that we're sick…Other churches don't recognise that. They don't believe it"* (Neil-4-27 & 29).

But, to avoid any confusion between these terms, I decided to adopt another phrase several of these members used, namely "messed-up" selves, as Jeremy illustrates:

> *"I had had a mental illness in my past…it wasn't all sorted. And that, actually a lot messed-up, a hell of a lot messed-up*' (Jeremy-2-2).

The messed-up selves who encountered CCD felt they had discovered a place where there were other sick or messed-up people like themselves. Linda conveys this:

> *"it was just a relief to be able to share with other people and to say out loud why I was in the place that I was. Why I had come over. Why I was in the state that I was, umm. And they would tell me their story in return, umm, which uhh. That in itself just felt like, 'oh! I am not the only one'"* (Melanie-2-1).

They also considered it was a place where they felt welcomed, accepted, and safe, as Danielle describes:

> *"no one judges you if, if you don't know what God sounds like. It's just, anything, I don't know. It's like, anyone's accepted, and anything's accepted no matter what your relationship with God"* (Danielle-4-1).

The messed-up selves perceived CCD was a place where others were for me, others listened to me, others understood me, others were there for me, others carried hope for me, and others loved me. Dawn highlights this:

> *"And just being in the ladies' groups and having people believe in me. I think that was probably the biggest impact. People sort of listening. Nobody, telling me to "shut up!" because I was talking crap. People taking an interest in what I had to say. People seeing my potential. Just, breathing life into me really, when I couldn't do that for myself"* (Dawn-4-1).

It was also a place where they experienced a sense of freedom they had not come across before that made them feel free to be themselves, free to make choices, free to make mistakes, free to be where they were at, free to be real, free to engage their emotions, and free to fall apart. Nicholas typifies this:

> *"I think the other thing is that in other church backgrounds there were other things*

going on, which would have been seen to be mistakes. And at CCD you are allowed to make them and you are allowed to make them freely. You didn't have to check out if you felt you wanted, had something to say. You didn't have to check it out first you just said it. And it was ok for some and not ok for others, but it didn't matter. You were free to be able to be who you were.

And if there were things that were evidently wrong, they could be sorted out later, perhaps? But it wasn't important now. As important now and that is very liberating! And yet, in that liberty you did feel safe. And you, if I am going to make a mistake, you know it doesn't matter, really. Because you know I am going to learn anyway; I shall fall forwards rather than fall backwards" (Nicholas-2-1).

Likewise, the messed-up selves recognised that they had found a place where change was possible and others are changing, which in turn helped them to find hope. Edmund recounts his thoughts:

"and thinking, 'Boy!' you know, 'Some, some real work's happened to these folk'. You know and, umm. 'This is really interesting. Can it really happen, umm to anyone including myself?'" (Edmund-3-1).

In complete contrast, I categorised the other group as "functional" selves because this was a phrase echoed by this group, as Sherry explains:

"I didn't come because I was unwell…as a family we were functioning reasonably well" (Sherry-2-7).

But, I also used it because it was the antithesis of how the messed-up selves saw themselves, as Nina portrays:

"I was just, err surviving, really…not functioning" (Nina-2-3 &4-12).

Interestingly, these functional selves believed they had discovered a place where others are sicker than them, selfish, and abusive, as Grant sums up:

> *"A*nd I thought, *"I've made a very big mistake here! This is quite a mess, selfish place, and it doesn't have any structure to it. And it certainly doesn't have the capacity to meet the needs of the people who are in it. There are a lot of very sick people here who are very vulnerable…And there's nothing really here to support it or keep it going"* (Grant-2-1).

Additionally, they felt they were not welcomed, not a priority, judged, on the fringe of things, isolated, not loved, blamed, unsafe, and unsupported as Alison clarifies:

> *"the breaks (at church on a Sunday) were* ***so*** *difficult because I didn't know how to go and talk to people and no one came and talked to me. So, I'd be sitting there on my own…and that was really hard…it was quite excruciating (laughs)"* (Alison-2-1).

Given all of this, these functional selves felt shocked and disappointed, that they didn't fit in, and questioned what sort of place they had come to. So, as Grant previously expressed, this, in turn, led them to conclude they had made a mistake coming to CCD and that they wanted to leave as quickly as possible. Charlie tells his story of this scenario:

> *"Well, it wasn't long before I thought 'what had I done?!' (Mark laughs), umm. It seemed err, it just seemed pretty wild actually I think, umm… And I think, I think after about three weeks I thought, 'Oh I suppose we'll have to go back'"* (Charlie-2-3).

In one sense, it shouldn't have surprised me that there were these two different initial reactions to encountering CCD as this phenomenon had been part of the formal discourse and discussed by the members for many years. For example, Peter explains this paradox at a community meeting:

> "We were forced and had to concede defeat at one point that we did have a TC. There were people who were passionately committed to the TC and some of them didn't want to know the Lord, but they wanted to be part of the TC. And there were others that wanted to be part of the church…
>
> In the church part, we have always had those who loved the congregation but didn't particularly enjoy the idea of being 'sick' or didn't enjoy the idea of being associated

with those who were really sick. We have always honoured that, but it has always been there…. So, we have both and they are separate, but they co-mingle within one another" (CCD: 01.07.2014).

Yet, what was so fascinating about these two viewpoints was the extent to which they were polar opposites and contradicted each other, almost as if they were like magnets repelling. On the one hand, the messed-up selves were conveying:

> *"I was really loved! And it was just, superlative if you like, the amount of care and love I was* given*"* (Carol-2-3).

Whilst, on the other, the functional selves were recounting:

> *"It's very sad (tearful) but I probably felt more unloved when I first came when we were, where we were then, umm than I had in any church previous"* (Mandy-4-8).

This discrepancy extended to every aspect of CCD, for example, the messed-up selves found the implicit expectation to change as encouraging and synonymous with there being the hope of change. Jennifer describes this:

> *"And there was a real. If I say there was a pressure to change, it was a good pressure. It was, it was an encouragement. But more than an encouragement, it was an expectation wasn't it, I think?"* (Jennifer-2-2).

Yet, Charlie, one of the functional selves described this assumption as "a burden" (Charlie-2-1). Similarly, the messed-up selves experienced CCD's apparent chaos and the lack of structure as freedom. Melanie clarifies this:

> "*And so, I think initially, in some ways it was a bit of a relief, umm. Because in the Sunday morning services there is a lot that is going on. There are people crying, there are flags that are waving, there's people speaking in tongues, there's people giving pictures, there's people, there's all sorts. And so, it wasn't regimented. And it wasn't this kind of, I don't know, very boxy routine kind of way. And I think, the kind of, the chaos of it. Somehow, it was all contained at the same time so that it was safe. So, it*

wasn't like, it was so,"urhh everything goes!" So, it was unsafe. It was more like, it's moving ,nothing stays the same" (Melanie-2-1).

Whilst Grant, one of the functional selves regarded the chaos and the lack of structure as "a mess" (Grant-2-3). Even the community aspect was viewed completely differently by these two groups. Although both acknowledged they had never experienced anything like it before, the messed-up selves believed it to be positive and life-changing. Emma gives an illustration of this:

"and how everybody kind of, you know the homework? And the way we all just kind of, I don't know. We were just kind of, a single entity. That kind of you know we roughly did the same kind of homework at roughly the same time. It was so cool! (They all laugh)…because we didn't have jobs, we had small children we kind of, saw each other during the week. And kind of, we'd be constantly like, telling our stories…So, it was like, during the week it all kind of. It was constant wasn't it rather than, from Sunday to Sunday?" (Emma 2-1, 2-2).

In contrast, the functional selves considered it intrusive as Charlie reveals:

"I think it was just so different to anything we'd ever experienced or lived in before, umm the level of contact…All of a sudden, you know you had people in your face all the time!" (Charlie-2-2).

Also, unlike the messed-up selves, the functional selves regarded Rapha and CCD as two separate entities. But again, they perceived the difference between them as quite extreme with Rapha seen as positive and life-changing and CCD viewed far less favourably, as Grant conveys:

"I'm not sure that it's CCD that began to impact me and make the change? It was the spiritual healing that made the change. The church was almost, a bit of a thorn in my side in truth" (Grant-3-2).

However, as mentioned earlier the messed-up selves saw they were intrinsically one and the same. Debbie portrays this idea:

> *"they're so joined together CCD and Rapha that I can't, you know…disentangle them, they're not separate things"* (Debbie-3-2).

Likewise, the messed-up selves recognised CCD as one whole entity, but the functional selves very clearly understood it as having two separate parts one was the therapeutic community and the other, was the church. This paradox is highlighted by Louise and Debbie challenging each other's perspectives:

> *"the therapeutic community idea that these people could be invited and there would be support, and there wasn't. That's not the same as, 'come to church','come to workshops', 'do your journey'. To me, to me they're separate, and I may be wrong but to me, they are"* (Louise-3-9).

> *"How can you separate that though? I don't know how you would separate? You can't separate, umm CCD and, umm whatever you want to call it"* (Debbie-3-6).

As mentioned previously, these two dissimilar responses were consistent over time, across a whole range of thresholds and were not impacted by any of the changes CCD had undergone. But some of the functional selves reflected on the significance of these changes as a way of trying to make sense of their painful experiences. Mandy discloses her thoughts:

> *"And we were massive…there were a lot of people that I never knew, really, umm. I was a very little fish, which is fine. I have no problem being a little fish, but it was a very little fish in a big pond, umm…it was a very isolating experience. And actually, then it was a very isolating church to be in"*(Mandy-4-6 & 4-8).

Instead, it seemed this diverseness was in some way associated with the degree of need the individual was experiencing at the point they crossed the threshold. Interestingly, this did not appear to be altered by their expectations prior to their arrival or their motivation for coming. Dawn, Tracy, and Jeremy who were all messed-up selves and therefore, had the same response to CCD illustrate how their expectations were not only poles apart but also, contradictory:

> *"I think I had a lot of expectations umm, because…I was so ill at the time. It was all I could hold on to was the hope that maybe this church could help me get out of this pit I'm in. So, for me, it was like a sort of light in the dark. It was a sort of beacon of light"* (Dawn-1-1).

and

> *"I came with no expectations put it that way, umm because I just came in off the street"* (Tracey-1-1).

and

> *"a friend told me about, who was going down to visit CCD… he was explaining to me some of the concepts, you know about how the community works…I just thought, 'this is, this is a dodgy cult!'"* (Jeremy-1-1).

Similarly, the functional selves had a variety of expectations and motivations for coming to CCD Charlie, Grant, and Sherry highlight this:

> *"I thought, 'it was a deeply spiritual place'"* (Charlie-1-1).

and

> *"I craved excitement, a fresh challenge. I was getting bored"* (Grant-1-3).

and

> *"So, we came, 'O.K. let's help other people'"* (Sherry-2-7).

However, it is important to point out that although the messed-up selves had by far and away a more positive experience of CCD, they weren't naïve. Suzanne details what she considered to be one of the weaknesses of CCD:

> *"it kind of felt like, the honesty lacked grace. And I'd be, it was really very painful"* (Suzanne-5-1).

Nonetheless, I noticed there was a curious exception to this trend. There were some members who were clearly messed-up and yet, they seemed to be mirroring the responses by the functional selves namely, an almost allergic reaction to CCD. Charlotte's story exemplifies this:

> *"I hated it when I first came…they actually, weren't very welcoming and felt quite hostile… it felt that I didn't have* ***any*** *support, umm and I wasn't given information. Things kept changing and as I say, the people I was staying with weren't very helpful to me, umm…I remember speaking to my friend on the phone, kind of, "I don't know what I've done? I need to leave!""* (Charlotte-2-5).

I thought it was intriguing how they described themselves as "too unwell" (Charlotte-2-6) to engage with the Rapha journey, with the community or even, in some respects to take responsibility for their life. Pat gives her account of this:

> *"It took me a long time to kind of, like, even begin to grasp the idea of the journey. I was just not well. I was just too unwell, really…I was so sick, umm and not able to do community if you like…all these people kept turning up and telling me their stories and I wasn't in the slightest bit interested (laughs). No way could I. I thought, "Why are these people coming and telling me this?", you know? I was so traumatised"* (Patricia-2-6 & 2-22).

So, I also adopted their term "too unwell" to name this group the too unwell selves. But what I found even more surprising was the other messed-up selves also perceived this group to be distinct from them and identified the defining feature that separated them as whether someone accepted taking responsibility for themselves or not. The messed-up selves acknowledged that they had found this aspect challenging but they had still chosen to buy into it. Whereas they observed that the too unwell selves had not, as Jennifer explains:

> *"I could pick somebody that I know…had very high expectations when they came… that, someone would be looking after them and telling them what to do. And, umm that the journey will be basically, not their responsibility. It's up to somebody (Jennifer laughs) else to make you feel, make you better, make you well. I think that's what*

> *some, some had the impression. Then, they very quickly found out that when it came to their, their horror, they were expected to take responsibility for themselves, for their own journey. And that was one of the hardest things I think, for all of us. I think, really, thinking about it (laughs)"* (Jennifer-3-1).

My sample comprised of about twice the number of messed-up selves as functional selves and only a few too sick selves. Also, Ig didn't have the data on what proportions of these groups there had been over the years. Given the negative responses from both the functional selves and the too unwell selves, it seemed incongruous that they have stayed for as long as they have. Louise sums up this enigma:

> *"I wondered what I'd come to? I really did! "Lord why am I here?! What's Your purpose?" and umm, (sighs) I think, I still am wondering"* (Louise-2-25).

I was aware that some of the messed-up selves had no church background before coming to CCD, but in contrast, there were none in the other two groups. So, there were potentially two other categories which had not appeared in my sample, namely those who had no faith and were functional selves and those who had no faith and were too unwell selves.

Finally, it seemed striking to me that the same place could elicit such conflicting intial responses. On the one hand, it created a feeling of hope, freedom, and love and on the other hand, it gave the appearance of a mess which in turn, conjured up a sense of regret, and being unloved. So, because of the positive life-changing nature of CCD experienced by the messed-up selves, I decided to focus solely on this group. Nonetheless, by doing so I was only too aware I was leaving behind the narratives of the functional selves and the too unwell selves which have been and still are just as much an integral part of CCD's story as the messed-up selves. So, although this is only one piece of the picture it also happens to reflect my own journey with CCD and therefore, what follows is really 'our' story.

I wrote this poem whilst I was starting to analyse my data and had reached the turning point when I decided to only focus on the messed-up selves.

Are you ready now?

This is it!
This the moment I've been waiting for.
No, dreaming of.
Like, *"somewhere over the rainbow"* kind of, dreaming of!
I can't actually believe it's here.
So why am I hesitating now?

I look back at all the people I've met along this road:
The artists, the storytellers, and the poets.
They smile and wave me off.
But I am so sad to be leaving them.
Like Dorothy, who finally got what she wanted – *"to go home!"*
And yet, part of her didn't want to say, *"goodbye"*.

I feel as if I'm somehow betraying *'them'*.
That maybe I didn't tell them **all** the *facts*
Of **what** I was going to **do** with their stories.
And had they known,
They might not have consented.
But **I** hadn't even fully realised the implications.

Like, some mad scientist in a laboratory
I will *'cut away'* those pieces I don't need for **my** theory.
Discard them and *'throw them to the floor'*!
Just like I have already de-selected the *'others'*,
Placing them *'in jars on a shelf'*:
*"**This** PhD isn't about **you**!"*

I turn to face the wall.
Over the years, this has become my artist's canvas.
And there it is, **still** calling to me – '*The Place'*.
And just like Dorothy says, *"it wasn't **a dream**!*

*This was truly a **live** place!"*

But I remember that some don't know it even exists.

"Not a place you can get to by a boat or a train".

A Place that not only changed me

And became **my** home

But somehow, I too *'became the place'.*

"Are you ready now?" the good witch asks.

*"Yes, I'm ready **now**!"*

Life before going through the door

Introducing me, myself, and I

"I don't feel very much like Pooh today," said Pooh.
"There, there," said Piglet *"I'll bring you tea and honey until you do"*
(Milne, 1994).

From the outset, and throughout each focus group, it was fascinating the way the messed-up selves conveyed the change they had experienced since being part of CCD. This change was all-encompassing and so fundamental it felt to them as if their identity had been altered. So much so, that they described themselves in terms of two different selves. One self was the person whom they had been before CCD and therefore before this change occurred. Anthony provides a very clear illustration of this messed-up self:

> *"So, my background was I was medicated for twenty years of my life. So, who I was at that point was 'medicated Anthony'. When I came off my medication but even before that, I was like, "why can't I just be Anthony?" "Why can't I be this young man named Anthony?" A child at that point.*
>
> *When I finally came off the medication I still felt like, something was indeed missing, umm. I couldn't, I couldn't get a job. I couldn't hold down a job. I couldn't even get a degree within a, umm within academia. I was completely just down and out. And I never, I knew I could do better. Didn't know how? Didn't know why I couldn't do better?*
>
> *But definitely coming off the medication put me in a bit of a spot where it's easier to go forward, to find something that wasn't there. It's weird 'cause, right, growing up I always used to say, "I was born missing some cards in my deck!" That's exactly how I would say it to my friends"* (Anthony-6-2).

