This study explores the highly gender-skewed phenomenon of violence in an effort to understand the possibility that certain needs might actually be the motivation for some violent kinds of behavior. The hypothesis guiding this exploration was that when shame for having done harm is met with empathy, imaginal structures associated with not belonging and/or exclusion will shift, allowing a felt sense of belonging and even eagerness to address and correct whatever harm has been done. The dissertation’s literature review explores the shame affect, the diversity of shame expression, the association of violence with shame, and how violence can emerge in response to perceptions of social exclusion. Empathy is then summarized, including empathy’s contributions to prosocial behavior.

The design utilized Imaginal Inquiry as its research methodology. To evaluate the shame affect, the study’s all-male participants were first asked to tell a story of a violent act, empathy was then evoked in a dialog concerning the act. This exploration utilized drawing, journaling, sculpture, and an empty-chair dialog to capture the imaginal structures supporting violence, and any shifts in these structures mediated by empathy. The study’s cumulative learning revealed that these men’s violent acts seemed to occur in response to perceptions of social exclusion, and that receiving empathy for their acts seemed to enable an experience of belonging and inclusion that then seemed to promote spontaneous willingness to make amends for one’s violent acts. The first learning proposes that an experience of being banished from a previously important relationship can promote a violent response, whether the violence is toward self or others. The second learning posits that group experience itself seems to promote and enable processing pain previously denied. The third learning proposes that empathic connection seems to carry with it an explicit experience of belonging and inclusion. The fourth learning posits that having an experience of belonging, of being heard and seen, seems to promote willingness to be accountable for the harm caused, and to make amends.

Violence may be reduced and accountability increased when men receive empathy and understanding for the harm they cause by their unskilled acts, rather than the punishment currently used to address male violence.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the many relationships that have contributed to my longing, and current ability, to understand violence in men. First among these are the hundreds of men I have encountered in my classes in prisons, jails, and while on probation and parole in post-release programs. I have been schooled by each of them in the wide variety of ways that men believe they are less than human, and I have been even more greatly humbled by their collective willingness to make amends.

I am grateful for the transformative learning community that Cohort Eleven provided me, enabling me to repeatedly turn toward my own violence, my own perceptions of being excluded, and to gradually recognize and befriend them. For my relationship with Dianna Grayer and her partner Sheridan Gold for their constant support and encouragement. They persistently reminded me to turn toward relationship and my soul is much happier for it.

Meridian University has placed wings under my efforts to understand myself and other men; I am still unearthing what I have learned and continue to integrate my understandings into my professional and personal life.

Vika Miller has provided me partnership, understanding, and respect that have increased by orders of magnitude my ability to incorporate my learnings into my teachings and my life, and I am deeply grateful for her support, encouragement, and love.

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Empathy and Social Exclusion:
Re-imagining Belonging as a Mediator of Violence

by
Frederic Lloyd Sly

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
In
Psychology

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Re-imagining Belonging as a Mediator of Violence

by

Frederic Lloyd Sly

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy In Psychology

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President

This dissertation is dedicated to everyone who longs for belonging and inclusion.
“Non-violence has a different logic. It recognizes that sin is an everyday occurrence which is in the very nature of action’s constant establishment of new relationships within a web of relations, and it needs forgiving, dismissing, in order to make it possible for life to go on by constantly releasing men from what they have done unknowingly. Only through this constant mutual release from what they do can men remain free agents, only by their constant willingness to change their minds and start again can they be trusted with so great as power as that to begin something new.”

Hannah Arendt

*The Human Condition*, 1958
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research Topic

During the final phase of writing this dissertation, I purchased a small electronic device to help me keep track of my schedule. I wanted it to synchronize with my computer’s calendar so I also purchased software that I was assured would help me accomplish this goal. At home I was unable to accomplish what I wanted and when I sought assistance at the place where I bought it the salesperson said, “Don’t you understand anything about these things?” I immediately noticed that my shoulders began to droop, that I broke eye contact, that I was blushing, and that I was simultaneously becoming very, very angry, all signs that I was feeling shame.\(^1\)

Many factors contributed to what happened next, including my financial situation, my biography and subjective states, social and cultural factors, and what had happened to me just prior to returning to the store, among others.\(^2\) My range of responses could have included abruptly leaving, vowing never to go into that store again; I could have told myself that I was just a dinosaur and no longer had a clue; or I could have smiled and asked the person to show me how to set it up in a way that worked. Instead, I glared at this person until I could see that he was becoming uncomfortable and then I said, “Would
you please find me someone who can actually help me?" ³ In Donald Nathanson’s writings about possible responses to a shame experience, he notes that responses similar to the one I expressed are directly related to the amount of violence in our world, defining violence as, “Violent or abusive exercise of power.” ⁴

Nathanson explains that because shame is such a powerful emotion, it is often experienced as overwhelming, and when it is overwhelming, shame is defended against. ⁵ Nathanson concludes that shame defenses not only explain the vast majority of violence toward self and others, but that many other personal and social ills can be understood to result from shame defenses as well. ⁶ Of interest to me is the relationship between shame and violence.