The other self was the person, they initially recognised they could be and then, later, were changing into. They had several terms for this self, all of which were based on the official discourse such as, who I am in Christ, the person I was created to be, whom I choose to be,

whom I am becoming, and my true self. Winnicott (1965) initially coined the term, 'true self' or the 'core' of the self (Winnicott, 1965: 45) which he described as:

> 'the inherited potential, which is experiencing a continuity of being, and acquiring in its own way and at its own speed a personal psychic reality and a personal body-scheme' (Winnicot, 1965: 45).

I will expand further about this true self in the chapters on **How change happens** and **A new self and a new spirituality.**

First, I will outline some of the distinct features of this messed-up self. Then I will lay out the landscape people in this group felt they were living in before CCD, a landscape which they believed had profoundly shaped this messed-up self.

The messed-up selves depicted themselves as being divided into different parts such as their emotions, beliefs, relationship with God, relationship with themselves, and relationship with others. Equally significant to this was the fact that each piece was broken. Also, the messed-up selves recognised they were somehow disconnected from their personhood or as Anthony put it, "something was indeed missing" (Anthony-6-2). Bringing all this together, it clearly demonstrated the extent of the damage. An example of this compartmentalisation was the relationship the messed-up selves had with their emotions. They found they could not identify or understand them, and they were too scared to share or show them. Moreover, when they did try to express them, they discovered that they were bottled up and/or out of control and/or overwhelming. Sandi makes clear several of these facets:

> *"my emotions…were so locked down I couldn't find them. And they would just splurt out! And then when I went to find them, they were gone! …it was like a brick tower. And I knew roughly it started off as a wooden tower. But then I worked out you could reinforce it with brick and concrete. And then I worked out you could put a lid on. So, nobody could get into you at all. But I didn't work out that that stopped God getting in and lots of other things (laughs). So, I thought, 'I had done quite well over the years at creating my tower'"* (Sandi-5-3).

The more I explored the experiences of the messed-up selves, the more it became obvious that so much of what they believed about themselves stemmed from the dominant discourse of their previous churches. Sandi very clearly illustrates this point. Although she explains the process by which she "locked down" her emotions, at the same time she was aware of the backdrop to this and so, she goes on to say:

> *"I had learnt well in my church before not to have emotion…All the way growing up through church that actually, 'emotions can lead you very astray' and 'you really shouldn't have them', umm 'cause if you're going to be holy then you didn't need them'"* (Sandi-4-1).

As mentioned previously, the messed-up selves came from a variety of denominations, most had attended more than one church, and some had even crossed over between different denominations. Despite this, there was a remarkable similarity between their initial responses to CCD. However, it seemed this fragmented, restrictive, and binary worldview was all-consuming and went far beyond the parameters of their old church. In fact, for the messed-up selves, it had become a way of life, as Dawn portrays:

> *"my experience with the church…was very kind of black and white and very sort of blinkered thinking. And it was sort of used as a way of punishing me, you know. I used to have to go to church as a punishment if I'd come home late or whatever. And I used to always think, 'if I didn't go, then I would go to hell!' So, it was a really negative, negative experience.*
>
> *I was just so fearful because of all the sort of preaches of "hell, and damnation, this eternal lake, fire" and all the rest of it. So, I just lived in complete fear. I just, you know it is so deep-rooted as well because it's sort of there from when you are a small child. And it's just very hard to imagine a god that doesn't want to punish you or stop you from enjoying your life, really"* (Dawn-3-1).

Given, the dramatic contrast between this old worldview and the impact of it on the messed-up selves and their initial responses to CCD, it seemed to me that they were experiencing something like a paradigm shift. Also, considering the messed-up selves painted this old church perspective as having a binary or "black and white" quality to it (Dawn-3-1), I was

reminded of the ancient Greek scholars. Before these scholars discovered that the earth was round, they had previously believed it was flat and, so, I decided to call this framework the 'flat world paradigm'.

Trying to survive in the flat world paradigm

Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now,
bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head,
behind Christopher Robin.
It is, as far as he knows,
the only way of coming downstairs,
but sometimes he feels that there really is another way,
if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it.
(Milne, 1994: 11)

Following my discovery of the flat world paradigm, it suddenly became even more obvious to me just how negative and oppressive it was, as Sandi conveys:

> *"I had always thought that, umm some people were more spiritual beings than other people. 'Cause, umm I, not only in my last church but err when I worked…I had people telling me that I, err "I wasn't a spiritual being". That, err "I was a sinner", umm "they were spiritual" (laughs)…*
>
> *And the other thing was also, the way they treated people that they believed were non-Christians, as if they were stupid or, umm. That they weren't important, umm…and therefore, wasn't "one of God's chosen people". So, therefore, was kind of like 'second hand', 'second-rate' person"* (Sandi-4-1).

This hierarchal power structure, which categorised some people as, "more spiritual" and others as "less spiritual" and therefore, "second-rate" was not only a central and pervasive theme in this flat world paradigm. Coupled with this, the messed-up selves highlighted that there was an ideal persona, who was at the top of this hierarchy to which everyone in the old

church, was required to conform to. I named this ideal model a 'Christian clone'. The messed-up selves were again, unanimous, and clear about the characteristics of this persona. These included someone who did not have emotions, followed the 'Christian rules', believed in the dominant discourse, and was a super evangelist. Some of these 'Christian rules' comprised of reading the bible every day, praying every day, attending church at least once a week, and attending prayer meetings. Nicholas elaborates:

> *"growing up in the churches, change always looked like one thing. You had to be a super Christian or a super Evangelical, umm. And the expectations, the pressures. You would very much change. You were meant to change! But you had to change in one direction. You had to become this particular mould of what it looks like to be a Christian"* (Nicholas-3-9).

Just like the flat world paradigm, the implicit expectations embedded in this Christian clone went beyond regulating their behaviour within the old church but also impacted every feature of their lives, as Jeremy illustrates:

"You weren't allowed to swear…people in churches tend to have similar music. And you look at peoples' bookcases and they would have the same kind of writers" (Jeremy-2-2 & 3-4).

Also for some, like Dawn, whose parents were part of the old church, they had been socialised into this negative binary worldview from their earliest years. Aside from this, another thread that ran through both this flat world paradigm and this mythical norm was the belief that it was unacceptable to experience mental health difficulties. This was particularly pertinent for the messed-up selves, as Lara explains:

> *"because suddenly, there is not this whole load of guilt. That, you are struggling, you've got mental health issues, umm you're not happy and "you should be" was the message I picked up from other churches. "Because you are a Christian and you've got God so, you should be fine""* (Lara-3-2).

This assertion seemed to be based on the biblical doctrine that when someone becomes a Christian, they are a 'new creation', 'the old life is gone; a new life begins!' (2 Corinthians, 5:17 – The Bible). But this ideology that there is no need to change because change has

already happened was juxtaposed to the unspoken pressure to change by conforming to the rules and becoming more like this Christian clone. Added to this confusion, the messed-up selves found it difficult to reconcile this culture with the significant mental health difficulties they were experiencing. They, therefore, felt that this doctrine was a form of 'Christian denial' which only exacerbated their problems by causing them to feel guilty and that they didn't fit in.

A further area of conflict for the messed-up selves was how they felt their encounters with the spiritual world were pathologised by the old church in much the same way that service users in mental health services experienced this as mentioned in the **Introduction**. So, paradoxically, the messed-up selves felt they were living in a paradigm that, on the one hand, advocated for them to become more spiritual whilst, on the other, forbade any evidence of them actively experiencing elements of the spiritual world for example seeing angels or demons. This inevitably reinforced their feelings of being judged, not understood, and not fitting in. Scarlett's story provides a case in point:

> *"church talk about angels and demons but if you encounter them then the church don't know how to handle it…And also, whereas you'd say to your friends before and they'd look at you like you're a freak. Whereas here, umm it don't matter. And you can see or hear whatever the hell you want. And you know what I mean? It's you. So, people don't really care if you know what I mean? So, if you see them or hear them it's just, part of who you are. Rather than being a freak if that makes sense?"* (Scarlett-4-3).

To cope with this flat world paradigm, some of the messed-up selves developed a 'Christian mask' in other words, a fake persona to hide how they were really feeling as Suzanne discloses:

> *"the Christian smile. And you know, in old church that's how we all went to church, wearing our Christian smile… just, the masks, which I had worn to church as a matter of course. And there was, I remember always coming back from church, umm so exhausted and so hungry because I had given out all this energy. It was a religious energy to promote myself as this Christian that was cloned into how, into how the rest of the people in that church was"* (Suzanne-3-1).

Whilst other messed-up selves seemed less able to adopt this mask as Stacey explains:

> *"It was always like, I was screaming. And everyone was always telling me to, "Shut up!" or that I was 'crazy' or I was 'asking for attention'"* (Stacey-2-1).

And others again appeared to be less willing to adopt this ideology or fake persona. Neil gives his account of this:

> *""You've been saved. You are healed. That's it, it's done!" and I said, "fuck off!""* (Neil-4-1).

Despite this situation, all the messed-up selves tried to find healing and to change by different means and from various sources including medication, counselling, mental health services, church leaders, specialist prayer ministries, and deliverance. They also recalled how the old church had advised them to use an assortment of spiritual practices, for example, reading the bible, praying, having more faith, others praying for them, waiting on God, and trying harder to change. But they found these techniques ineffective and judgmental, as Linda gives her account:

> "*So, for me, one of the biggest differences is that churches I had been to in the past. If I was struggling then it felt like, there were only two options they could offer me. It was either, "Try harder. You are not trying hard enough!" was the message I heard. Or "we will pray for you and then you will be better", which I wasn't. And it felt like, those were the only two things…none of it helped really. None of it helped"* (Linda-3-2).

Many of the methods mirrored the expectations and requirements of the Christian clone which the messed-up selves had already felt unable to achieve. Thus, regardless of their best efforts, they ended up feeling they had failed. But, added to this, they now felt it was their fault they couldn't change which, in turn, left them feeling a sense of guilt and blame. Consequently, the more the messed-up selves tried to change and couldn't, the less they knew what was wrong or how to change. This predicament was grave because it left them feeling as if the old church didn't have any answers and created a downward spiral for them as the

harder they tried, the sicker they became. Then, the sicker they were, the less they felt like the Christian clone and the more they felt they were the "odd one out" and "a freak". Subsequently, this led them to have a further loss of hope, a belief that change is not possible and feeling despair and isolation. A member who had recently returned to CCD after several years away vividly portrayed this paradox:

> *"The darkness in my life that I respond to is very powerful. And I've become very, very highly skilled at pretending 'I'm OK' and looking OK, and putting on an act. And it's not a nice place to be.*
>
> *And so, these last eighteen months every time that I've kind of, then fallen back into addictive patterns of behaviour it's got worse. Not just, in terms of the consequences and the damage that I do to myself and to others. But in terms of, the added layers of shame and fear that are added to the underlying baggage that's sat there all the time. There's still a part of me that thinks, 'I'm the only one who can't change?'"* (Brian).

For some of the messed-up selves, the consequences were even more extreme, as they were either asked to leave the old church and/or reached the point of feeling suicidal. Tina and Nancy typify this:

> *"I got chucked out of that (the last church I was in) (laughs) and umm, because umm, because I wasn't healed, umm. Because they'd prayed for me to be healed umm, and went through my life and then the next year I got ill again so they chucked me out"* (Tina-5-1).

And:

> *"it was either this (CCD) or death"* (Nancy-1-1).

Given the similarities between the narratives of the messed-up selves and my own story, this felt at times a surreal experience. As I integrated and pieced together the different fragments of their stories it felt like I was like looking through my old photo album. Suddenly, the researcher and the researched were commingling as this poem expresses.

The blurring of the lines

I look at you through the lens
Whilst gently turning the handle.
And, as I do gradually, the blur diminishes.
But just at the point, you come into focus
The lens transforms into a mirror
And I'm staring back at **me**!

I read your words again and again and again.
Taking them in, savouring all of their goodness.
Like an icy cold drink on a hot summer's day,
"Hope", "free", "real", "change".
Now, they are dancing around the room
Like butterflies in the sunlight.

I try to catch them.
To hold them in my hands,
To see more clearly their colours.
But as suddenly as they appeared, they vanish.
I open my mouth to gasp in surprise
And they all fly out of **me**!

The oneness paradigm: A new way of living in a new world

'"If I had a world of my own, everything would be nonsense.
Nothing would be what it is because everything would be what it isn't.
And contrary wise, what is, it wouldn't be and what it wouldn't be,
it would, you see?" (said Alice)'
(Disney, 1951).

When the messed-up selves crossed the threshold of CCD they encountered a place that was completely polarised from the flat world paradigm. So, in contrast to the binary, fragmented, and compartmentalised nature of the flat world paradigm, they described somewhere, or something, which was altogether unifying. It was a place where everything commingled to create a harmonious whole including aspects that would otherwise be contradictions and, so, I named this place the 'oneness paradigm'. One of the most intriguing and complicated findings of this oneness paradigm was that its qualities appeared to be not only essential elements but also, simultaneously, being the effect. I will examine this mystery further in the chapter on **How change happens.**

So, to being with I grouped all the aspects of this oneness paradigm into four categories *values, freedom, safety*, and *transformational change*. I will explain the meaning of the term *transformational change* directly when I explore this category in more detail. But even this process of forming these categories posed a significant challenge, as I discovered several characteristics occurred in more than one group. In these moments I felt like I was viewing the same attribute but from a different angle. An example of this overlap was the aspect of *'being real'* which in part Stacey depicted:

> *"And I think it was a combination of relief at finding somewhere where I wasn't being judged all the time. And I wasn't expected to pretend that I was fine"* (Stacey-2-1).

Again, however, I will outline the full meaning given to this term by the messed-up selves shortly. Even though I identified *'being real'* as a value, I also found it cropped up within the categories of *freedom* and *safety*. It seemed that, having entered the oneness paradigm, the

messed-up selves now felt they were *free to 'be real'*, and it was *safe to 'be real'*, as Elizabeth and Anthony both clarify:

> *"in CCD you can just walk in and say, "This is me. This is who I am. I'm crap or I'm wonderful". And in other churches, you sort of have to put on an act and I have to think about it now before I go in"* (Elizabeth-4-6).

Also,

> *"And the first experience was that probably the first time I felt safe talking about what was going on"* (Anthony-2-1).

Hence, the metaphor I felt most resembled this multiplicity is the picture of light travelling through a prism. The white light contains a mixture of all the various colours, but, when it passes through a prism, the white light separates into all the spectral colours of a rainbow. This is because each colour travels at a different speed. Just as the white light encompasses the diverse colours and their blending together, so too are all the qualities of the oneness paradigm present and yet, interweaving. Keeping this in mind, I was only too aware that the complex process of isolating each core component would, inevitably, distort its very substance. Kurt Koffka (1935) summed up this conundrum with 'the whole is something else than the sum of its parts' (Kurt Koffka, 1935: 467). Also, given the spiritual nature of the oneness paradigm, I appreciated this added an extra challenge to my analysis.

Values

I will start by examining the category of values or ideals. These were not part of formal written guidelines but, rather, were implicit within the fabric of the oneness paradigm. They incorporated the aspiration that:

Everyone is accepted	Everyone is Important	Everyone is Spiritual	Everyone is unique	Everyone is Sick
Everyone has potential	Everyone will change	Everyone will 'be real'	Everyone will be challenged	Everyone will tell their story

Everyone will honour others	Everyone will give and take	Everyone will pay it forward	Everyone will own their damage	Everyone will own their journey
Everyone will be open to another perspective	Everyone will go outside of their comfort zone	Everyone will own whom they are becoming	Everyone will take responsibility for their life	Everyone will find their place

I will expand on two of these values, not just to clarify their meaning but, also, to illustrate further the interplay between them all. The first of these is *everyone will pay it forward*, a concept I borrowed from Ryan Hyde's (1999) novel of the same name, which was later made into a film with the same name by Leder (2000). The story is about a twelve-year-old boy called Trevor, who launches a goodwill movement known as 'pay it forward'. This involves the recipient of a favour who then, in turn, carries out a favour for three other people rather than paying it back to the original giver. I think this fictional story most clearly illustrates the type of giving the messed-up selves were experiencing and practising in the oneness paradigm. So, just like Trevor, the messed-up selves responded to the help they had received when they first arrived by, in turn, helping another messed-up self in need rather than by adopting reciprocity. Alternatively, *they paid it forward* by giving in some way to the whole community. As mentioned in the chapter **Interweaving narratives**, this help took numerous forms, for example, help with shopping, babysitting, dog walking, sharing my story, supporting someone with their journey of healing, welcoming a visitor, helping on a Rapha Journey workshop or at a Sunday morning service. So, it appeared that just as in the story of 'Pay it forward', the messed-up selves were passing on the goodness they had received. This, in turn, created a cycle of kindness that, in a sense, became contagious.

The second value I will explore is *everyone will 'be real'* which as mentioned above, involves speaking honestly about how you feel. But, for the messed-up selves, 'being real' encompassed a considerably broader meaning than this. For instance, even in terms of someone speaking honestly about how they felt, they observed this was at a much deeper level of reality than they had ever experienced before, as Jeremy recounts:

> *"it was all about being real. Being honest about how you were feeling about yourself and about other people. And then, that was the basis from which you changed…So, I think for me that was the reality. The reality of being honest. And if that meant saying, "fuck!" excuse the language. But then, that was to me one of the big things was people were swearing. And not just for the sake of it but because that was how they felt…there was almost a freedom to express that was more real"* (Jeremy-3-1).

Also, for those who had previously worn a mask or Christian smile in the flat world paradigm, they found 'being real' at this deeper level of reality required them to take this off or they would feel exposed anyway as Melanie points out:

> *"you couldn't go in and wear your mask because people will see through it"* (Melanie-5-2).

Additionally, the messed-up selves observed this *'being real'* was expressed in two other ways. One being, that it enabled them to admit the full extent of their damage and, the other, that it gave them permission to be their true or authentic self which had remained hidden beneath their Christian mask. Winnicott (1965) originally coined the term, 'true self' or the 'core' of the self (1965: 183) which he described as:

> 'the inherited potential, which is experiencing a continuity of being, and acquiring in its own way and at its own speed a personal psychic reality and a personal body-scheme' (Winnicott, 1965: 46).

Other terms used by the messed-up selves for this 'new' self were *"whom I am in Christ", "whom I am created to be"* and *"whom I am becoming".* Jennifer shares her experience:

> *"it was almost an expected norm that umm, who you portrayed or who you thought you were, wasn't necessarily who you actually were inside. And everyone was wanting to try and find out who the real person was umm, supposedly good or supposedly bad or whatever, the real"* (Jennifer-4-1).

What is more, for the messed-up selves *'being real'* did not simple just consist of speaking honestly about how they felt but also, and equally importantly, it comprised of fully engaging their emotions. This could include to the point of falling apart or by catharsis but didn't necessarily have to. I have made a distinction between these two processes because the formal discourse with CCD has defined 'catharsis' as the deliberate engaging of 'locked-up emotion so that it emotionally floods us' (Holmes & Williams, 2017: 147). Whereas the messed-up selves described falling apart as something that felt unintentional at the outset, but, once it had begun, then required their acceptance to go with it. Also, what was significant for the messed-up selves about this aspect of *'being real'* was that falling apart, or publically displaying their emotions in any of the CCD meetings, was not only acceptable but actively welcomed, as Tony recalls:

> *"that first Christmas we came to this house we're, we're in. We sat about ten, twelve people sat at the Christmas dinner table… I fell apart over the dinner table and had to sit down in this very room on the floor with a notebook writing what I was feeling and what was coming up through the body"* (Tony-2-1).

Finally, for the messed-up selves, the meaning of *'being real'* went even further, as it also entailed them feeling free to act on how they felt, as Nina and Melanie explain:

> *"Yeah, it's being real, isn't it? If you want to sit down, you sit down. If you want to hide in the corner, you hide in the corner"* (Nina-2-1).

Also,

> *"you could be sobbing your eyes out one Sunday and the next Sunday you could be, you know quite genuinely be one of the people waving the flags"* (Melanie-4-1).

Given this wider meaning to *'being real'* it was probably not surprising that this particular value was inextricably interwoven with several of the other values, for example, *everyone will: tell their story, own their damage, own whom they are becoming, be challenged,* and *own their journey of healing*.

Freedom

The second category that made up the oneness paradigm was freedom. This included the qualities that there was *no right or wrong*, *no requirements, no rules, no expectations*, and *permission was not needed*. I should point out that the messed-up selves identified these qualities in contrast to their experience of the flat world paradigm which they had found oppressive and restrictive because of the Christian rules, expectations, and requirements. So, these characteristics were not intended to be absolute and, therefore, implied CCD operated without any boundaries. Stacey tries to clarify this and to capture the impact of this new-found freedom on her:

> *"And all the Christian rules didn't apply in the same way like you could curse. And there were couples living together that weren't married and people weren't telling them to leave or "ship up"! And there was just, a whole different perspective on where people were at and what they needed. And what they needed to do. And it was quite shocking to me in mostly a good way. It was like, a relief and, umm, it was amazing"* (Stacey-2-1).

This freedom also consisted of:

Everyone is free to make choices	Everyone is free to make mistakes	Everyone is free spiritual	Everyone is free to see what they want	Everyone is free to hear what they want
Everyone is free to not go to church	Everyone is free to be themselves	Everyone is free to look at themselves	Everyone is free to have a voice	Everyone is free to be open to another perspective
Everyone is free find their passions	Everyone is free think outside the box	Everyone is free choose whom they are becoming		

I then noticed there was a cross-over between this category and the values category because the messed-up selves discovered freedom by *everyone being accepted* and *everyone* seen as *important, spiritual, unique, sick, having potential* as well as *uniqueness being celebrated*, and so on. Tina and Jennifer give some other examples of how this new-found freedom was significant for them. The first is having the *freedom to be open to another perspective*:

> *"in my worldview, a healthy person was someone who didn't show their emotion very much. Do you know what I mean? They didn't you know, splurge! Your emotions were kept under control…*
>
> *It took me a while to actually, umm realise my worldview probably wasn't healthy. Do you know what I mean?...I think I just had a wrong view of what healthy was umm…it was like everything clicked into place for me…but I just had to completely change my worldview of what I thought was normal. "What was normal?""*
> (Tina-2-1 & 5-2).

The second was having the *freedom to think outside of the box*:

> *"I think one of the big differences as well was to be encouraged to think outside the box. And not just do what you've always done and go on the same treadmill. But actually, to ask questions, "What do you* ***really*** *want to do? What, where are your passions?"*
>
> *And if you think, 'Oh, I couldn't do this!' or 'I couldn't do that! No, never in a million years!' "Why not?! Give me one good reason". So, I'd give about twenty good reasons. "No, no, no (Carol laughs) give me one good reason". By the time I had tried my thirty-something no good reason, I had nothing. "O.K. let's go for it!", umm. It's changed, changed my life"* (Jennifer-4-4).

The messed-up selves went so far as to identify this freedom within the ambience of CCD, for example, they felt *nothing stayed the same, everyone was changing, everyone expected the unexpected*, and there was a kind of *'safe chaos'*. I will define and explore this last trait shortly, but, for now, Jennifer gives her description of this milieu:

"Every meeting was completely different. And you had no idea what to expect but you knew something was going to happen" (Jennifer-2-2).

Safety

The third category was safety. This again had many overlaps with the freedom category and comprised of it was *safe to 'be real', be yourself, be where you are at, make choices, make mistakes, fall apart,* and of course, *'safe chaos'*. Linda shares her experience of how it was *safe to be where you are at*:

"it was perfectly all right to be sitting and sobbing. And in other churches, I've picked up this concern that "What is going on there? That doesn't look right". Whereas, at CCD someone just hands you some tissues, or puts an arm round you if you want one. And so, it's absolutely fine you can just cry for as long as you want or don't want umm. So, there was safety in just being able to be where I was" (Linda-2-1).

Also, like freedom, the messed-up selves perceived safety within the ambience of CCD, for example, it felt safe because *everyone was accepted, they were not the only ones, change was possible, everyone was changing, others carried hope*, and again, *'safe chaos'*. Howard explains how his experience of discovering *change was possible* made it feel safe for him:

"my perception was there was evidence, real evidence that redemption was, umm was possible. What do I mean by that? I mean sorting out the mess was going to be possible here in a way that just wasn't available through, umm other organisations and churches that I had had contact with. That's what made it safe" (Howard-2-1).

One of the most significant facets of safety for the messed-up selves seemed to be that it felt *safe to 'be real'*. Conversely, however, they felt that *anyone being unreal* made it feel unsafe. Jeremy highlights his experience of this:

"not everybody is safe at all times…you realised as you went on that, that people could talk, do the talk but that didn't necessarily mean that they were safe…there is a real distinction I think between what people can say about their journey and actually, how that is really lived out" (Jeremy-5-2).

I found it intriguing how these characteristics not only commingled within the same category but also, across all the categories. But, more than this, I was puzzled by how the categories of freedom and safety could blend together whilst also, in one sense, being contradictory to each other. For, on the one hand, freedom could be seen as risk-taking whilst, on the other, safety could be interpreted as risk-free. Despite this paradox, Carol gives an illustration of how these characteristics unify together in practice using the characteristic of *everyone is accepted*:

> *"to come somewhere where there was just recognised that everyone has problems in their life. Different things that they're dealing with and that's acceptable. You are accepted as you are. You can cry if you need to. I think, just to have that sense of safety and acceptance was, was amazing. And there was a real freedom in that"* (Carol-2-2).

Also, it appeared the blending of these categories had created a quite new concept, which the messed-up selves termed, *"safe chaos"*. It was almost as if the amalgamation of these elements had, in some way, changed the form of both freedom and safety so that *freedom felt safe* to them, as Howard clarifies:

> *"And I see no conflict between these two ideas of it being a safe place and it being a chaotic place. So, err I agree with exactly what has just been said. To simultaneously feel this is a safe place to fall apart and acknowledge reality. And at the same place, the same time have the chaos of the band playing and someone at the microphone, kids doing something else and flags, and banners and everything happening at once. And safe, whilst being chaotic"* (Howard-4-2).

And *safety felt so free* to them that it challenged them, which Nicholas explains:

> *"CCD is safe. It ain't comfortable, umm and they are quite different things…the church setting always spoke to me. Whenever I went God would speak, someone would speak, and it would be challenging, umm. And nobody would particularly know that they were challenging me, but I was being challenged. The whole atmosphere could challenge you, umm (Nicholas-3-1).*

Interestingly, the messed-up selves seemed to recognise almost twice the amount of freedom compared with safety within this oneness paradigm. Moreover, they seemed to value this imbalance so that, even if there were moments when it felt unsafe, they still preferred the freedom of this newfound reality. Jeremy provides an example of this:

> *"I think for me, it was, it was the honesty in the relationships, umm. That people were just so brutal (he laughs and then they all laugh) for want of a better word in, in just, saying it how it is. But you know it wasn't always. Sometimes, you did get the honesty without the love or the grace. That could be very painful. But even that, you know, you could still, you could still use it if you like. It was still helpful, it was still, I think, yeah...*
>
> *I had come from a background where I could blame a lot on what I did on the fact that I had a mental illness (laughs). So, I could be a complete prat and then say, "Oh! It's because I'm schizophrenic" or something, whatever. And just, people weren't willing to put up with that. People would, "you acted like an idiot!" And people would just say, "you've acted like a twat!" Sorry, excuse my language.*
>
> *People, you know would say it how it was, you know? And for me, it was, it was the learning in that. It was the learning in relationship, how to do relationships…it was seeing myself how other people saw me and realising, (laughs) a lot of that wasn't good at all, umm. And that I needed to be different if I wanted relationships and friendships"* (Jeremy-4-1 & 4-2).

In light of how oppressive and restrictive the flat world paradigm was for the messed-up selves, it is not surprising that they appreciated this greater sense of freedom. Paula poignantly sums up why this was the case for her:

> *"So, it's, it's probably coming from the other direction. Like where God tells you everything and you just do everything regardless without having any say in it. You just ask Him, "What shall I do?" To having choice to do anything I'd like. And I wish I'd had known that I had that choice when I was twelve. Because I wouldn't have ever, I wouldn't have ever taken those choices. And, umm so, I don't really, (laughs). It's life, its life-changing isn't it, really?! (Paula-6-1).*

Transformational change

The fourth and final element of the oneness paradigm was transformational change. I have borrowed this term and its synonym 'transformative' from Susan's research (Williams, 2007: 53), as the components she identified so closely echoed those perceived by the messed-up selves. Susan had based her definition of transformational change on:

> 'Mishler's distinction between the formation, re-formation and transformation of identity (Mishler, 1999: 80). He suggested the distinguishing feature about transformation of identity is that it involves new parts of identity, rather than a growth or reorganization of existing parts' (Williams, 2007: 53).

Although there are very clear similarities with Susan's model of transformational change, I have extensively expanded on this by including numerous other traits. I will make a fuller comparison of her research and mine later in the **Discussion** chapter.

The messed-up selves seemed captivated by this new type of change more than any other facet in the oneness paradigm. They were also amazed by everything about it for, example, how it looked, felt, happened, and its impact on them and those around them. This type of change was outside anything they had experienced before, in particular, because it was tangible and obvious to anyone who encountered it, as Jeremy reveals:

> *"'Cause this guy you know. We had gone back quite a few years and I had always known him as really messed-up and really angry…He finally understood why he was the way he was. And why he had had all of these problems all these years…there is something happening in this guy who I have always known as being angry and messed-up"* (Jeremy-1-2).

Given how desperate the messed-up selves had been to change, coupled with, their frustration at their inability to do so within the flat world paradigm, it is understandable this transformational change was so attractive to them. In fact, it was the reason many of them (including myself) came to CCD, as Sandi shares her story, which mirrors my own:

> *"then I, umm talked to a friend of mine…she was, umm becoming different inside and I watched her change on the inside…I knew that, umm what Annabelle found was*

different to anything else because I'd never known anybody change on the inside before. I'd seen lots of Christians that change on the outside. But I knew there was something different and that's why we started coming" (Sandi-1-1).

Just as with the other attributes of the oneness paradigm the qualities of transformational change blend together and therefore, it is precarious to separate these out. Also, in the same way that freedom and safety were a paradox and yet, intertwined so too, were various parts of this change. Besides these three characteristics already referred to namely, *change is real, change is possible,* and *change is obvious* I identified fourteen other elements. The first of these traits is linked to these other three and is *an inner change* or a change that alters the person's character which can be seen in Sandi's example above, but Jeremy also tries to capture the essence of this:

"in CCD I think the difference was that change was about character and change was about personality"(Jeremy-3-1).

This *inner change* was the antithesis to the change the messed-up selves had previously experienced in the flat world paradigm, as again Jeremy goes on to point out:

"I think with regard to change it was you know, with previous churches change was all outwards. It was all, and it was so banal as well, you know, not going over the speed limit, or umm…smoking. Yeah, that was extreme stuff. And it was all…yeah, it was all about following the rules. And it was all. But in a real kind of, you know in a real superficial kind of way" (Jeremy-3-1, 3-2 & 3-3).

The second component, again, connected with this *inner change*, was the depth of, or the *scope for, change*. The messed-up selves found this transformational change was so much more comprehensive than the type of change they had experienced in the flat world paradigm as, Howard explains:

"the scope for change and the agenda or the possible agenda for change was much bigger, umm and more comprehensive than, umm I had previously ever realized. Because in previous churches they had never talked about such potential scope for change" (Howard-3-1).

This *greater scope for change* was embodied in two ways which were like two sides of the same coin occurring in unison. One was, that the messed-up selves began to *realise the full extent of their damage* was worse than they had initially thought, as Linda depicts:

> *"in CCD during the message from, during the services and when you're talking to people is, "O.K. So, you got a problem with that. So, let's look at what's going on there and actually, dig a bit deeper because obviously there is a problem", umm. So, that made just a completely massive difference"* (Linda-3-2).

Yet, this discovery did not seem to demoralise them as they just saw it was more opportunity for change which Howard explains:

> *"CCD and Rapha have allowed me and enabled me to contemplate far bigger change and far greater redemption for the mess in my life and the baggage, whatever than I ever would have known to be possible"* (Howard-6-1).

The other facet was *the growth of* something new, namely, *their true self.* Although it could be argued that this self was there all along, as the messed-up selves began to recognise it and discovered it was so fundamentally different from their fragmented self, it felt to them as if it was new. So, again, this revelation opened up more possibilities for change, as Melanie outlines:

> *"But also, in terms of holding up a mirror to how you are now. It's almost like, they also hold up another mirror. And just, helping you see who you are becoming" (Melanie-7-1).*

Thus, whether they were exposing more layers of damage or exploring another angle of their true self, the messed-up selves saw everything as the potential for change.

The third quality was the fact that this transformational change *affected every part of their personhood*. Hence, I have broken this down into five different characteristics *feelings, cognition, relationships, spirituality,* and *behaviour.* Although each of these brought

considerable change in their own right, one feature which seemed to hold more value for the messed-up selves than the others was their *feelings,* as Linda highlights:

> *"So, emotions are welcome and accepted and invested in"* (Linda-3-2).