Silvan Tompkins describes shame as an affect, a primary physiological response to environmental signals. ⁷ He posits that shame attenuates the affects interest and joy, and serves to control interest where interest may be harmful. ⁸ Tomkins holds that shame serves to modulate affects, including itself, and that shame, rather than being a single identifiable affect, is a theoretical construct that includes discouragement, shame, shyness, and guilt differentiated by perceptions of “causes and consequences.” ⁹ Helen Lewis shares Tomkins views, stating that the physiological experience of shame is actually a block of emotions she terms the “shame – embarrassment – humiliation – shyness complex.” ¹⁰ Lewis differentiates between shame and guilt by noting that with shame the self is the focus of evaluation, whereas with guilt an action is the focus of evaluation: “I am wrong” versus “what I did was wrong.” ¹¹ June Tangney and Rhonda
Dearing state that shame also carries the message “I do not belong” and evokes anger and fear of exclusion.12

Abraham Maslow posits that human motivation is based on needs, basic motivating factors common to all humans, and that the need to belong is among them.13 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs places physiological needs such as food and air as primary; when these are satisfied safety needs such as physical security and peace can be addressed, followed by the need for belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.14 Goeff MacDonald and Mark Leary conclude that the need to belong is a critical and essential human need because survival of the human individual is dependent on membership in a group.15 MacDonald and Leary state further that, “. . . social pain, the specific emotional response to the perception that one is being excluded.” can evoke the same aggressive responses toward self and others as does physical pain, and that in addition to feeling “hurt,” social pain includes many forms of shame such as guilt, embarrassment, and humiliation.16 In their review of the need to belong, Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary comment about Maslow’s hierarchy of needs that, “If psychology has erred with regard to the need to belong, in our view, the error has not been to deny the existence of such a motive so much as to under appreciate it.” 17

Arun Ghandi describes violence as a plague in our culture.18 At present in this country more African American children die from murder than by any other cause, our prisons breed violence, and by many measures America is the most violent country on Earth, and the vast majority of this violence is perpetrated by men.19 In his writings
about our prison system, James Gilligan proposes that shame is the cause of all violence, violence that is further promoted and perpetuated by the shaming nature of our response to violence and injustice.  

In his formulation of Imaginal Transformation Praxis, Aftab Omer states, “Shame is being’s call to belonging,” and that shame “... tells us to stop doing harm.” Omer speaks of turning either toward or away from the experience of shame, thereby entering into either increased belonging, or increased and continued alienation, respectively. Omer also states that, “Empathy is how we engender circumstances that promote a person’s curiosity about how to let their own experience unfold,” suggesting that empathy is essential in transforming an experience of shame and non-belonging into “... a deep experience of oneness of kind.”

Carl Rogers defines empathy as “The capacity to experience the affect of another, understand the meaning of the expressed affect in the life of the other, and to reflect this meaning back to the person without losing self.” Kaufman considers empathy to be essential to healthy development of children, and also to be the primary component of effective therapy, which he describes as corrective development. Maslow equates his concept of needs to the meaning component of empathy. In their exploration of the relationship between violence and empathy, Paul Miller and Nancy Eisenberg document that empathy training both promotes prosocial behavior, defined as “... voluntary, intentional behavior that results in benefits for others,” and reduces aggression. Mark Umbreit et al. conclude that Restorative Justice practices, an
alternative to the punishment to address crime, generate an increase in empathy between victim and offender, and it is the increased empathy that is responsible for the effectiveness of these practices in reducing crime, recidivism, and violence.\textsuperscript{27}

Restorative justice theory posits that crime is a violation of people and of interpersonal relationships, therefore, restoring a sense of “all-rightness” with everyone affected by a crime, including the victim, the offender, and the extended community, is the central goal of restorative justice practices.\textsuperscript{28}

This study explores whether violence arises when the experience of shame is generated by perceptions of social exclusion and, further, whether empathy mediates the transformation of violent responses to the experience of shame into an experience of belonging and willingness to be accountable for harmful behavior.

**Personal Relationship to the Research Topic**

My life has been most deeply affected by my experience of shame. My earliest memories are filled with shame, embarrassment, and a terrible shyness that prompted others’ teasing and ridicule, especially when I expressed interest and excitement toward females. As a result, I have always understood that my failures and the resulting overwhelming shame I felt meant that I am less than others, somehow unworthy, and especially that somehow I do not belong. Simultaneously, there have been moments in my life where I have gone into a hot or cold rage without ever knowing how I got there.\textsuperscript{29} In each instance that I expressed rage, my rage was followed by deep feelings of
shame, regret, and profound confusion, and I was left trying to understand what was
going on inside me that I apparently had no control over.

My sense of having no ability to influence my world, especially my relationships,
of being powerless to create and sustain nurturing relationships contributed to what I now
understand to have been symptoms of depression that persisted into my “50’s.” I spent
many hours profoundly confused that I could be so able and skilled at any task that did
not require expressing myself to others directly, and so unable, almost frozen solid, when
confronted with any activity that required that I engage others, especially if the primary
activity was to understand and respond to others, such as in my intimate relationships
and/or raising my and my partner’s children.

As an example, while writing this dissertation, my partner announced that she
decided that she needed more time alone in our home so that she could focus on her work
and her relationship with herself, and that as a result she wanted me to leave the house for
long periods during the day. In response I became furious, a very cold fury that I could
feel clenching around my heart. I said to her, “You seem to think that you can do
whatever you want without regard for how it affects me!” My eyes were narrowed and I
said these words with great intensity, and then I turned away from her, separating myself
emotionally and cutting off any reply that she might have had. She immediately became
angry and accused me of being unwilling to engage in discussion about what she was
wanting in her life. It required several days for the emotional effects of this interaction to
diminish and for me to be able to approach her with openness and willingness to try to
find a strategy that would address her needs as well as my own. Upon reflection, I
discovered that I had thought I was being made to leave our home without regard for how
that would affect me. I also discovered that I had been telling myself that my needs did
not matter to her, especially my need to negotiate actions and decisions that affect me;
ironically, the same thing she was asking of me.

Throughout my life I have tried to belong by joining groups and going to social
events, seeking to contribute to others and to enjoy others’ companionship. During social
events I would usually stand aside and watch others interact, and whenever attention
would come my way my mind would go blank and I would shrink and withdraw. I have
spent my life trying to prove to myself and others that I am worthy of belonging through
accomplishments such as multiple academic degrees, being “Mr. Helpful,” and being
generous to my own detriment, believing that if I give up my life for others maybe they
would accept me or, at least, I would deserve to be accepted. However, repeatedly the
outcome of my efforts did not produce the sense of belonging that I longed for. As a
result I have felt anger, resentment, bitterness, and contempt directed mostly, but not
entirely, toward myself in a stream of inner verbal nastiness masked by a thin veneer of
over-bright smiles and “good-guyness.” I believe that the intensity and persistence of my
inner violence, and that portion of my inner violence that has leaked out onto others over
the span of my life, represents a deep and unacknowledged fear that I am being excluded,
and it is the magnitude and intensity of my personal response, as well as my increasing
awareness of similar responses in others, mostly men, that inspired me to both pursue a
career in psychology and to perform this exploration.\(^{30}\)

About eight years before starting this dissertation I began teaching Nonviolent Communication (NVC), a communication skill and consciousness developed from Person-Centered Psychotherapy by Marshall Rosenberg.\(^{31}\) At the time of completing this dissertation I have offered NVC education to thousands of people, including incarcerated and paroled men and women, over 75 percent of whom had committed violent crimes.\(^{32}\) Over this time I have come to understand that, irrespective of the specific events that brought those committing violence into conflict with the law, they had committed those acts out of a sense of powerlessness, shame, and despair over their experience of not belonging.

I am pleased with the results of my NVC classes: participants calm, express hopefulness, report increasing ease and satisfaction in their relationships, and speak of a sense of having more control over their lives. Teaching NVC has also promoted my own transformation. Since I started teaching I have become more calm and relaxed especially with those attending my classes, particularly as I have become more skilled at teaching and engaging those attending my classes. My increased effectiveness apparently has challenged my false impression that I am powerless, that I cannot create and sustain relationships, and that I have nothing to offer others that they value. I have also noticed that my need to please others and my dependence on their satisfaction for my sense of wellbeing has diminished greatly and I now more deeply accept myself than I have ever done.
I have watched hundreds of men and smaller numbers of women also learn to experience harmony and joy in their lives, and I have repeatedly observed that the most rapid progress comes when participants learn how to provide empathy for themselves and others. During the empathy-building portion of my classes participants become more calm and more able to report what they are feeling, there is a general reduction in blaming self and others for any pain in their relationships, and they report that they are enjoying their relationships more deeply than before. In addition, developing my own capacity to express empathy has enabled me to transform a portion of my own shame and has reduced my own violence, much to my own relief and that of my loved ones as well.33

I embarked upon this study in order to deepen my understanding of the relationship between empathy, shame, belonging, and violence, to find healing for the pain of my own unmet need for belonging, and to potentially increase my effectiveness as a teacher and therapist.

Theory in Practice

Aftab Omer’s Imaginal Transformation Praxis is used to explore the relationship between shame, empathy, and the need for belonging.34 Omer posits that, “Capacities, specific potentials for responding to domains of life experience,” develop in response to environmental imperative.35 According to Omer, the experience of shame can be transformed into the capacity for autonomy, “... the self-regulating potentials intrinsic to
the soul’s sovereign nature.” Further, the expression of shame seems to be dependent on structures Omer calls “gatekeepers, the individual and collective dynamics that resist and restrict experience.” Empathy for self and others seems to alter the experience of shame by somehow altering the inner relationship to gatekeeping. Omer notes that, “. . . empathy promotes a person’s curiosity about how to let their own experience unfold.” This inquiry focuses on the role that empathy plays in transmuting shame into autonomy when shame is accompanied by Nathanson’s defenses against shame.

Research Problem and Hypothesis

This study’s main Research Problem is the following: When shame accompanied by Nathanson’s attack-self, attack-other response to shame is met with empathy, what shifts in subjective states arise? Further research questions included: What effect might empathy have on imaginal structures relating to the sensation of not-belonging and/or exclusion? And, what subjective states might be evoked when shame is met with empathy? A hypothesis about the relationship between shame and empathy is: When shame for having done harm is met with empathy, imaginal structures associated with not belonging and/or exclusion will shift, allowing a felt sense of belonging and even eagerness to address and correct whatever harm has been done.