This was possibly partly due to experience of the flat world paradigm which had denied the messed-up selves having feelings, but it was potentially also because they discovered the important role they themselves play in their journey of healing which will be explored more in the chapter **How change happens.**

Following on from this, the next significant factor was the *cognitive changes* these messed-up encountered which were noticeable to them in two particular ways. One took the form of some of the messed-up selves *not remembering the details of their trauma* once they had let go of their pain. This mirrored the formal discourse of the Rapha Journey which was the change experienced will be as if (the trauma) had never happened. Whilst the other cognitive change was evident by them *adopting a completely different perspective*, as Tina conveys:

> *"there is a wide-mindedness in CCD that I hadn't come across before. So, for myself and for the churches I'd gone to there was an awful lot of, "This is the train tracks. Stay on the train tracks, you will be safe. Deviate from the train tracks and Satan will get you!""* (Lisa-4-1).

The other element of their personhood to experience change was their *relationships*. This in itself was not only multifaceted but also, had far-reaching consequences. The first was the way relationships played a part in their journey of healing by *others helping them, 'standing with them', believing in them*, and *celebrating with them* the change they had experienced. The practice of *'standing with someone'* could be described as the event when someone makes a spiritual declaration and those witnessing this affirm it with them. It is prevalent within CCD and Charlie gives his experience of this:

> *"The idea of you know, people stand with you for something. And you know, sort of be of one accord, you know. I'll, I can say, "Yes, I'm going to 'stand with you' Harry…in expecting this to happen", umm. It's phenomenal!…err, interceding on their behalf, umm…And seeing the, the fruit of that, you know?"* (Charlie-3-4 & 5).

Whilst Sandi gives her account of others believing in her:

> *"one of the main differences that I valued was that people didn't see me how I saw me…Because they believed something about me that I couldn't and even wouldn't believe about myself to start with, umm. Because they saw potential in me that I didn't even think was there"* (Sandi-4-1).

One other facet of *relational change* was that it seemed to be *contagious* in the sense that change not only happened for the messed-up selves when they were *being helped*, but also when they were the ones helping or *'standing with someone'*. Melanie recites her encounter with this phenomenon:

> *"and people will stand with you, and you can feel it, you know with others as well, when they are doing it"* (Melanie-3-1).

But, what was also interesting is that the messed-up selves recognised that this contagious nature to change occurred simply by them *sharing their stories* with each other. Emma gives an example of this:

> *"we'd be constantly like, telling our stories. And then, we'd be like, "Oh, how did you do that?" And somehow, that would do something inside of us, wouldn't it? And we would like, possibly, start doing the homework while that person was talking to us. And, so, then we're kind of catching up to where that person was in a way"* (Emma-2-2).

So, just as *pay it forward* seemed to generate a cycle of goodness, so too, *transformational change* appeared to create yet more *transformational change*.

The messed-up selves found that another way in which this change impacted their relationships was by their *willingness to be open with each other*, or by them *'being real'*. Some messed-up selves welcomed this new paradigm and simply *needed permission* to do so, as Howard recalls:

> *"it was safe for me because the people that were talking to me were err, were allowing me to talk about the reality of how bad some of my baggage was"* (Howard-2-1).

Whilst, others, who were initially more hesitant, quickly saw the benefits of this and responded by also *'being real'*. Danielle shares her experience of this:

> *"But I did like that it was so open when I first came (laughs)…But when I first came everyone kind of said in the first couple of weeks like, "Oh! So, what are you here for?". And it forced me to, to talk about things straight away which actually I think that's really helpful to be just so open from, from day one"* (Danielle-2-6).

As mentioned previously the messed-up selves were impressed by the way this new type of change was so *obvious*. But, this was so stark at times that they found it quite *disorientating* which in turn, affected their relationships, as Jennifer reveals:

> *"And every time you met someone you didn't know what they were going to be like because they were always different to how you last saw them. And you couldn't relate to them how you had done even in the previous week or even in the last time you saw them. Because they might have done a big chunk of homework or something. And something would have completely changed, and you just know it by looking at them. And you'd think, 'I don't know you anymore what are you like?!' (laughs) And that used to happen a lot, didn't it?" (Jennifer-2-5).*

Consequently, the messed-up selves recognised they had to carefully navigate and re-negotiate their relationships with each other in light of this change in the other person. Jennifer tries to capture this scenario:

> *"Sometimes you'd be a bit afraid because you wanted to find out where they were at first. 'Cause, you didn't want to either steal what had happened for them too quick or, or make any mistakes based on the fact that they've moved on, but you might not have done or something"* (Jennifer2-5).

Linked to this is the fourth characteristic of the messed-up selves' personhood which was impacted by this change namely, their *spiritual nature*. They discovered not only a completely *different kind of spirituality* than the one they had previously known but, also, one they had not thought possible. Melanie provides an illustration of this:

> *"I don't have to count on one hand the number of times I have actually, I have authentically met with the Lord, umm. This is becoming part of the norm of how I live my life is that I can profoundly meet Him and have these moments and encounters with the Lord. And then, with other people, you know. That was the other thing, it's not just this solitary thing, it's very much also with others"* (Melanie-3-1).

This *spiritual dynamic* had a similar *contagious* quality to it in that it did not just impact their relationships on a one-to-one basis but, also, went far beyond this and reverberated throughout the whole of CCD. Emma attempts to sum this up:

> *"And the kind of these weird waves of the Holy Spirit. And how everybody kind of, you know the homework. And the way we all just kind of, I don't know? We were just kind of a single entity that kind of, you know. We roughly did the same kind of homework at roughly the same time. It was so cool"* (Emma-2-2).

The final attribute of change which related to the messed-up selves' personhood was how it affected their *behaviour.* Although this aspect was evident in their lives, they seemed to mention it the least. This was in complete contrast to the flat world paradigm where this had been the focus. Lisa gives an example of observing this quality in her son's life:

> *"And seeing Patrick change. He used to smash his room so that everything was about two inches long: his bed, his furniture, everything! For about, I don't remember how long but it was for a couple of years. Everything he had. And we'd replace it and then he'd do it again. And I knew that he was letting go of all the stuff that was inside that hurt so much…*
>
> *But now he's got his own home. It's, it's clean. It's, it's, he's totally and utterly different! And that is absolutely amazing! I mean, I thought, it was finished. That his life was going to be a downward spiral of horribleness and he's not!"* (Lisa-3-1).

As mentioned above, the messed-up selves valued the ability to change with the support of others enormously, but they also appreciated the freedom and empowerment they felt to be able to *change by themselves*. Again, this was because they had not experienced this in the flat world paradigm which required them to have *someone else help them* to change or simply *wait for God to heal* them. Suzanne depicts her experience of this:

> *"I would say it was the freedom of knowing I and The Lord could make the changes. Whereas in past church it has always been I had to go through someone. Or it felt I always had to go through someone. To me, I was never allowed to change myself. It always had to be done via people who knew far better about me. And, you know, the pastoral thing that was like an authority that clamped me. So, being in CCD it was fantastic… It was fantastic to be able to take that personal responsibility"* (Suzanne-4-1).

Transformational change was, therefore, something that the messed-up selves could *accomplish by themselves* and that they could also *achieve with help from others*. So, it was as if these two features were two halves that complemented each other. Likewise, the messed-up selves discovered that transformational change occurred because they *intentionally* wanted it to happen and, alongside this, the oneness paradigm seemed to also facilitate it *spontaneously.*

This last facet is the eighth characteristic of transformational change as it, together with the other elements, resulted in *a faster rate of change* than the messed-up selves had known. Howard highlights his observation of this:

> *"taking ownership and responsibility for my baggage and damage…resulted as Melanie said in a much faster rate of progress or journeying or change or whatever you want to call it"* (Howard-3-1).

As mentioned earlier, this was so rapid and stark at times that it was *disorientating* for those around the person who had changed. Likewise, this was the experience for the messed-up self who had changed, as Tina explains:

> *"But it was very bizarre, good, and bad getting used to the whole, umm letting go of emotion. And then, being sent, I was sent to Jennifer's house to recuperate one day. And I spent the afternoon on her sofa, and I just didn't know (laughs) what was going on. And then, you know it was, that's how it was for me. It was the shock of moving in, leaving all my world behind, and good and bad not knowing how to be anymore. Learning everything new. And, umm yeah, it was quite hard but good hard if you know what I mean? (laughs)"* (Tina-2-4).

Similar to the way that some of the other contradictory traits appeared to complement each other, *transformational change* happened both *suddenly* and *gradually over time*. Sometimes this was so slowly that others recognised it happening before the person who was changing. Edmund recalls his experience of this:

> *"And you know, I remember getting back in touch with old friends or family and (them) saying, "you're changed or you're changing". They recognised it before I did"* (Edmund-3-1).

In contrast to the perceived requirement to become a Christian clone in the flat world paradigm, the messed-up selves experienced a very *individual journey of transformational change* and that the *type of change* created was *unique*. Nicholas outlines both these characteristics:

> *"I suppose in CCD straight away was the uniqueness of change. And that actually, the emphasis is on becoming, finding out who you are created to be in Christ…it was very, very, it is very, very unique and it doesn't look like anybody else's journey"* (Nicolas-3-1).

For the twelfth aspect of transformational change, I have again borrowed from Susan's research as she identified the nature of this change as *'salugenic'*. She, in turn, had borrowed this term from Clinebell (1995) because, unlike other types of change, Susan found transformational change 'only includes change that is health and growth-producing (Clinebell 1995: 82)' (Williams, 2007: 167). I noticed that this too was the case with my data, but as mentioned earlier by Tina, the messed-up selves also acknowledged this type of change was not easy, "it was hard, but good hard" (Tina-2-4).

Finally, last but by no means least, the messed-up selves were astounded to discover that this transformational change *lasted,* which, again, had not been their experience of change in the flat world paradigm as Nicholas points out:

> *"the fact is there is hope because I can change, umm and I, umm and the change will last. It is not something, which will dissipate or go away"* (Nicholas-3-1).

I wrote this poem when I was analysing my data and beginning to form my theory of the oneness paradigm.

Oneness

I lay out all the pieces on the floor.
Some have been worked again and again.
Refining the intricate detail with every new thread
Just as the early quilters did in ancient Egypt
Until it too is fit for The King.

Some were started but never finished.
Some have been re-arranged from every angle
Whilst others now don't seem to fit.
In some places the layers of appliqué are complex
Yet, in other parts, there are still huge gaps.

The pattern was torn up long ago
But the final picture remains unclear.
I was so sure in the beginning
So confident of the design.
Now, I just laugh at my own naivety.

I had no idea how much it would change.
Though more surprising,
With every word pinned carefully and sewn,

The torn, the frayed and the well-worn parts of **me**
Somehow were also being repaired.
With one single silk thread
Soft, vibrant, and glinting in the sunlight
Sometimes invisible but remarkably strong
Oneness - will stitch together to make whole.
And in doing so, make sense of it all.

Encountering the oneness paradigm

A paradigm shift

> '"*Once upon a time, not so long ago, there was a little girl, and her name was Emily. And she had a shop…It was rather an unusual shop because it didn't sell anything. You see everything in that shop window was a thing that somebody had once lost, and Emily had found and brought home to Bagpuss. Emily's cat Bagpuss. The most important, the most beautiful, the most magical saggy old cloth cat in the whole wide world…*
>
> *One day Emily found a thing. She brought it back to the shop and put it Down in front of Bagpuss who was in the shop window fast asleep as usual. But then Emily said some magic words… And Bagpuss was wide-awake. And when Bagpuss wakes up all his friends wake up too"*"
> (Firmin and Postgate, 1974).

The story of 'Bagpuss' is the closest analogy I could think of to depict not only the striking differences between the flat world paradigm and the oneness paradigm but, also, the significance of the shift from one to the other. Kuhn (1962) coined the phrase a 'paradigm shift' to describe the process whereby science evolves by 'an important change that happens when the usual way of thinking about or doing something is replaced by a new and different way' (Kuhn, 1962 as quoted in Lombrozo, 2016). At the beginning of the story, Bagpus initially appears in black and white photographs which are placed within the pages of a photo album. Each photograph is separate and distinct from the next. They are compartmentalised and tidy, one to each page. Each photograph is a snapshot of just one moment in time. The structure of the book only makes sense when each page is turned in chronological order in a very rational and linear way. Likewise, the flat world paradigm seemed to mirror this image as the messed-up selves had described it as a two-dimensional – black and white, static, linear, fragmented, tidy, and boxy world. I also found it quite enchanting how the author then uses a 'magical' moment when Bagpuss "wakes up and all his friends wake up too" to entirely transform the story into a colourful moving film. Whereas Bagpuss was previously just a black and white photograph of a "saggy old cloth cat", he suddenly transforms, as if by

magic, into a living, fully technicolour cat. Moreover, his friends are no longer just toys or ornaments but are 'real'. Similarly, when the messed-up selves encountered the oneness paradigm they described it as a real-life living organism that was constantly moving, changing, growing, and evolving as one coherent whole. It made them free, safe, and was life-changing. Jeremy tried to portray the contrast between these two paradigms:

> *"it was almost as if church was separate. And your secular life was separate to everything else. It was all boxes. And you came to the workshop and suddenly, the teaching was all about, 'you are one being'. And suddenly, all these different compartments didn't make sense anymore. And that, that was the most radical thing. That just blew it out the water! Suddenly, it wasn't like, Christian stuff, you know goes there and that stuff goes there. It blew it all out…it all kind of came together"* (Jeremey-8-3).

This was recently confirmed when Barbara, a recent visitor to CCD who had also been undertaking her Rapha journey for a few years described this same distinction and the dramatic shift she too had experienced between her previous church and this new oneness paradigm. Barbara commented to me that she felt like she had moved from a "black and white Christianity" to a completely different spirituality; one where her relationship with God was now "three-dimensional and alive". I will examine further the differences between these two paradigms in the **Discussion** chapter.

Given the profound differences between these two paradigms, it is probably not surprising that the messed-up selves had some radical responses when they encountered this new oneness paradigm. But what they did not anticipate was that simply crossing its threshold would, in itself, facilitate change. I will elaborate on this more in the chapter on **How change happens** but, first, I will outline their various responses.

Responses to the oneness paradigm

"Who are you?" said the Caterpillar…
Alice replied, rather shyly, *"I – I hardly know, Sir, just at present – at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."*
"What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar, sternly. *"Explain yourself!"*
"I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir," said Alice, *"because I'm not myself, you see"*
(Caroll, 1865/2017: 64).

The messed-up selves seemed to have three very distinct responses when first encountering this oneness paradigm and each type of response appeared to be influenced by two factors. One was the degree to which the person could emotionally engage their feelings and the other was their willingness to embrace spiritual reality. The latter is very similar to the spirituality of the Indigenous communities previously mentioned in the chapter **Discovering the significance of Place**. It has been described by the formal discourse of CCD as a perspective that advocates there is an 'eternal spiritual world', which is a 'parallel world' to the physical world (Holmes & Williams, 1998: 11). Also, it promotes the idea that, because part of our human nature includes a 'human spirit' this part of our nature is 'part of this supernatural spiritual world – the bridge in all of us to this parallel spiritual universe' (Holmes & Williams, 1998: 2). Spiritual reality is, therefore, a growing awareness and understanding of this spiritual world and our human spirit.

Given this, the first group of messed-up selves seemed able to easily engage their feelings and spontaneously embrace spiritual reality. So, their initial reaction to this oneness paradigm was that they felt safe, hopeful, free, and accepted. Therefore, they immediately felt able to be real and fall apart. In contrast to this, the second group (which included me) significantly struggled to engage their feelings at first. This was not surprising considering they had worked very hard to push down their feelings and were disconnected from them as previously described in the chapter **Life before the door.** And, yet, they appeared very comfortable with embracing spiritual reality. This combination of emotional disconnect whilst simultaneously embracing spiritual reality resulted in them feeling shocked, confused, and outside of their comfort zone, but also able to be real. They couldn't fall apart, however, and it obviously

took them longer to engage their feelings which, in turn, slowed down their ability to change. I will expand on this in the chapter on **How change happens.** The third group had the most complex reaction. On the one hand, they seemed able to easily engage their feelings, but on the other, they initially struggled to embrace spiritual reality. This mixture resulted in them feeling accepted but also, shocked, overwhelmed, confused, exposed, and fearful. Because of their initial reluctance to accept spiritual reality they had to go through a process of realisation to recognise that their damage was worse than they had first thought. During this time, they struggled with the exposure of their damage including their fake masks, and so, understandably, some felt they needed to briefly withdraw. Jeremy gives his account of this experience:

> *" it was almost like, I was living in this Christian denial, 'it's all right, everything will be fine'. Because I had had a mental illness in my past and all that was gone now. So, to come and be confronted with the fact that it wasn't all sorted. And actually, a lot messed up; a hell of a lot messed up. More than what I realised. To then be confronted with that in an almost,*
> *sort of, a whole weekend. It was just too much for me, I had to get away.*
>
> *Once I had gone away, I realised actually, (laughs) this crap is coming With me! I didn't just leave it at Deal it is coming with me. So, in a sense, I had to come back"* (Jeremy-2-2).

Each of these different responses by the messed-up selves was, therefore, rooted in their damage, but all of them were able to experience change.

I wrote this poem to best describe the journey I had been on during this PhD. After I had written it, I realised that it also echoed my own encounter with the oneness paradigm.

Turned Inside Outside

With its words and concepts, it re-awakened beliefs deep within me.
It gave me new beliefs and a hope.
It reinforced my passion to be a voice for the oppressed.
It re-shaped my thinking; it challenged my thinking.
It expanded my mind to take on new horizons.
It excited me; it disappointed me.
It turned me **inside out**.

It stretched me and it turned the world on its head.
It called to me, to the very core of me, to my significance.
It charged me to change and to bring change.
It took all of the different parts of me, one by one.
It laid them out on a table before me.
It examined them and named them.
It threw them all up in the air and brought them all together.
It made me whole.

It affirmed me like a friend and criticized me like my worst enemy.
It helped me to dream, and it opened doors of possibilities.
It showed me the worst of me and my humanity,
with all of its faults and failings.
It showed me where I had come from and new places I had not yet seen.
It understood where I was at, but it knew I could be so much more.

It cried with me for all the years I had suffered oppression as a woman.
It picked me up and gave me back my dignity.
It saw my womanhood as beautiful.
It welcomed me into a world of sisterhood across nations, across countries, across continents
And yet, it refused to only see me as a woman.
It saw a professional, an academic, a daughter, a friend, a lover.
It saw **me.**

It questioned my definition of womanhood and it offended me.
It offered me a mirror to see how I too had oppressed others,
even other women.
Sometimes with my words, sometimes with my position.
Sometimes with my silence, watching,
doing nothing!
Just being there and being part of the problem.

Then it took me by the hand
And gently led me to a place I immediately recognised
It had brought me **home.**
The smell of the scent and the sounds in the air captivated me
As I walked step by step through familiar landscape.
I knew it remembered me and I, in turn, welcomed it.
The excitement welled up inside of me until I could burst
Like being reunited with a long-lost friend after so many years.
This is it! This is **it!!**

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry or both at the same time.
Suddenly, all of the questions, all of the contradictions I had carried for so long
Fell to the floor and simply, evaporated.
Here everything made sense!
And yet, simultaneously, without me even noticing
It pushed me off the end of the world I had come to know.
As if someone had reached down and stretched open the sky like curtains
So, there was only, **beyond.**

Here there were no answers because there were no questions.
I had no words but didn't need them.
I couldn't speak the language
But somehow, I was more understood than I had ever been.
And I knew what was being said **I** had become **us**
And **we** had become **One.**

How change happens

> *'"Real isn't how you are made,"* said the Skin Horse. *"It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to lay with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."*
> *"Does it hurt?"* asked the Rabbit.
> *"Sometimes,"* said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. *"When you are Real, you don't mind being hurt."*
> *"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,"* he asked, *"or bit by bit?"*
> *"It doesn't happen all at once,"* said the Skin Horse. *"You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out, and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real, you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."'*
> (Williams, 1922: 8&9).

As previously mentioned in the chapter **The oneness paradigm,** this paradigm was comprised of four foundational characteristics *values, freedom, safety*, and *transformational change.* Because each element was not just a core ingredient but also, an effect of the synergy this meant change was at the very heart of this paradigm. Also, as these qualities overlapped and reinforced each other, together they created a synergy which, in turn, facilitated healing and wholeness. Given this, it should not be surprising that the messed-up selves appeared to experience change simply by **Encountering the oneness paradigm** as highlighted above. To illustrate further how this synergy worked I will use the aspect of *acceptance*, or its synonym *not being judged*, which is probably one of the bedrocks of how change happens. But I should point out, however, that, just in the same way that freedom was not absolute, so too, *acceptance* was not unconditional in this context. Instead, the messed-up selves felt they were *accepted for who they were*. In other words, for their worth as a person.

The first significant factor to note about *acceptance* is that although it was a core value by itself it was also implicit within the other values because its nature is equality. For example,

everyone is spiritual, and *everyone is unique*. So, all the values blended together and reinforced the feeling for the messed-up selves that they were *accepted*. Also, *acceptance* was tacit within many of the facets of freedom. For instance, there was *no right and wrong* and there were *no expectations or requirements*. Likewise, it was evident in the category of safety, such as, it was *safe to be where they were at*. So, again, each feature in each category strengthened the other to create the condition that acceptance was in the very fabric of CCD.

Secondly, the messed-up selves experienced *acceptance* so tangibly just by meeting other messed-up selves in this oneness paradigm that *they felt they were not alone*, as Melanie illustrates:

> *"And they would tell me their story in return, umm, which uhh, that in itself felt like, "Oh! I am not the only one. You are not judging me. It's O.K.""* (Melanie-2-1).

This connection became so significant that any differences between the messed-up selves, for example, the length of time they had been on their Rapha journey, did not appear to weaken it, as Linda explains:

> *"I could meet people that had travelled the road and were further ahead than I was. And they had been, a lot of them had been far more ill than I had ever been. And yet, they were still now far more well than I had ever been, than I was then"* (Linda-4-1).

Also, one of the impacts of *others 'being real'* or *telling their story* to the messed-up selves as a way of them introducing CCD was that the latter felt that, not only had they been given a considerable level of trust, but, as they had just met, it was *unearned trust*. So, this again endorsed their feeling of *acceptance*. Linda recalls her experience:

> *"Also, their trust to share their stories with me, umm. I don't think I had ever encountered that in a church before, umm. For people to be able to say, "This is my experience, this is what has happened to me, it was very similar, and it is not a problem for me now". And you could tell that was true. It wasn't some sort of denial thing they were doing, they were actually, better now"* (Linda-4-1).

Likewise, the messed-up selves experienced this *unearned trust* by *others paying it forward*

which, in turn, contributed to their sense of *being accepted*, as Ian outlines:

> *"And so, initially, it was a case of, right, O.K. complete strangers are inviting me into their house. Going back to what you were saying Harry, about trust, big issue for me. Because normal people, people outside the community don't do that. Don't normally invite complete strangers into their house and let them stay. So, I spent one night with Philip and Sandi…Yeah, that kind of like, screwed with my head an awful lot"* (Ian-2-1).

Alongside the messed-up selves directly experiencing *acceptance*, they also had the opportunity to witness the reaction of others, as Elizabeth conveys:

> *"it was the honesty that people have that was different from where I'd gone before. That people would just stand up in the service and say where they were at and ask, err for people to stand with them. And when somebody stood up there and said where they were at quite often it led to other people standing up and saying where they were at"* (Elizabeth-2-1).

Besides this, the ethos that *feelings were welcomed* (including *their public display*) resulted in the messed-up selves feeling that this part of their personhood was *accepted*. So, again, each component overlapped and reinforced the others adding to this sense of *acceptance* being part of the milieu. The reason this was so important was that *feeling accepted* seemed to be one of the prerequisites for change.

I will now outline four attributes of transformational change to further explore the process of how change happens. These are *meeting other messed-up selves who were changing, learning to be real, being open to another perspective*, and *'standing with others'*. Like all aspects of the oneness paradigm, they too overlapped and energised each other thereby adding to this synergy so breaking them down into isolated pieces, of course, distorts the wholeness nature of change. Taking the first attribute, namely *meeting other messed-up selves who had already experienced transformational change* appeared to have a spontaneous knock-on effect of giving the messed-up selves *hope* that *change was* also *possible* for them. Melanie gives her response:

> *"And actually, there is hope it will get better. It doesn't have to, it won't stay like this"* (Melanie-2-1).

Given how long some of the messed-up selves had lived with hopelessness in the flat world paradigm, this alone was a significant and powerful change. But, also, as referred to earlier in the chapter **The oneness paradigm**, sometimes just hearing *others tell their story* was enough to *connect with the pain* of the messed-up selves. Sandi recounts her experience of this:

> *"I can remember one day Joan coming 'round and asking me to tell my story. And as I started telling my story, umm. After a few minutes, she started crying and I said, "Do you want me to stop?" "No, no! continue" (they laugh) "tell me more!" And she's crying more and I'm like, "really, should I stop?" And she's like, "No, no, no!" (they laugh)…And she'd be like, "no, no it's good!" (They laugh). "But it doesn't look good" (they laugh)"* (Sandi-2-2).

Hence, by *others sharing how change had happened to them*, even *more change* was created and, therefore, produced an almost *contagion effect*. Also, implicit within the attribute, *others are changing*, is *the know-how to change*. This seemed to include *knowledge of the Rapha journey principles*, *the practical application of these tools* and therefore, *the relevant lived experience*. Linda clarifies this from her perspective:

> *"It's that therapeutic experience and knowledge. That huge body of knowledge because you've got so many people that have travelled so far in their lives. It's more than knowledge it is the living of that"* (Linda-4-1).

This know-how was passed on to the messed-up selves through the Rapha Journey workshops and a variety of CCD forums, for example, Ladies' nights, women's clinics, discipleship groups, one-to-one sessions, and mentoring. But alongside this, they were shared even more widely through informal day-to-day social interactions. Moreover, another aspect that was intrinsic to *others are changing* was the fact that having *already experienced change* themselves, they *carried hope* the messed-up selves *would be able to change* too. Linda explains her observation of this:

> *"They have come through it and so, there was that hope that they carried when I was feeling pretty hopeless"* (Linda-2-1).

Likewise, this *hope that others carried* for the messed-up selves also embodied that *they saw their potential, believed in them,* and *called out their true self*. Sandi sums this up:

> *"People didn't see me how I saw me…Because they believed something about me that I couldn't and even wouldn't believe about myself to start with, umm. Because they saw potential in me that I didn't even think was there"* (Sandi-4-1).

So, just as with *acceptance*, all these characteristics individually generated *hope* in the messed-up selves, but the cumulative effect was immense for them.

The second factor that appeared to facilitate change was *'being real'*. Some of the messed-up selves saw this, along with *acceptance*, as integral to how change happens, as Jeremy tries to explain:

> *"it was all about being real. Being honest about how you were feeling about yourself, and about other people. And then that was the basis from which you"* (Jeremy-3-1).

For some, *'being real'* came very naturally to them and, therefore, they *only needed permission* and encouragement to do so. Ellie recalls her experience of this:

> *"my head said one thing and my spirit said another…so, I started to learn about how 'what I think I think is not necessarily what I think'. So, I learnt how to be real. So, in a prayer group the following week they were like, "Praise God!" and I'm like, 'I really want to go home and read Harry Potter if I'm honest!'"* (Ellie-3-1).

Whilst, for others, it appeared far more of a struggle, as they had to *learn to take their masks off.* Given how long they had worn these in the flat world paradigm because of living in Christian denial and/or fear of judgment, this was a significant step. Suzanne highlights her difficulties:

"not being able to do the Christian smile…so, things like that just weren't cutting the mustard at CCD. It didn't make any difference, the smile people could see through it. And so, that scary moment of knowing you were, you've been rumbled (laughs and they laugh). I had been rumbled! (They all laugh again) I couldn't get away with that anymore" (Suzanne-3-1).

But, for some, *'being real'* was clearly even more of a battle. This was as a result of the damage to their emotions which meant, initially, they were *unable to find their feelings* without a significant amount of assistance. Edward describes his conflict:

"I was trying to (sighs) find out where, where my feelings were, which I'd so bottled up, so bottled up, umm. Yeah, I can remember a few techniques people had to get me, get me going. Dear Charlie in particular, (laughs) realised I was sitting there, umm with, with the lid on and he found a way of making me angry. I forget exactly what he said. It was something like, sort of suggesting, suggesting that I thought of something in a way, which was completely, completely misrepresenting me. That was a really good way of winding me up (laughs) and, umm. 'Oh! Right. O.K. Yes got the message – be a bit more honest about things'" (Edmund-3-1).

Whilst, for some other messed-up selves, it seemed even more complex still. For, not only did they *struggle to find their feelings*, but, once they had found them, they were *not able to identify them*. Emma illustrates the process she went through:

"I had feelings, but I didn't ever use them they were just kind of locked down. And then when I got here, they kind of, umm. I think they must have seen that I was just kind of full. And they very, they very gently kind of started to tease them out even though it might have been messy. And, but actually, learning how to let the, the umm, backlog…And also, having names for those emotions. Because before, they were just whizzing around. And then, and then once they had started to come out. I never even knew what they were in the beginning. And then, I was able to identify, 'Oh! that must have been anger?' Or 'that must have been frustration?' And, actually, giving things a name, you know, passion, sort of thing, umm. Because before they were just kind of like, umm Whoosh! and you're wiped out!" (Emma-4-1).

Also, once the messed-up selves had *learned to identify their feelings*, they then had to *learn how to fully engage them* and *let them go*. Emma and Carol give a depiction of their experiences:

> *"learning how to let out the, the umm, backlog, umm. Obviously, now I'm able to kind of, let out, I think (Christine laughs) most times, healthy chunks at a time. When I, when I kind of, think to myself, 'Oh my gosh! I'm laughing so much I could cry. O.K. So, I'm actually quite sad inside I better just (laughs) go and go and let that out'"* (Emma-4-1).

And

> *"once you find a way of actually being able to get rid of it and realizing there's ways you can change and, umm finding a process through that. Then, that is just amazing, and it gives such hope"* (Carol-5-1).

Given the emotional place where the messed-up selves started from, the years they had had to hide or deny what they were really feeling in the flat world paradigm and not to mention the effort it took some of them to achieve the full meaning of *'being real'*, it is not surprising the importance they placed on it. So, for them, it was not only a catalyst for change but also an outcome of change.

The third aspect which the messed-up selves recognised promoted change was *being open to another perspective.* Part of this involved growing *an awareness and understanding of the spiritual world* and *their human spirit* which was mentioned earlier in the chapter **Responses to the oneness paradigm**. Coupled with this was a different view from the Western culture of what is emotionally healthy or emotionally sick, which was referred to in the chapter **A tale of two communities or the story of one community from two perspectives**. But the messed-up selves seemed to also equate this with *being willing to be challenged by others* including by *"God's perspective".* Grant gives an account of his experience of this:

> *"Here, I feel I've got people stepping back looking at me saying, "So, when are you going to grow up then? Where's your maturity?" And I've got God looking over my shoulder saying, "Where's your maturity in this? Rather than weeping about yourself have a look at what you're going to become and how you going to do it and stand on*

your own two feet. And have a look at yourself in the mirror and be who you should become!"" (Grant-4-3).

Again, given the oppressive nature of the flat world paradigm it is probably not surprising that some of the messed-up selves felt this quality was so powerful it was the pre-requisite for change, as Nicholas explains:

"It starts with having permission to believe something else…Actually, I had a set of, I had a code by which I lived. It was challenged, "Do you really believe it?" "What's it doing for you?" "Sweet nothing! I am always going to be like this unless I change what I believe. Unless I think and actually feel what I believe to be true I am never going to go anywhere"…

And actually, one of the things is the whole thing of, I am a whole being. I am not just this segment here and there's another segment here and another segment here. I am a whole person, this affects this, affects this. I don't like it always. I want to have just a cold. I don't want it to have to mean something else. But on the other hand, I am a whole being. And that was a radical change in my thinking. It meant if I changed in one area (clicks fingers) everything could change, potentially" (Nicholas-7-2).

Similar to *'being real'* it was evident that some of the messed-up selves found it easy to *accept this new perspective*, as Anthony conveys:

"And on the Friday, I was actually going to a workshop, which for some reason made a lot of sense to me, umm. Although people had said to me,"a lot of what they teach here is counter-intuitive" it still made a lot of sense right off the bat. So, umm my initial impressions were, umm it just, a lot of it made a lot of sense. It wasn't as off the wall as I thought it would be" (Anthony -2-1).

Whilst, for others, this was far more of a challenge, and it took them some time to adjust to this *new way of thinking*. Carol gives an account of her experience:

"it's sort of like, everything that I thought was one way was actually, a different way…and so, everything got turned on its head" (Carol-5-1).

Also, *being willing to be challenged by others* seemed to have a knock-on effect because it then exposed, at least for some of the messed-up selves that their *damage was far worse* than they had initially thought. Melanie provides an example of this from her life:

> *"I think people hold up a mirror, umm to who you are, to who you are now. So, you can see yourself and you can see kind of the areas. For me, it was people loving me really highlighted to me that actually, I really don't love myself. And I really, really struggle to allow love in, umm"* (Melanie-7-1).

Linked to this was the fact that some messed-up selves were *challenged by others* simply by *them* '*being real'*. It was as if this level of reality, or authenticity, seemed to have the power to *expose the messed-up selves' masks*. Ian describes his experience of this:

> *"you can look at people and go, 'mmm, I'm not getting the entire picture, am I, you know?...The whole issue of masks and, 'I'll wear this mask for you and I'll wear this mask for you and this mask for you and you know? And it's a case of, "Take off the masks!" and, you know? Yeah, what's underneath may not be particularly pleasant to look at but is where I am at the moment"* (Ian-4-2).