Methodology and Research Design

The research methodology Imaginal Inquiry is a component of Imaginal
Transformation Praxis. Imaginial Inquiry elicits integrated involvement from all those participating and is, therefore, considered part of the participatory paradigm of qualitative research. Imaginial Inquiry involves evoking experience, expressing experience, interpreting experience and, finally, integrating experience.

To evoke shame and its correlated responses, participants were asked to remember a time when, in relationship to another, they did something that they now regret, and then to tell the story of this interaction to the group. To evoke an experience of empathy, participants engaged in an empathic dialogue with me and co-researcher, former Meridian student and good friend Steve Woolf. Empathic dialogue, as codified by NVC, involves each participant telling the story of an act they now regret, while researcher and co-researcher guessed the participants’ affects and the meanings underlying those affects, which were expressed as needs. Participants expressed their experiences by drawing their remembered affective state at the time of the act they told their story about, and by again drawing their affective state evoked by their participation in an empathy dialogue. Participants spoke what arose for them while viewing the two drawings separately, and again when they were presented as a collage. Participants also expressed how they were affected by the exploration’s activities by writing in journals, by sculpting a figure, and by placing their sculptures in relationship to the sculptures of the other participants in their group. Participants interpreted their experiences through naming and speaking the meanings of their drawings and sculptures and through identifying key moments, moments that especially stood out for them during the exploration. Finally, integration included collective viewing of the drawings and sculpture, stating what arose in them during the exploration at the end of the sessions, and engaging in an empty chair dialogue with the victim of the act that they now regret.

Participants for this study were recruited from men in my community who stated that they had done something in relationship with another that they now regret. Nine
volunteers participated in three separate explorations.

Significance and Relevance of the Topic

Violence has a huge social cost. California alone spends over 8.5 billion dollars a year on incarceration, more than it spends on public education. It seems to me that interventions that promote reduction of violence will serve to make our country a more peaceful place to raise our children in safety and happiness. Therefore, efforts made to understand the observed efficacy of empathy in reducing violence could contribute to our ability to promote peace in our communicates and in our country and, by potentially increasing the ability of men to turn toward shame, possibly reduce violence worldwide. Those who would be most immediately affected would be those prone to violence and, of equal importance, psychologists and counselors seeking to increase the effectiveness of their interventions with violent offenders. Those who long for sustainable relationships, those who are wondering how to increase intimacy and understanding, and those who long for an increased sense of belonging in their lives could also be affected.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction and Overview

This research involves four areas of inquiry. My first section, psychological perspectives on shame and the human experience, addresses shame’s place in the palate of human physiological responses to environmental stimuli. Included in this exploration is a description of shame as an affect, a review of the history of shame in the psychological literature, and an inquiry into the adaptive significance of shame. Further, the range of expression of the shame affect is described including a differentiation between shame, guilt, shyness, embarrassment, discouragement, humiliation, and mortification, among others. Next, the extent to which a healthy expression of shame can be distorted resulting in psychopathology is explored. This inquiry is essential for understanding variations in the expression of shame observed within individuals, between genders, and among cultures, and for understanding the changes in the expression of shame observed over evolutionary and developmental time.

A second section, shame and defenses against shame, explores the relationship between shame and violence, giving special attention to the relationship between the sense of self acquired during development and the extent of anger and violence expressed
during environmental challenge. This investigation addresses the role of the human need to belong in the violent expression of shame, including how the need to belong illuminates how the experience of shame affects the developing sense of self; how perceptions of social exclusion may mediate the relationship between shame, anger, and violence; and the variation observed in the expression of shame.

Third, the specific shaming of males, examines shame and its gender-specific effects on men in our culture to possibly clarify why men seem to express violence more frequently than women. Included is how males are at risk for challenges to attachment because they have a different gender than their mothers. Also explored are the cultural messages describing the essence of males and how either living or rebelling against these scripts generates shame. Further described is how the loss of rites of passage in western technological cultures has contributed to basic male shame, the sense of being shameful simply for being born male. This exploration is also intended to further explicate and deepen understanding of the transformations observed when a violent response to the experience of shame is met with empathy.

Fourth, the role of empathy in transmuting shame, explores the nature of empathy and its effect on human relationships. The current range of definitions of empathy in the psychological literature is explored, along with published parallel concepts for this essential human quality. The relationship between empathy and sympathy is described, as well as how these separate but interdependent qualities and capacities influence one other. Also included are descriptions of empathy’s role in effecting normal psychological
development, the consequences in terms of psychological health of failures of empathy during development, and how the empathic failures of childhood may be resolved through empathic therapeutic relationship illustrating the centrality of empathy in effective psychotherapy. Empathy’s place in transmuting pain generated at a social level is addressed including empathy’s place as a prime effector in restorative justice practices, the emerging alternative to our culture’s current punitive justice system. The effects of trauma on the capacity for empathy and the contribution of empathic awareness to the evolution of the human species are also discussed. Finally, of special interest are descriptions of shifts in subjective states that occur when psychopathology is met with empathy.

In my final section, imaginal approaches to shame, empathy, and belonging, I explore the role that image plays in the relationship between the experience of belonging; the expression of shame, especially the violent expression of shame; and empathy. The archetypal and mythological expressions of this relationship will receive special attention because shame and its resolution, both violent and peaceful, have been portrayed in every possible form of human expression, including novels, plays, art, ritual, movies, dance, religious and spiritual writings, components of the shamanic tradition, etc. Perhaps these sources can provide access to ways of resolving these fundamental challenges that have proven effective throughout human history.

**Psychological Perspectives on Shame in the Human Experience**
In 1872 Charles Darwin published *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. In this study Darwin, who proposed the first formulation of what is now modern evolutionary theory, made an effort to understand the place that feelings have in human evolution. As part of this study Darwin surveyed outreach workers throughout the world, inquiring into whether feeling responses were similar among humans worldwide. He discovered not only that they were, but that they were also similar over the entire human life span from birth to death and, further, that other primate and mammalian species share similar expressions.

Donald Nathanson remarks that Darwin’s descriptions of the universality of the expression of feelings far outstripped his ability to derive an encompassing theory to explain them, and although many authors proposed explanations in the intervening period, 90 years would elapse before Sylvan Tomkins’ presented affect theory, a comprehensive formulation of the significance of primary physiological responses in the evolution of humans. Nathanson attributes Tomkins’ success to his clinical observations, to rearing a new daughter and observing her responses, and to his incorporation of elements contained in other attempts to explain affect that had been published since Darwin first struggled to define it. Contributors to affect theory included Sigmund Freud, who in his formulation of drive theory seemed to de-emphasize the importance of feelings in the human experience; and Alfred Adler, Karen Horney, Eric Erickson, and others who increasingly emphasized the importance of feeling in providing motivation for human behavior.
Tomkins notes, “I see affect or feelings as the primary innate biological motivating mechanism . . . without its amplification, nothing else matters, and with its amplification, anything can matter.”  

Essential to understanding affect theory is the idea that, “. . . the function of any affect is to amplify the highly specific stimulus that set it in motion.”  

Gershen Kaufman and Lev Raphael support the primacy of affect as the motivating component of human behavior, stating, “. . . affect is primary over drives because the drives require fusion with affect in order to function. Just as it powers decision, action, and cognition, affect powers the drives.”

Tomkins’ contributions included alteration of what was previously considered a fundamental principal of biology, the stimulus-response diad, into the stimulus-affect-response triad. Today affect theory is an accepted component of psychological theory, fundamentally linking psychology with physiology.

Tomkins proposes nine distinct physiological responses to environmental stimuli, divided into two groups which he termed the positive and negative affects. Positive affects include interest/excitement, enjoyment/joy, and surprise/startle. Negative affects include distress/anguish, fear/terror, shame/humiliation, dismell, disgust, and rage/anger.

Tomkins suggests that these nine affects provide humans with information about how to respond to a full range of encountered environmental stimuli. He offers the example that the dismell and distaste affects prompt humans to reject tainted food that might poison them, mediated through the senses of smell and taste, respectively.

Darwin posits that shame is what makes us human, noting that, “Blushing is the
most peculiar and the most human of all expressions.”  

Kaufman holds that shame functions, “. . . always alert us to any affront to human dignity,” and that, “. . . shame plays a vital role in the development of conscience. By alerting us to misconduct or wrongdoing - to transgression in any form - shame motivates necessary self-correction.”  

Freud proposes that shame arose much as it was depicted in Genesis: when humans stood erect their genitals were exposed, stimulating shame.  

Freud also suggests that throughout history human shame has been used as a method of social control designed to restrict what the controlled might want to do in their own behalf, such as, “. . . kill oppressive kings and priests.”  

Tomkins explains that shame serves to modulate interest/excitement when these affects could result in harm, such as in interest in unproven strangers. Tomkins also describes the range of expression of the shame affect, which he posited to include shame, guilt, embarrassment, shyness, and discouragement, among others, holding that, “. . . the core affect is identical, although the coassembled perceptions, cognitions, and intentions may be vastly different.”  

Helen Block Lewis supports Tomkin’s suggestion that the diversity of words we use to describe the shame experience arise from a single physiological response; she terms this response the “shame – embarrassment – humiliation – shyness” complex.”  

After describing the significance of Tomkins’ contributions, Nathanson concludes that Tomkins’ script theory, the idea that the expression of affect is dependent on scripts learned in relationship with primary caregivers during development, effectively explains
the range of expression of each innate affect. Tomkins’ script theory further posits that affective experiences are assembled into scenes by the developing infant, which are then linked into scripts, trained affective responses to environmental stimuli. Tomkins states that scripts provide the basis for affective magnification, when particular scripts are magnified by attachment to other affects and their varying intensity. Nathanson observes that innate drives can be linked by scripts to specific affects which can then be magnified, producing individualized responses to context. Nathanson also suggests that, “Shame becomes the most social of the negative affects because it modulates, regulates, impedes, contains, the interest and enjoyment that power all sociality.” Script Theory, then, provides a basis for not only understanding the observed variation in the range of expression of affect in response to environmental stimuli, but also for understanding the observed cultural variation in affect expression, for example the embarrassment of burping at American dinner tables in contrast to the embarrassment of not burping at Turkish dinner tables.