So, just like *hope*, it appeared that *change* and *'being real'* had an almost *contagious* quality - the more the messed-up selves were *exposed to others 'being real'*, the more it *challenged them to 'be real'* too. This ripple effect, or synergy, seemed to result in this deeper level of reality existing within the atmosphere of this oneness paradigm. Thus, when the messed-up selves encountered this paradigm and stepped over the threshold, it spontaneously *exposed their buried feelings* which they had hidden for so many years. Carol recalls when this happened to her:

> "*it almost felt like, umm all, all the feelings of all the years that I'd had bottled up (laughs). It was like everything softened up and all started (laughs) to rise to the surface. And that was incredibly scary because it was just like all this crap really, just masses of emotions and everything it just all started to float (laughs) to the top. And, and then that's horrible because you can see it all around you. All this stuff you've been trying to bury. And you know everyone else can see it so, it feels very scary. And*

it sort of like, turns well, turns your whole world upside down. But it fills it with possibilities and, umm a sense of hope that things can be different" (Carol-5-2).

Like so many facets of the oneness paradigm, *being willing to be challenged by others* seemed to have two contrasting elements that were twinned. So, just as it facilitated the messed-up selves to *discover the true extent of their damage*, it also *helped them to recognise more of their true selves*. Following on from above, Melanie continues with her story:

"But also, in terms of holding up a mirror to how you are now. It's almost like, they also hold up another mirror. And just, helping you see who you are becoming. But it's like, they help you. They help you both find and carry. And they hold that belief for you, in terms of who you are becoming. And they call that out in you…They believe in you, and they call that out and celebrate it I suppose as it's, as it's emerging?" (Melanie-7-1).

Although the messed-up selves acknowledged that *being challenged by another perspective* or *by others*, or even just *by the milieu*, was *uncomfortable*, it did not seem to faze them. Instead, they seemed to actually welcome situations or opportunities that resulted in them *feeling outside their comfort zone* because they appreciated this would somehow instigate even *more change* for them. Tony tries to sum this up by using the ethos of CCD being a field hospital and the practice of supporting others by *paying it forward*:

"it's the situations you get into err…sort of puts you outside your sort of comfort zone. You know, being in the situation where it's like Charlie said, "You have people all of a sudden". It's just you and your family and then next thing you know, it's you, your family plus somebody from the church living with you or two people or, you know?...

I think it's the same as, you know, 'Get out your sick bed and let someone else get in now'. And so, you're sort of thinking, 'hang on, I know I'm not right yet but why am I having to get out and be and no idea who I am?' And be well when someone else is worse off than you are, and you have to try and help them" (Tony-3-1).

The fourth component of how change happened was the practice of *'standing with someone'*. As mentioned previously in the chapter **The oneness paradigm**, there are two aspects to this. One is when the person makes a spiritual declaration or, as it is sometimes called, someone *'putting a stake in the ground'* and the other, when those witnessing this event *affirm it.* These tools have become so renowned for facilitating change that, periodically, a whole Sunday morning service will be given over to this practice. Philip explains the symbolism of these concepts for him:

> *"I'd never heard anybody use the phrase, "I'll, let's put a stake in the ground" until I came here. And the instant I heard it, it made sense. All the years of pegging out sites and putting surveyor's staffs in the ground, stakes. Put them in the ground trying to map out and see the size, see the extent, "**This** is our plot of land! **This** is where we're going to build." And putting the pegs in, "T**his** is what it's gonna look like. **This** is how big it is!"…It makes sense. And very significant lifestyle changes as a result of those phrases, 'standing, standing with someone', 'putting stakes in the ground'. Just phenomenal! I think they are the tools that change us, perhaps? Or, or they are the mechanism by which change happens or is facilitated, umm. The catalyst to move it forward, perhaps?"* (Philip-3-12).

It is worth reiterating that the practice of *'standing with someone'* did not just *change the person* making the declaration, but also *those who were supporting* them. Likewise, the same seemed the case for *paying it forward*, as Grant outlines:

> *"So, I understood this in a biblical context because I've been taught it before I came here. But I didn't understand any outworking of it. Is, that when you are giving into people's lives it changes you. Now, I thought it changed you just because you feel good. Because you've blessed somebody, and you've done something. And all that kind of warm fussy stuff. But I think it lays deeper than that. I think it, there's a spiritual dynamic that is altered. Rather, that alters perhaps even within yourself when you're doing something within other people's lives…You will grow at the same time as helping someone else grow"* (Grant-3-9).

Although all the aspects above illustrate how the influence of others or simply the atmosphere of the oneness paradigm, generated change for the messed-up selves, it is also important to

note that, alongside this, and equally important for them, was the part they played in their journey of healing. This seemed to materialise in four different ways, but integral to all of them was that the messed-up selves had to *take responsibility for their damage, for the person they were becoming, for their journey of healing,* and *for all aspects of their lives*. This philosophy was in stark contrast to the passivity and dependency they had experienced in the flat world paradigm in relation to the church and/or mental health services. Howard illustrates this with examples from his life:

> *"The whole, umm thing about taking ownership and responsibility for my baggage and damage…Learning how to deal with my baggage for myself rather than, either a) waiting ages and ages for God to heal whatever that meant? Or b) going off to see specialists at prayer ministry schools or whatever, umm and having, umm a wonderful weekend away but then, in the following weeks and months not being able to help myself in that sort of way… Being equipped to take ownership"* (Howard-3-1).

However, even though the messed-up selves understood the benefits of *taking responsibility* in relation to all these elements because it meant that they could *initiate change*, for some, it was still *a challenge*. Karen recalls her struggle with this:

> *"One of the expectations that got me when I first got here was, I had to take responsibility for myself because I hadn't been expected to do that before. So, that was quite a shock (laughs)"* (Karen-2-2).

Finally, one other way that expedited change that the messed-up selves identified was a critical moment or *a 'tipping point'*. This phenomenon was recognised by Gladwell (2000) to explain, the 'emergence of fashion trends' or other 'mysterious' changes in everyday life (Gladwell, 2000: 9&7). He described a tipping point as having three traits which, in turn, cause a social 'epidemic'. These are:

> 'one, contagiousness; two, the fact that little causes can have big effects; and three, that changes happens not gradually but at one dramatic moment…The world of the Tipping Point is a place where the unexpected becomes the expected, where radical change is more than a possibility. It is…a certainty' (Gladwell, 2000: 7, 9, 13 & 14).

For some of the messed-up selves, this *tipping point* was *a particular concept* of the official discourse which suddenly connected deeply with them. Melanie gives an example of this:

> *"there was a line on the very first workshop that just completely transformed my thinking and gave me hope which was, "The Lord can take the pain and take the damage and make it as if it had never happened". That the level of healing could be that thorough, umm. Because that is the exact opposite of what I had been taught…the tears just kept completely rolling down my cheeks because it went in. That was my moment I suppose when I thought, 'That's what I want!'"* (Melanie-9-1).

Whilst, for others, this *critical moment* occurred the very first time, they *applied some of the techniques* mentioned above, as Anthony conveys:

> *"I started implementing the tools…getting the anger out and giving it to the Lord, and what not…I definitely felt the difference in letting the anger out and having people around me instantaneously, "you're a bit softer now". And people would open up and people said, "Your eyes look different"…I felt, I felt, for the first time I felt content where I was temporarily. But the first time I've sat down and watched T.V. without fidgeting and, you know, umm, trying to do something else at the same time"* (Anthony-3-1).

Other messed-up selves felt this *tipping point* occurred when they had *undone* a significant amount of their *historic damage* which, in turn, tipped the balance of the scales. They felt as if they changed from *living as this messed-up self* to *living more consistently in their true self*. Suzanne gives her observations of this process occurring in her life:

> *"And it took me years to come to that place where I could actually tip that balance and befriend that person, who I really was in Christ. And the reality, living in the real world and, umm and who I really was. And getting rid of enough masks and all the checks and balances that I had that I had built up in my own life"* (Suzanne-2-2).

I wrote this poem after I had repeatedly re-started my analysis. I realised that each time I dismantled the design and cleared my wall I too had changed and saw my data in a new light.

From this new place, I was then able to start to rebuild my theory. I was simultaneously also aware that I had changed at every stage along this PhD journey.

Becoming

Slap! As the clay hits the wheel.
Gently, I caress it into shape
First this way and then that way,
Moulding it into the image in my mind's eye.
Then, crushing it back to the ball it used to be
I repeat this process again, and again.

This time, it seems to move before I touch it.
Does it have a life of its own?
Or are there hands sculpting it that I don't see?
Now, there is no distinction between it and me
I too feel the push and the pull.

Pieces are removed from me, and others added
Until we are seamlessly one.
The brutality of it and the beauty,
Perfectly entwined.
This was not what I set out to create,
But then I am not who I was.
I am changed, flawed, and becoming.

A new me and a new spirituality

When (Pooh) awoke in the morning, the first thing he saw was
Tigger, sitting in front of the glass and looking at himself.
"Hallo!" said Pooh. *"Hallo!"* said Tigger.
"I've found somebody just like me. I thought I was the only one of them."...

"Don't you know what Tiggers like? asked Pooh…
"I do," said Tigger. *"Everything there is in the world except honey and haycorns and - what were those hot things called?" "Thistles." "Yes, and those."...*
But the more Tigger put his nose into this and his paw into that, the more things he found which Tigger didn't like…
"What happens now?"...

So, Tigger came closer, and he leant over the back of Roo's chair, and suddenly he put out his tongue, and took one large gololloP…
But the Extract of Malt had gone…
Then Tigger looked up at the ceiling, and closed his eyes, and his tongue went round and round his chops, in case he had left any outside, and a peaceful smile came over his face as he said,
"So that's what Tiggers like!"
(Milne, 1926/1994: 142, 150 & 151).

The two outcomes the messed-up selves experienced from changing in the oneness paradigm were the discovery of and *becoming their true self* and what felt to them like *a radically different spirituality*. To fully appreciate this contrast, it is important to remind ourselves of how life was for them in the flat world paradigm as previously mentioned in the chapter **Life before the door**. The messed-up selves felt fragmented and that the different parts of them namely, *their emotions, beliefs, relationship with God, relationship with themselves, and relationship with others* were somehow compartmentalised. This sense of disconnection with themselves felt to them as if "something was indeed missing" (Anthony-6-2). But, also, so

much of the person they had become and what they believed about themselves stemmed from the oppressive flat world paradigm with its judgemental ideology, and scaremongering. Coupled with this were its requirements and expectations to conform to a certain mould; a Christian clone. This resulted in the messed-up selves feeling unable to admit they had mental health difficulties or express their emotions, and, ultimately, it made them feel like a "second-rate person" (Sandi-4-1). Some created a fake self or persona, a "Christian mask" (Suzanne-3-1) as a way of coping with this.

Turning to the oneness paradigm, it seemed that in just the same way that the ideology and the culture of the flat world paradigm had shaped the messed-up selves, so too, the oneness paradigm changed them. I will illustrate this by exploring seven different features. The first of these was the contrast between the messed-up selves coming from a fragmented and compartmentalised paradigm to one that was *holistic* and *in harmony*. This extended to the belief that they were also *one whole being* that was *interconnected with the spiritual world.* Nicholas gives his description of this as previously mentioned in the chapter **How change happens:**

> *"I am a whole being. I am not just this segment here and there's another segment here and another segment here. I am a whole person, this affects this, affects this"* (Nicholas-7-2).

Linked to this was the philosophy in relation to *emotions*. Whereas, in the flat world paradigm, the messed-up selves had *learned not to have their emotions* because they might lead them astray or because they weren't holy in the oneness paradigm, but they discovered, as Linda recalls:

> *"emotions are welcome and accepted and invested in"* (Linda-3-2).

Given this viewpoint, and because of their journey of change, they not only *grew more connected to their emotions* but, also, *more comfortable expressing* them including, publically. Also, the messed-up selves discovered they were *able to engage with* and *let go of their historic pain.* The third aspect that demonstrated the power of this philosophy in this new oneness paradigm is the idea of *a true self*. Anthony explains how this concept

transformed his perspective and became an inspiration for him to pursue his journey of change:

> *"CCD said, "there is a true you in there let's find it!" and I just went off like a rocket…I'm still struggling seeing myself as that man as well. 'Cause I have seen him, umm in a vision just for the record at that point and it was one of the most awe inspiriting and scariest things I've probably seen"* (Anthony-6-1 & 8).

Coupled with this was the understanding that *everyone's true self is unique*. So, again, this completely contradicted the impression the messed-up selves had in the flat world paradigm that they had to become the same as everyone else. Nicholas sums up his experience of embracing this *freedom to discover the person whom he is becoming* and his *uniqueness:*

> *"the emphasis is on becoming, finding out who you are created to be in Christ, umm…taking responsibility, umm. And finding out, umm who you are, umm who this person is, what their interests and passions are. And also, how or who Christ is and relating from that person to Christ and visa versa. And there is a real relationship, a real interchange. But it was very, very, it is very, very unique and it doesn't look like anybody else's journey…*
>
> *And actually, if you want to, you know whatever you want to do as long as, you are doing that in your true self, who you are, you know in Christ. It was like, there was such a, there was such a life in that. It is so, it's celebrated"* (Nicholas-3-1).

Having this opportunity in the oneness paradigm to *focus on themselves*, whether this was *undoing their damage* from the past or *exploring their passions*, couldn't have been more different for the messed-up selves from the life they had known in the flat world paradigm. Nicholas illustrates this disparity using the story of 'the good Samaritan' (The Bible, Luke 10: 30-37):

> *"I felt a bit like the guy in the story on the Jericho Road where, you know he gets beaten up and carted off to a hotel. And the guy who was helping him out says, "Can you get up tomorrow and polish the silver before you get well", umm. And the*

emphasis (in CCD) was on actually there is a right time for that. But there's also a priority too, 'God's agenda is you, not mission. God's agenda starts with you. You can't love other people unless you love yourself and find out how to love yourself. And be at one with yourself, know who you are'" (Nicholas-4-1).

The process of the messed-up selves *discovering* and *connecting with their true selves* started with *embracing this new perspective*, as Edmund explains:

"I think another way of putting it is this, this realisation that, umm there is a version of myself or whatever, that Christ created or having, means for me to be. And I, I can aim to get closer to that, but I don't have to continue to struggle and wallow in the, yeah, the mud or whatever, the mire" (Edmund-4-3).

Then, the more they were able to *let go of their damage* and *welcome their true self*, the more *consistency they found in living as their true self*. Sandi describes the struggle she had:

"(you're) at a workshop, where you're stood in all your gifting and anointing, which you could hold for a weekend (laughs)… the rest of the time you can't keep it together like that, you know. And I mean, umm you know, as we are growing and changing in our journeys we're able to keep hold of that person more" (Sandi-3-2 & 3).

Implicit within the belief that *everyone is unique* was the assumption that *everyone is equal*. This was also expressed through the other values, for example, *everyone is spiritual, is sick,* and *has potential*, as previously mentioned in the chapter **The oneness paradigm**, which seemed to facilitate the messed-up selves *becoming more of their true self*. This was a far cry from their experiences of the flat world paradigm where they had felt judged as less than others. Likewise, because of the dogma of the flat world paradigm, they had also felt judged by God and lived in fear of Him punishing them. This, in turn, had resulted in them feeling disconnected from Him. Whereas, in the oneness paradigm, *they learned that God loves them*, as Tracey portrays:

"So, to come to a church where people kind of, ask you your name, give you a cup of coffee, umm. So, actually, God doesn't hate you or want to kill you, He actually, He loves you (laughs) (Dawn laughs)…So, for me it took a long time, I don't know.

Anyway, it took a while to get my head round that (laughs) and get everything round that, really…but once I understood and learnt I guess that God does love me, umm, it became quite an amazing, umm experience, umm. Always amazing? Not always, didn't always feel good, umm. But then obviously, I had lots of err, I had lots of err, feelings towards God from the fact that I thought He wanted to kill me and, umm (makes noises with her mouth) that I had to let go of.

So, it was amazing to come to a place where now I can go, "do you know what? God's alright, me and Him get on alright most of the time" and umm, yeah. So, so, yeah, that's how it was different to my old church and umm, I think there's just that honesty, that level of honesty. And actually, I don't know I guess I've learnt to have that relationship with I suppose God and myself" (Tracey-3-1).

Once the messed-up selves felt they could have *an authentic relationship with God*, they also began to experience this as *part of their daily life* which, again, was a significant transformation from how it had previously been, as Melanie conveys:

"I did have moments and experiences of really meeting The Lord, but I think I could really pinpoint those moments and they were really few and far between. And I think the other thing with CCD is that those moments got much, much, much quicker together. So, rather than it being a year since the last time I heard from The Lord or since I had had a very profound encounter with Christ, it was last week and then it was you know this morning, do you know? And it was much, much quicker" (Melanie-3-1).