Michael Lewis’ conclusion that the way we think and feel about the world is passed from parents to children further supports Tomkins’ Script Theory. Lewis emphasizes how historically shame and humiliation have been used in the process of socialization, and concludes that social relationships and their associated affects that children learn are reinforced using love withdrawal, behavior that essentially contains the message, “You are not worthy of being loved because of how you are behaving,” a strategy that is clearly used to evoke shame. In his discussion of the diversity of the
range of expression of the shame affect, Tomkins states that, “As for the theoretical
construct shame, however, I will argue that these are not differences in shame, but rather
differences in objects and sources, and differences in responses to both sources and
affect.” Tomkins’ Script Theory provides a basis for understanding how “. . .
differences in objects and sources, and differences in responses to both sources and
affect,” are assembled into individual responses to the environment by linking affects and
scripts. Tomkins continues by stating, “Therefore, strictly speaking, one can be
‘ashamed’ of either being inferior or being immoral and of striving either to overcome
inferiority or immorality.”

Many authors have addressed the diversity of shame’s expression differentiating
between context and the quality of affect expressed. Helen Lynd provides an early
differentiation between shame and guilt by noting that the Germanic derivations of the
separate terms, Scham, for shame and Schuldig for guilt, impart different meanings; in
the case of shame a sense of self as flawed especially in reference to previously held
beliefs about self, and in the case of guilt, of having performed an action that a debt is
now owed for because of its consequences to others. In either case, Lynd posits that a
sense of self is essential to the experience of either shame or guilt. Michael Lewis
observes that the experience of shame and its various expressions first requires a sense of
self, and refers to shame as the self-conscious emotion. Gerhart Piers and Milton
Singer support M. Lewis’ and Lynd’s position that a sense of self is necessary for an
experience of shame when they note that shame and guilt arise in response to distinct ego
challenges: for guilt, transgression, and for shame, failure. Piers and Singer link shame and belonging, observing that underlying shame is, “... the fear of contempt which, on an even deeper level of the unconscious, spells fear of abandonment, the death by emotional starvation.” Jane Tangney and Rhonda Dowling support Helen Block Lewis’ claim that shame and guilt differ in focus, positing that with shame the message is, “I am wrong,” whereas with guilt the message is, “What I did was wrong.”

Similarly, Tangney et al. conclude that embarrassment contains the message, “I have been exposed,” indicating a violation of a social convention. Donald Mosher and Barbara White explain that shyness mediates an individual’s sense of belonging to a group or other relationship not previously established. Mosher and White support Tomkins’ contention that shame, guilt, and shyness are not different affects, differing solely in terms of the context and intensity in which they are expressed. Among their conclusions they identify gender differences in the experiences of shame and other shame affects, and attribute these differences to culturally specific learned gender identities.

Michael Lewis views humiliation as the intentional evocation of shame in an effort to condition and control, such as the use of disgust and contempt by parents to evoke shame in their children in an effort to discourage certain behaviors and promote others. Lewis relates the development of this strategy to the onset of toilet training in children and the parent’s disgust with bodily functions and products. Nathanson supports Lewis stating that humiliation occurs when, “... shame is the result of an aggressive attack by a valued other,” and by noting that mortification means to be shamed
Nathanson concludes, “I think that whether we call such experiences shame, embarrassment, humiliation, mortification, discouragement, or by other terms mostly depends on our lifetime experiences of shame affect,” emphasizing the subjective nature of the separate terms used to describe the experience of shame.  

In an attempt to explain the relationship between shame and the expression of symptoms associated with psychopathology, Freud suggests that aggression toward self resulting from guilt is what underlies depression. Andrew Morrison also claims that there is a causal relationship between shame and depression and states that many suicides can be attributed to internalized shame.  

Eric Erickson proposes a theoretical model that can help clarify shame’s contribution to psychopathology. Erickson’s model divides the human life cycle into discrete stages, with each life stage characterized by distinct challenges that must be effectively met in order to foster healthy development. Erickson notes that shame arises during the second developmental stage, early childhood, which occurs between nine months and four years of age, and describes the challenge of this stage as a battle for autonomy. Erickson posits that the goal of the second stage is to develop will, and that children who are unable to develop will and self-control at this developmental stage may be affected by self-doubt and shame throughout the rest of their lives.  

Helen Lewis’ work exploring the nature of ineffective psychotherapy proposes three kinds of shame experiences: overt, unidentified shame, shame that is experienced but, because of its intensity, is not able to be identified or articulated as such until it
begins to diminish. *Consciously experienced shame* is shame that is recognized, articulated, and guides genuine response, and *bypassed shame*, shame that is marginally acknowledged and, because it is not embraced, results in hostility, aggression, and resentment. She posits that the suppression of bypassed shame results in psychopathology in its various forms. Supporting Helen Lewis, Michael Lewis proposes that unacknowledged shame can be transformed into sadness and depression. He further claims that avoidance of shame in those with shame-based personalities is the basis of narcissism, and that dissociation is ultimately a strategy for avoidance of shame. Nathanson asserts that borderline personalities are shame-based personalities that also carry dismell and disgust toward self.

Kaufman and Nathanson both claim that since Tomkins developed affect theory, shame has begun to receive attention as a driving force in the human experience, resulting in a steady increase in the effectiveness of therapeutic approaches that emphasize addressing shame.

Kaufman systematically examines how shame in its various guises is first internalized and then magnified, giving rise to a wide-ranging series of syndromes. Kaufman asserts that syndrome differentiation results from the cojoining of other negative affects with shame, and provides a general classification of shame-based symptoms. Kaufman states that compulsive syndromes involve shame-infused repetitive enactments such as addictive disorders, eating disorders, and sexual and physical abuse; that schizoid, depressive, and paranoid syndromes, including paranoid schizophrenia, occur when shame and paranoia become fused; with phobic syndromes, including agoraphobia, the phobia guards against further shame; with sexual dysfunction
syndromes such as impotence and premature ejaculation, the sex drive has become infused with shame; with splitting syndromes, including multiple, borderline, and narcissistic personality disorders, shame has been fused with the personal process of disowning; and that sociopathic and psychopathic syndromes occur where shame is an expression of failures in human attachment.  

Attachment theory states that the relationship between primary care-givers, most usually parents, and their children, beginning even before birth can deeply influence children’s psychological health throughout their lives. In his review of the development of attachment theory, Robert Karen explains how the importance of rearing styles upon the subsequent psychological health of children came to be understood by the psychological community. Karen describes how different kinds of parenting result in three different attachment styles. Secure attachment develops when children had received attuned and reliable rearing; avoidant attachment develops when children are treated harshly and rejected; and ambivalent attachment develops when children receive inconsistent and/or chaotic rearing. Secure attachment produces children that develop in alignment with Erickson’s model, especially in their capacity to be independent and autonomous in cooperative relationships. Avoidant and ambivalently attached children grow into adults who are dependent on their relationships for a sense of themselves, and this state of dependence can produce psychopathology.

Karen explains that the necessary condition for secure attachment is that parents are able to embrace and accept their children even when their children are expressing hatred. Ann Ulanov proposes that hatred can be a natural and healthy response to
challenges presented by the environment. However hatred, when not met and addressed, results in a “widening split” between mother and child that, if left unaddressed, can lead to depression, aggression, and external dependence. Ulanov concludes that when endured, hatred can provide the ego destructiveness necessary to move toward a more integrated self, thereby being the fuel for growth.

Jane Goldberg asserts that hate and love are on the opposite ends of the array of human emotions, and neither is inherently good or bad. It is only when hatred is not constructively managed that it can become destructive. Goldberg posits that mismanaged hatred is the source of all abuse, violence, and war, and that how we manage hatred is learned from our parents during childhood. Goldberg asserts that mismanaged hate can take forms such as obsessive/compulsive, passive/aggressive, masochistic, schizophrenic, and depressive hatred, each influencing and influenced by the personality of the person expressing it. Goldberg concludes that for hatred to be managed it must be expressed, heard, and acknowledged, but far too often hatred is hidden and becomes problematic. Only when hatred is acknowledged and embraced, is brought into friendly relationship, can the power of hatred to contribute to life be realized.

Albert Memmi states that dependence, “. . . a relationship with a real or ideal being, object, group, or institution, that involves more or less compulsion and that is connected with the satisfaction of a need,” may become problematic when, in the search to meet a specific need, people seek to meet their needs by engaging providers outside of themselves. Memmi emphasizes that when external providers are ambivalent or even
resentful about providing, misery and humiliation can arise that can lead to aggression and attacks toward both self and others. Memmi proposes that to minimize misery and humiliation people could learn to meet as many of their needs as possible themselves, and to bring a high degree of discretion to meeting those needs that cannot be internally met by choosing predictable and willing sources. Memmi concludes that dependence is a basic human condition that does not have to be problematic, however because dependence can have pathological forms, programs that promote healthy psychological relationships must engage and promote healthy dependence.

Felicity de Zulueta describes the relationship between attachment and how challenges to secure attachment promote violence and asserts that while aggression and violence are considered inherent to humans, especially males, that another premise has been arising in the psychological and social communities concerning the etiology of violence, that violence and aggression seem more likely to result from challenges to basic human connection. She proposes that trauma, defined as any experience that produces dissociation and splitting, and challenges to secure attachment that she understands to be traumatic experiences, both generate and support an experience of otherness in the traumatized person. De Zulueta posits that trauma-related dissociation is the necessary condition for dehumanization of both self and others, and that all violence, whether on the extremes of violence to self, suicide, or violence towards others, homicide, genocide, etc., is dependent on shame generated by a sense of being other. She concludes that the experience of shame combined with an experience of otherness serves to magnify
both dissociation and the experience of otherness, generating ever increasing amounts of shame and violence and, until we address shame and the experience of otherness, violence will persist and grow.  

In Karen Jaenke’s discussion of Imaginal Psychology and its relationship to the concepts of soul and soullessness, she proposes that the psychological phenomenon of dissociation can be equated to soul loss and can result in soullessness.  

Imaginal Psychology, an emerging branch of psychology, identifies soul as the primary concern of psychology, and imagination and images as the primary entrance into work with soul.  

Omer states that images, “. . . both mediate and constitute experience.”  