Coupled with this was the *belief in the spiritual world* and *their human spirit*. The messed-up selves not only found these ideas radical but also, had tangible experiences of them, as Karen and Lisa recall:

"God was real and here and now rather than just on a Sunday. So, I didn't understand anything about the spiritual side of stuff. So, it was like a complete and utter shock (laughs) and it took me a few months to get over (laughs), over it, umm" (Karen-2-1).

> *"I must admit, that (we can change) gave me so much hope…To know that, I can actually alter the whole structure of myself, spiritually. And do it also, in a way that if my children choose it, they can have release from it and that is absolutely awesome! It's not just, 'brought under the blood' and all that crap (Stacey and Nancy laugh). It's just totally and utterly gone, really (Nancy laughs)"* (Lisa-4-12).

The messed-up selves also found *this spiritual connectedness impacted their relationships* with each other as previously mentioned in the chapter **The oneness paradigm**. They experienced *a depth* and *a spiritual reality* they had not known before. Philip gives his observations of this phenomenon:

> *"It's the 'common cause' thing, of one accord. Because somebody has a problem or a cause and you agree and you 'stand with it'. You are in that cause, umm. So, there's an affiliation; it's more than words…It doesn't necessarily require anything physical. It just requires some sort of, 'standing on a common piece of ground spiritually', err. I don't know how it works but it does. It's very significant"* (Philip-3-11).

Since finding this *new spiritual reality* twenty-four seven and seven days a week along with this *deeper level of reality* and *connection in their relationships*, the messed-up selves seemed to have a different perspective on *attending church*. Also, because they were no longer living under the oppressive and legalistic flat world paradigm (and given how damaging this had been for them), it was not unusual for some of them to *take time out* from attending the Sunday morning services. But, for some, this newfound freedom was so empowering that they then struggled to return, as Lisa highlights:

> *"when I started at first, I never thought I'd have time out of church; I was quite 'train track'. And then, when I realised, I need to and Susan said to me, "it'll only be a few weeks". I knew it wouldn't be a few weeks, I knew it would take longer than that, umm. And in actual fact, I am still struggling to come back to church after about five years"* (Lisa-5-1).

For other messed-up selves, the impact of *finding this new level of reality* was even greater. They found when they visited other churches that it felt to them as if they were having an

allergic reaction to returning to an oppressive religion and level of unreality. Stacey describes her experience:

> *"I can't go into ninety-nine per cent of churches without feeling in a worse place than when I went in. And feeling like, 'I want to get the hell out!' That, 'I hate it!' That, 'I can't stand these people' and 'I can't stand the whole experience'. So, CCD…it's like, it's alive, you know. It matters and it means something. It's not just, a bunch of people standing around, dressed up nice, judging each other and singing a bunch of songs to make them feel better about their life. Like, it's not an act"* (Stacey-4-1).

I wrote this poem during a period of interruption from this research process when I missed my PhD so desperately. I feel it illustrates how it had become so much a part of me and the person whom I am becoming.

Missing me

You were in me and all around me.
You were everywhere I looked.
You were there to greet me in the morning with a new idea.
Sometimes, you'd patiently waited all night to tell me.
Other times, you woke me up with a start in the middle of the night
This was a **now**!!
And I couldn't get back to sleep 'til I had written it down.

You came with me wherever I went
Like Winnie the Pooh, the faithful friend.
"Wherever I am, there's always Pooh, there's always Pooh and Me."
You'd whisper in my ear during conversations with friends
Or even while just watching T.V.
We'd chatter endlessly on the train
And you'd be my last thought before turning off the light.

Sometimes people asked after you, *"How's she doing?"*

But before I'd even finished my sentence, they'd changed the subject.
Some asked but secretly hoped the answer to be, *"It's over, she's gone!"*
Some were genuinely interested and got as excited as me
As if I was sharing, I'd just fallen in love for the very first time.
Sometimes a stranger would ask, and I'd stumble,
At a loss for words, afraid they might judge you.

But now, you no longer greet me or are with me.
You just hang on the wall silently, motionless
Or hide in the cupboard like an old forgotten toy.
I don't even have a feeling about that or you, just this numbness.
What was it that connected us and how did it get broken, and so quickly?
What was it you used to say?
I'm not sure I'd even recognise your voice now.

My eye catches the cover of a book I had once devoured.
You and I had danced and laughed all around the room
At the realisation, someone on the other side of the world had also met you.
I open it but the music doesn't play.
Words that had once meant so much to me
'Place', 'being real' and *'change'* are hollow now
And you are just someone I used to know once.

There were *'Tigger days'*
When all I wanted to do was bounce with excitement at a eureka moment!
There were *'Pooh days'*
When I felt like I was *"a bear of very little brain"*.
And there were *'Wol (Owl) days'*
When the whole house got turned upside down.
But mostly, there were *'Christopher Robbin adventure days'*
When you would lead me on an *"expotition"* to somewhere.

But now, every day feels like *'an Eyeore without his tail day'*
When I think sadly to myself, *"why?"*

And sometimes I think, *"wherefore?"*

And sometimes I think, *"Inasmuch as which?"*

Like Rabbit getting lost in the fog and not knowing which way is home

I need you to find me!

Because there is no **me** without you

And I'm not sure tea and honey will do until you do.

Discussion

> ‘To (Lucy’s) surprise (the wardrobe door) opened quite easily, … She immediately stepped into the wardrobe and got in among the (mostly long fur) coats and rubbed her face against them,… She took a step further in - then two or three steps always expecting to feel woodwork against the tips of her fingers. But she could not feel it…
>
> A moment later she found that she was standing in the middle of a wood at night-time with snow under her feet and snowflakes falling through the air…*“This is the land of Narnia”,* said the Faun.’
>
> (Lewis, 1950/2014: 15, 16 & 20).

Two paradigms: The Flat world paradigm and the oneness paradigm

When comparing the flat world paradigm with the oneness paradigm, it seemed as if there was no parallel between the two. Not only did they have two completely different sets of contents, but the way the pieces in each paradigm related to each other was also very distinct. As I previously mentioned in the chapter **Encountering the oneness paradigm**, the pieces in the flat world paradigm were two-dimensional, binary, fragmented, compartmentalised, tidy, and boxy. This was why I had compared them to the black and white photographs in the photo album in the story of Bagpuss. So, even when the messed-up selves attempted to try to change, they felt their choices were limited, and ultimately, failed to work. In contrast, the oneness paradigm was a place where everything commingled to create a harmonious whole, including aspects that would otherwise be contradictions. All the pieces overlapped, facilitated, and strengthened each other to create a synergy.

Given this, it made identifying both the process of change and the various responses to the oneness paradigm extremely complex. Because these two paradigms were so completely different and none of the pieces matched, I could not find a theoretical framework that would encompass both. This again posed a significant challenge for me. So, the only way I could

find to resolve this was to have a set of theoretical codes for 'before the door' and an entirely different set for 'after the door'. Coupled with this, when I was examining the reactions of all the groups to the oneness paradigm, I found it interesting how they were so contradictory, as previously mentioned in the chapter **Revisiting the Salugenic Place**. On the one hand, the messed-up selves experienced hope, freedom, safety, reality, acceptance, love – a life-changing experience. Whilst, on the other, the functional selves and the too unwell selves felt the complete opposite and appeared to have an almost allergic reaction. For example, they found it messy, unstructured, unsupportive, and perceived others to be selfish and intrusive. They also felt judged, that they couldn't connect, they didn't fit in, it was painful, and, consequently, they wanted to leave. What I found so paradoxical about this was that the reaction of the functional selves mirrored exactly the responses of the too unwell selves, even though they came to CCD with completely opposite expectations and levels of need.

Following on from this, another enigma was how the functional selves perceived the messed-up selves as not 'being real' but, rather, that they had a fake persona. Belinda gives her observations of this:

> *"I'd met their 'workshop selves' (laughs) which were a little bit different to their 'rest of their time selves' (laughs)"* (Belinda-2-1).

Yet, the messed-up selves felt they were the ones who had let go of their "Christian mask", were now 'being real' and were confronting the full reality of their damage. Considering how strong and different these reactions were from the messed-up selves, it would be interesting to explore more what was going on for them. Likewise, I was also aware that all my participants had the Christian faith before they came to CCD. Although there had been four members (two men and two women) in my sample who had not had the Christian faith prior to coming to CCD, but were unable to attend on the day my focus groups were held. So, again, it would be interesting to understand how those without faith, or even those who have a different faith, respond compared with those with the Christian faith.

The flat world paradigm and secondary literature

One of the themes of this thesis has been how the messed-up selves changed from the fragmented and broken condition they were in to then discovering a new whole and becoming self. Over the years a cacophony of theories, critiques, and narratives has developed about the formation and definition of identity across all disciplines and genres from Locke (1689) to Freud (1923) and through to the present day. One of those who has examined several theories relating to the fragmentation of identity is Layton (1999) who concludes they are 'quite contradictory' (Layton, 1999: 120). Whilst one of the most important contributions to this debate has been the third-wave feminists, for example, Walker (1995), hooks (1981), Butler (1990; 1993) and Collins (1990). They have criticized 'identity politics' for inadvertently fixing identity for example how lesbians are being portrayed. Phelan (1989) expands on this by suggesting that lesbians:

> 'are being portrayed as some homogeneous group…What has been accepted in lesbian feminism is not the lesbian, but the **Lesbian** – the politically /sexually/ culturally correct being, the carrier of **the** lesbian feminist consciousness' (Phelan, 1989: 57, emphasis in the original).

Hekman (2000) goes on to suggest that there are two outcomes from this restrictive 'fixing':

> 'Internally, the members of an identity collectively police identity by creating an ideal to which they expect participants to conform…Externally, it means that…the identity of the members of an identity collective is fixed by the dominant political group. This can be done formally by legal categories – the definition of a protected class' (Hekman, 2000: 297).

Walker (1995) also argues that 'identity politics' has meant feminism has been reduced to 'conform(ing) to an identity and way of living that doesn't allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories' (Walker, 1995: xxxiii). Instead, she asserts that an alternative approach would be one where:

> ‘we find ourselves seeking to create identities that accommodate ambiguity and multiple positionalities…accepting contradiction…in using **and** much more than we use **either/or**’ (Walker, 1995: xxxiii & xxxv, emphasis in the original).

However, the messed-up selves seem to hold to the idea of a core self rather than this post-modernist perspective, albeit that it is fragmented, and they feel disconnected from it. This mirrors the experience of the individuals that Layton and Winnicott (1971/2005) worked with who characterised their state by saying, “‘it’s as though there isn’t really a ME” (Winnicott, 1971/2005: 78; emphasis in the original) which was also ‘painful’ and ‘tormenting’ for them (Layton, 1998: 132 &126). Thus, Layton also advocates for the idea of a ‘core self’ (Layton, 1999: 136). Although, in contrast to Winnicott, she does not see this as a ‘true self’, but rather a ‘continuously evolving negotiator’ between internal and external worlds (Layton, 1999: 26). She also disagrees with those post-modernist theorists who belittle any concept of a ‘unified self’ and view the individual as being able to ‘pick and choose how they wish to represent themselves at any given moment’ (Layton, 1999: 124). Alternatively, Layton proposes this idea of a ‘core self’ and therefore, a ‘sense of unity’ is not only essential for an individual’s good mental health but also their ethical behaviour, as it enables them to be good to themselves and others (Layton, 1999: 136).

Following on from this, one of the central themes of this flat world paradigm was how the messed-up selves felt its oppressive ideology had substantially shaped who they had become and how they felt about themselves. An example of this was how they perceived it categorised people into a hierarchy of those who were ‘spiritual’ and those who were ‘less spiritual’, such that the latter felt they were a “second-rate person” (Sandi-4-1). This bears a striking similarity to Lorde’s (1985) observation of Black women in America when she said, ‘we are Black women, defined as never-good-enough’ (Lorde, 1985: 170). It is also akin to de Beauvoir’s (1949) theory of ‘otherness’ (de Beauvoir, 1993: xlvii) which she summed up as:

> ‘the category of **the Other** is as primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality – that of the Self and the Other…(for example) Sun-Moon, and Day-Night’ (de Beauvoir, 1993: xlv, emphasis in the original).

She went on to apply this to gender by highlighting:

> 'This duality was not originally attached to the division of the sexes; it was not dependent upon any empirical facts…nevertheless (woman) finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other...He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other' (de Beauvoir, 1993: lix & xlv).

This binary construct of identity or, as Spivak (1985) calls it, 'the production of othering' (Spivak, 1985: 255) has been applied to various other differences such as, 'Man/animal, believer/non-believer, healthy/ill, heterosexual/homosexual, Black/White, adult/child' (Staszak, 2008: 3). Also, Jordan (1994) contends that the success and reinforcement of these divisions are based on one premise, namely 'there is difference and there is power. And who holds the power decides the meaning of the difference' (Jordan, 1994: 197; as quoted in Walker, 1995: xxi). Throughout history, this othering has been imposed by various discourses. Said (1978) and Spivak (1985), for example, identified how it has been used in anthropology and geography to distinguish White Men as the 'superior' race from 'inferior' races, and thereby, to 'justify' colonial ideology and rule (Staszak, 2008: 4). In the flat world paradigm, the messed-up selves not only identified this dichotomy between those who were "more spiritual" and themselves but also, between those who were "more spiritual" and a non-believer.

Following on from this, another aspect of othering is built on what Lorde (1984) describes as 'a mythical norm' (Lorde, 1984: 116), in other words a strictly defined and ideal persona, against which people are measured and thus discover how much they differ from this. This norm is saturated in expectations, usually those which determine 'what is good and bad, correct, and incorrect behaviour and ideology' (Walker, 1995: xxxv), to which everyone is required to conform to. Likewise, the messed-up selves also recognised that an ideal persona was promoted within the flat world paradigm which they perceived they were required to conform to and were judged against. However, because of their damage, the messed-up selves felt unable to adhere to this Christian clone which reinforced their feeling of being "less than".

Linked to this, Butler (1993) and Jensen (2011) have identified that those who are othered are not just passive objects but instead have the agency to change their situation. Butler (1993)

takes the view that because 'gender is constrained by the hegemony of specific gender norms (it can therefore be disrupted)… by not 'doing' gender as it is supposed to be done' (Butler, 1993: 94-5 as quoted in Hekman, 2000: 292). Jensen (2011) discovered two other forms of resistance, namely 'refusing to be devalued' and 'refusing to occupy the position of the other' (Jensen, 2011: 66). In this context, some of the messed-up selves also seemed to demonstrate a level of resistance to being othered. There were those who created a false persona, a "Christian smile" (Suzanne-3-1) to hide their mental health difficulties and the fact that they had not been able to achieve this Christian clone. An example of this is given by Jennifer who recalls her experience "who you portrayed or who you thought you were, wasn't necessarily who you actually were inside" (Jennifer-4-1). Others, who have experienced mental health difficulties, also admitted to wearing a mask to conceal their mental distress. In recent years this has included several high-profile celebrities and members of the Royal Family who have also appealed for the stigma around mental health to be removed, a message that is endorsed by the campaign 'Time to Change' which produced a film entitled, 'sometimes we say we're fine when we're not' and ends by saying, "to really find out - ask twice" (Time to Change, 2019). On the other hand, some messed-up selves such as Neil, rejected part of the dominant ideology, " "You've been saved. You are healed. That's it, it's done!" And I said, "fuck off!" (Neil-4-1).

Integral to the messed-up selves feeling "not-good-enough" in the flat world paradigm was the fact that the dominant philosophy advocated that feelings were not permitted. Sandi gives an illustration of this " "emotions can lead you very astray". And "you really shouldn't have them", umm. " 'Cause if you're going to be holy then you didn't need them" "(Sandi-4-1). This dogma can be traced back to Greek theologians, for example, Plato (375 BC) and the Stoics (Chrysippus, 225 BCE; Seneca, AD c. 45; Epictetus, 108 AD) who believed in the 'ideal of apatheia – freedom from all emotions' (Epictetus, 108 AD as quoted in Sorabji, 2002: 1). However, this attitude to emotion was not just prevalent throughout the Western church but also all over England between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. MacDonald (1980), for instance, highlights the impact of this dogma which was expressed through the prejudices of the ruling class towards 'popular religious enthusiasm' on mental health services. He identified that it not only changed the meaning of madness through 'the secularisation of ideas of insanity' but also advanced medical therapies as 'the only proper means to relieve mental illness' (MacDonald, 1980 as quoted in Murray, & Turner, 1990: 62, 61& 71). MacDonald (1980) goes on to point out, that because of the revival that occurred

within Methodism during this period which was in complete contrast to this ideology, it was viewed as:

> 'a form of religious enthusiasm…(and) that Methodist beliefs and behaviour were signs of madness…and some early Methodists were actually incarcerated in asylums on their doctor's orders (Whitefield, 1960; Wesley (1842)' (MacDonald, 1980 as quoted in Murray, & Turner, 1990: 62 & 64).

He also emphasised that this 'hatred for religious passion' led to almost every important medical book about mental disorder that was printed in the eighteenth century echoing this assertion that 'religious enthusiasm caused insanity' (MacDonald, 1980 as quoted in Murray, & Turner, 1990: 66 & 64).

Alongside this pathologising of emotions, the messed-up selves felt their experiences of the spiritual world were also judged in the flat world paradigm as unsound. MacDonald (1980) found this perspective was also rooted in the 'ruling-class shibboleth' about religious enthusiasm during this period. Before this he notes it was widely held that 'perfectly rational people could receive inspiration from God or have intercourse with the Devil' (MacDonald, 1980 as quoted in Murray, & Turner, 1990: 64 & 68). After this watershed, however, philosophers, physicians, and writers alike argued that these were 'deluded ideas and imaginary perceptions' or hallucinations (MacDonald, 1980 as quoted in Murray, & Turner, 1990: 67). Consequently, these experiences also became 'the defining characteristic' of insanity and, again, found their way into most medical books about insanity at the time (MacDonald, 1980 as quoted in Murray, & Turner, 1990: 68). Given the importance placed on these ideas within mental health services, it is probably not surprising that they are still evident today, as noted in the **Introduction.**

For the messed-up selves, however, this pathology was predominately experienced in their previous churches and, again, they are not alone. Clinebell (2005) has recognised that not only has the distinction between 'health-giving and sickness-causing religions' had a long history but also that today, there is 'an epidemic of pathogenic (sickness causing) religious beliefs and ethical practices'. He goes on to warn of the dangers if leaders from different faith traditions do not learn 'how to distinguish pathogenic from salugenic faith' but also recognises this is 'a difficult and never-ending project' (Clinebell, 2005: 181-183). Likewise,

Crowley and Jenkinson (2009) have also examined these differences and many of the harmful elements they identified mirror those of the messed-up selves namely, 'dis-empower(ing) members', 'cloned personalities', 'uniformity' 'questioning discouraged'. They also stress the need for mental health services to understand the potent effects of 'pathological spirituality' to be able to deliver the most effective help (Crowley and Jenkinson as quoted in Cook et al., 2009: 258 & 270). Although Crowley and Jenkinson (2009) acknowledge the issue of harm is a 'complex' one, they suggest a way forward might be:

> 'Rather than attempting to classify groups into 'good or bad', 'harmful and not harmful', and their beliefs into 'true' and 'false', it can be helpful to consider a continuum with a critical point after which a group can progress to become harmful, if it takes its beliefs and/or practices to the extreme (Chambers et al, 1994; Kendall, 2006)' (Crowley and Jenkinson as quoted in Cook et al., 2009: 255).

The oneness paradigm and secondary literature

One of the significant characteristics of the oneness paradigm was 'being real', which was evident in all aspects of the paradigm. It was a fundamental element in facilitating change and was viewed by the messed-up selves as an outcome of change. Similarly, Brené Brown (2012/2015) also advocated for the importance of 'being real' by suggesting 'to love ourselves and support each other in the process of becoming real is perhaps the greatest single act of daring greatly' (Brown, 2012/2015: 110). Implicit within 'being real'and just as crucial for the messed-up selves was others making themselves vulnerable. This seemed to have a powerful impact on them. Again, Brown also recognised this and described it as 'the heart' of meaningful human experiences and 'the path' back to human connection (Brown, 2012/2015: 12). Given this message, it is perhaps not surprising that Brown's 'Ted Talks' have become some of the most popular to date (Brown, 2010, as quoted on Ted Conferences). Ted Talks (Marks & Wurman, 1984) is an American-Canadian media organisation that posts videos from expert speakers online for free distribution under the slogan 'ideas worth spreading'. However, one noticeable difference between Brown and the messed-up selves is that she saw the act of someone giving their vulnerability necessitated 'people who have **earned the right to hear them** – people with whom we've cultivated relationships that can

bear the weight of our story' (Brown, 2012: 160, emphasis in the original). Whereas, for the messed-up selves it was precisely because they had not 'earned the right', that this act of vulnerability had such an impact on them.

Another aspect of the oneness paradigm that seems to have gained notoriety recently is paying it forward in the form of 'Time Banks' (Boyle, 2014). These operate on the simple premise 'One hour of your help earns one hour of help from someone else – whenever you need it' (Timebanking UK, 2021). Time banks have developed across the UK and even abroad. Boyle asserts that the fundamental difference between these and someone receiving help from mainstream services is that they do not simply meet people's needs, 'they make people feel needed too'. He goes on to say that this is crucial because 'feeling useful is a basic human need' and, therefore, these Time banks should be part of any local multi-agency preventive infrastructure (Boyle, 2015).

Finally, because of the transformational change the messed-up selves experienced within the oneness paradigm, they discovered a way of 'being' that was completely different from what they had previously known in the flat world paradigm. This is akin to Aoki's (1986/1991) theory of the teacher 'indwelling in a zone between two curriculum worlds: the worlds of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experiences', (Aoki, 1991 as quoted in Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 159). This builds on his idea of 'third spaces', as previously outlined in the chapter **An unusual adventure.** Aoki (1986/1991) argues that, first, the 'curriculum-as-plan' world includes:

> 'a set of curriculum statements: statements of **intent** and **interest** (given in the language of "goals," "aims," and "objectives"), statements of what teachers and students should do (usually given in the language of **activities**)…(And) within this scheme of things, teachers are asked to be doers…Teachers are "trained," and… become effective in trained ways of "doing."' (Aoki, 1991 as quoted in Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 160, emphasis in the original).

He goes on to point out, however, that what has been 'forgotten' and what profoundly matters is how the teachers' 'doings' stem from who they are. Hence, teaching is fundamentally 'a mode of being' and the quality of their teaching depends on them 'being' who they are. In contrast to this, Aoki (1991) suggests the other space the teacher occupies is 'curriculum-as-

lived-experiences' which is comprised of a world of students who are unique human beings with proper names. So, the teacher must live 'dwelling aright within' these two horizons and the tension this brings. He advocates that:

> 'to be alive is to live in tension; that, in fact, it is the tensionality that allows good thoughts and actions to arise…that tensionless strings are not only unable to give voice to songs, but also unable to allow a song to be sung…the teacher's dwelling place (is) a sanctified clearing…an extraordinarily unique and precious place, a hopeful place, a trustful place… from the "is" to new possibilities yet unknown' (Aoki, 1991, as quoted in Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 160, 162 & 164).

The oneness paradigm and the salugenic place

Once I had discovered my theory, I returned to revisit Susan's findings. I was surprised by how remarkably similar they were to mine, even though there was over a decade between the time she collected her data in 2002 and when I collected mine. One of the first similarities was between Susan's theory of a 'trapped self' and my messed-up self. This was the plight of the person prior to encountering CCD and experiencing transformational change. Like the messed-up self, she had also discovered the 'trapped self' wanted to change but had found 'their previous attempts had failed' which in turn, had led them to give up hope that change was possible. Susan termed this condition 'Change-despair'. However, where Susan's theory differed from mine was that she found the 'trapped self' had a 'fear of change' either in relation to 'the process of Change' or 'the outcome of Change' (Williams, 2007: 168 & 54). Contrary to this, the messed-up selves had not expressed this sentiment in any of my data.

Following on from this, both theories established that 'being judged' was a primary factor that had led to these individuals being either a trapped or messed-up self. Implicit within Susan's theory, however, was that this 'prejudicial judging' occurred within the context of one-to-one interactions (Williams, 2007: 168). Whilst the messed-up selves perceived this judgement was permeated throughout the oppressive flat world paradigm. It was instilled within its hierarchical power structure by categorising those who were 'spiritual' and those

who were ‘less than’ and it was the foundation of the expectations and requirements integral to becoming this ideal type of a Christian clone.

Thirdly, when comparing my oneness paradigm with Susan’s ‘salugenic place’, in other words, a ‘Change-enabling social environment’ (Williams, 2007: 79), I discovered both had complementary core ingredients albeit we categorised them differently. Susan classified these as ‘acceptance, choice, journeying together, openness enabling resources’. Although she also noted their ‘interdependence’ and ‘reinforcement’ of each other (again, was very much like the oneness paradigm) it is here that her theory then diverges. Susan highlights that in the salugenic place these core characteristics:

> ‘are in creative tension, pulling in different directions, both reinforcing and constraining each other…Each pulls away from the…others thereby preventing any one becoming dominant.’ (Williams, 2007: 79, 85 & 86).

She goes on to say that they combined to form new emergent characteristics namely, safety, freedom, and atmosphere and that it was ‘the balance between freedom (chaos) and safety (stability) in the milieu that creates the Change-enabling potential’ (Williams, 2007: 79 & 105). In fact, the importance of these two qualities balancing each other was such a bedrock of Susan’s theory that she considered:

> ‘a salugenic Place was also fragile. Rather than being a consistent and stable expression of the community, there have been times when CCD has failed to be a salugenic Place. The atmosphere has changed, and the balance of safety and freedom has been temporarily lost’ (Williams, 2007: 109).

In opposition to this, however, I found that, far from being equal and balancing one another out, there was almost twice the amount of freedom to safety in the oneness paradigm. It would be interesting to explore this further, but I do not have the data to be clear why this discrepancy exists. Also, given the commonality between these two theories, and despite the gap in years between them, I am inclined to disagree with Susan’s perspective regarding the ‘fragility’ of the place. Rather, it would seem to me there is a robust quality to it in so much as it is still able to facilitate change even after all these years. Moreover, even Susan’s participants appeared to support this position, as she states, ‘Although they expected ongoing

change most did not foresee the Change-enabling character of the community being weakened' (Williams, 2007: 109).

Fourthly, I had identified the messed-up selves had three different responses to the oneness paradigm and, remarkably Susan found the same was true for the trapped selves. These were 'withdrawal, embracing or the intermediate position or ongoing attendance' (Williams, 2007: 136) which, in part, my data supports. On the one hand, Jeremy mirrored 'withdrawal' by acknowledging that "I had to get away…but that…once I had gone away, I realised actually…I had to come back" (Jeremy-2-2). Whilst, on the other, it could be argued they also 'embraced' the oneness paradigm. However, my data suggests the connection between the person and the place and then their responses is far more complex than this especially when the functional selves and too unwell selves are also factored in. Linked to this, Susan also found that the trapped self experienced change through their 'interaction with the community'. Yet, how this change happened again seemed far more simplistic and linear a process than the complexity of the oneness paradigm suggests, which I have previously mapped out in the chapter **How change happens**. For instance, Susan argued change happened because of 'acceptance, believing in Change and 'being me'' (Williams, 2007: 133 & 137). Also, I have already indicated the similarities between Susan's model of transformative change and mine in the chapter **The oneness paradigm**. But, where these two seem to differ is that she primarily saw change as a 'self-selected inner change', whereas I have also emphasised the unintended impact the oneness paradigm has on the messed-up selves. Susan identified six elements, but I went on to extensively expand on this with, other relational aspects and its spiritual dimension. (Williams, 2007: 166).

Finally, Susan's perspective on the outcome of change as 'the person is becoming' also seemed to match mine as she notes:

> 'After Change has been initiated, and as it continues to be sustained, the category in my primary data that best describes the person is becoming…the person has thus become Change embracing. Together with others, in their personal identity they have both the desire and the capacity to continue to Change' (Williams, 2007: 161).

When I started out on this PhD journey, I perceived that I was building on Susan's research and when I discovered so many of the similarities it felt like a eureka moment for me,

particularly the ability for this unique place to still facilitate change. However, the more I compared the two theories the more I saw their differences which, at the time, felt like an emotional wrench. I wrote this poem to express this crossroads.

Disentangling a rainbow

Carefully I cut through the stiches
And remove the words with tweezers.
Your PhD and mine had so overlapped.
The same colours still as vibrant today
As when you wrote them back then.
The bright reds pumping like blood.
It reminds me of the hospital we once were.
No, still are
And hopefully, will continue to be.

The wounded being helped up the stairs.
What a welcome we were given.
Like heroes back from the war
Or Olympic champions with their medals
Being welcomed **home!**
Or the reds are the Red Cross flags flying high.
A sign of hope -
There is healing here for everyone
But especially, the hopeless.

I remember how so excited we were
To discover the rainbow was **still there**!
And just as strong!
But this isn't 'our' PhD (only, we know it is).
So, I try to disentangle them as best I can.
It's heart breaking to fragment **The Oneness**
But I store the pieces in a safe place for later.

The story of the **salugenic Place**
Will be told, again.

Conclusion

This thesis began by highlighting the health benefits of spirituality and, in stark contrast, how some service users felt their spirituality had been ignored or their spiritual experiences pathologised by mental health and social care services. My research suggests that, whilst the messed-up selves corroborated this, what surprised me was the extent to which they felt this had also been their experience in churches they had attended in the past. These messed-up selves felt the Church had a similar judgemental approach to their mental health difficulties and had pressurised them to conform to certain, taken for granted, rules and become more like an ideal type namely, a "Christian clone". This had left them feeling misunderstood, judged as "not-good-enough", and despairing. Despite their attempts to change, they not only found the various techniques ineffective, but they also felt blamed for their resistance to, and lack of, change. My research demonstrates, however, I found that what seems to be at the heart of this situation in each of these contexts is the same Western, binary, fragmented, oppressive, and pathogenic (sickness-causing) ideology, or what I termed the flat world paradigm. So, far from it being the fault of the messed-up selves, this flat world paradigm had added to their distress and hindered their attempts to change.

Alongside this situation, there is legislation and guidance that requires professionals within the health and social care sectors to consider their service users' spiritual needs. Despite this, however, health and social care professionals are 'uncertain', 'apprehensive' and 'divided' about whether this component should be included within the provision of health and social care, and if so, how. Coupled with this, there is no obvious consensus as to what spiritually-competent health and social work practice is, but there has been a call for a new paradigm. I would argue that my exploration of this unique community, demonstrates that CCD, or the oneness paradigm, could be this new paradigm and a potential answer to this paradox.

The oneness paradigm is, in so many ways, the antithesis of current health and social care services in the West and, therefore, like deep ecology, it could be argued provides a critique of these services. Firstly, although health and social care services both advocate for an 'holistic approach' to providing 'person-centred care' their ideologies remain rooted in the Western fragmented binary paradigm. Hence, the Care Act 2014 has divided the person's needs into nine different 'domains of well-being' (Care Act 2014: C.1). Secondly, and linked

to this, is the secularisation of the professions over time, which has, in part, led to spirituality and spiritual care being perceived as a part of the individual's life that service providers should not directly address. In contrast to this, the oneness paradigm adopts an ideology parallel to deep ecology and the Indigenous communities that view spirituality as integral to everything. That is to say, the individual, their social relationships, and their relationship with the environment.

Thirdly, the Western culture of health and social care services adopts a fragmented and binary way of thinking, which not only separates 'professional knowledge' from 'lived experience' but also places the professional *above* the lived experience. Moreover, the culture of these services emphasises that practitioners must adopt a 'professional detachment'. Thus, despite the Care Act 2014 advocating for 'co-production' and advocacy, ultimately, it is primarily local councils that decide whether an individual will receive help and the type of help that will be based on the professional's 'objective' judgment and the agency's policies (DoH, 2014: s.2.14 and NHS, 2022). Conversely, the oneness paradigm empowers these messed-up selves creating a deep connection and vulnerability in relationships that fundamentally challenges this approach.

Fourthly, the oneness paradigm has the ability to facilitate change for these messed-up selves simply by them encountering it. Moreover, it promotes a completely different type of change than that they had previously known in the flat world paradigm - transformational change. This change results in these messed-up selves discovering a new way of 'being' and becoming. Once again, this differs from Western health and social care services which focus on the practitioner's 'activities' and asks them to be 'doers' rather than understand that their '"doings" flow from who they are, their beings' (Aoki, 1991, as quoted in Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 160).

In conclusion, it could be argued that the oneness paradigm in its entirety offers, therefore, both a powerful critique of contemporary (and historical) health and social care services and, perhaps, one answer to the paradox of incorporating spirituality into practice. Like Zapf (2005b), though, I remain pessimistic that mainstream services are likely to make the shift to a new paradigm. However, given the evident power to enable and facilitate positive change by the oneness paradigm, it is, surely, time for health and social care services to look beyond

the narrow confines and disempowering ideologies of current systems of care and support towards one which promises a more genuinely person-centred and holistic perspective.

Finally, this is a poem I wrote when I experienced, in a new way, the interconnectedness and harmony of the oneness paradigm whilst a walked along the path where I used to take my little Westie, Brodie.

Our path

This was *our* path
Where *our* bench was
Where we sat watching the sun come up.
The peace and quiet only broken
By a bird singing or occasionally, by you
When another fellow traveller came along
And you weren't sure if they were friend or foe.
It was *our* secret place.

I stopped coming for a while.
It was too painful
And never quite seemed the same without you.
But recently, I re-discovered it
And with it a whole new world
The flowers, the butterflies, the bees, the snails, and the beetles.
It's funny to think how I never saw it before
But our path really is *our* path
And not such a secret after all

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