Omer has put forth a collection of concepts, principles, and practices known as Imaginal Transformation Praxis designed as an integrative approach to both personal and cultural transformation.  

Jaenke also notes that soul loss can operate on a cultural level, stating, “When dissociation becomes culturally pervasive and comes to be taken as normal, there is a collective dissociation from the passionate life of the soul, referred to as normative dissociation.”  

Kaufman holds that because shame is evoked any time the environment presents stimuli that provoke issues of the self, therapeutic approaches addressing shame must, “. . . focus on the self’s relationship with the self.”  

Kaufman describes the stages of healing beginning with identifying identity scripts that support pathology, to then differentiate between self and these scripts, and to then create new scripts and scenes based upon re-owning the disowned parts of the self.  

Finally, the internalized parental
image that is contributing to the pathology must be dis-internalized. He posits that the essential components of healing from shame-based syndromes and result in a self-affirming capacity are self-nurturance and self-forgiveness. Kaufman further proposes that because shame-based syndromes are expressed in a background of negative self-images that generate shame, resolution of these syndromes requires a process of re-imagining the relationship with self. Kaufman has developed a process called reparenting imagery that transforms shame-infused personalities though a re-imagining process.

Nathanson posits that shame is under-acknowledged as a source of psychopathology, commenting, “Pandora’s box has another compartment, and I believe we therapists cannot work in it until we have become much more comfortable with its contents; until we have a generation of therapists as comfortable dealing with issues of shame as they are with other affects, shame remains, for the most part, veiled.”

Thus far, this review has focused on the primary physiological response known as the affect shame, the diversity of shame’s expression, and environmental conditions especially during early childhood that affect the relationship with shame. Affects in general are understood to have evolved in order to provide information about the significance and importance of environmental events. In particular, shame and its diversity of expressions seem to provide individuals and groups with powerful alerts about challenges to their standing with other individuals and groups, and seem to inform when actions may alter current relationships in ways that could result in non-acceptance
and/or exclusion. The range of expression of the shame affect seems to correspond to the diversity of social situations in which it is expressed, and may reflect the importance of relationship to others for humans as well as other primate species. Nathanson states that, “Shame becomes the most social of the negative affects because it modulates, regulates, impedes, contains, the interest and enjoyment that power all sociality.”

Overwhelming experiences of shame and other affects can produce dissociation, and dissociation, because it reduces not only a felt sense of self but reduces the ability to sense another’s affects as well, is considered a pre-condition to violence. Dissociation can occur not only on the level of the individual, but upon the cultural level as well.

Finally, the experience of shame can be manipulated, sometimes destructively. Attachment theory describes the outcomes of the quality of relationship between parents and children beginning pre-birth. When attachment becomes problematical, dissociation and violence can arise as well. Therefore, shame can also be understood to mediate relationship with self as well as with others.

**Shame and Defenses Against Shame**

Nathanson explains that the experience of affect proceeds through four stages: first, the environment provides a triggering event, followed by the physiological affective response. Then a cognitive phase occurs during which this event is compared to others from the past followed, finally, by responses to the scripts governing this event. Nathanson suggests that shame responses fall into two general classes, “... patterns of
either acceptance or defense.” Nathanson claims that in the case of shame, because of its painful nature, acceptance of shame occurs much less often than defending against it. Nathanson is supported in this view by Kaufman, who states, “The affect of shame is important because no other affect is more disturbing to the self, none more central for the sense of identity.” To explain the variation in defensive responses to shame, Nathanson offers his Compass of Shame, a model proposing four distinct defensive strategies against shame: withdrawal, avoidance, attack self, and attack others.

Nathanson posits that the withdrawal strategy allows escape from the shaming situation into the experience of shame, whereas the avoidance strategy involves careful attention paid to reducing or, hopefully, eliminating participation in situations in which shame might be evoked. When shame is anticipated or experienced, the attack self strategy may be employed in an attempt to bring the shaming experience under personal control. Finally, overwhelming experiences of shame may be projected onto others using the attack other strategy. Nathanson claims that the attack other response to shame is the basis for all violence today.

Salman Rushdie recognizes the connection between shame and violence, noting, “. . . that men [and women] will sacrifice their dearest love on the implacable altars of their pride. . . . Between shame and shamelessness lies the axis upon which we turn; meteorological conditions on both these poles are of the most extreme, ferocious type. Shamelessness, shame: the roots of violence.” Many other authors propose a relationship between shame and violence as well; indeed, the evidence linking shame and
violence seems overwhelming.\textsuperscript{100}

In writing about the American prison system James Gilligan states, “The purpose of violence, either crime or punishment, is to diminish the intensity of shame and replace it as far as possible with its opposite, pride, thus preventing the individual from being overwhelmed by the feeling of shame.”\textsuperscript{101} Gilligan further claims that our punitive justice system perpetuates violence because, “Punishment is the most powerful stimulus to violent behavior that we have yet discovered.”\textsuperscript{102} He goes on to say that violent crime is a response to the shame of believing that you are not cared for and loved by others.\textsuperscript{103} Gilligan suggests that many inmates go to prison because, “. . . even as brutal, degrading, and dehumanizing as our prisons are, . . . . they (inmates) receive more care there than on the street.”\textsuperscript{104} Gilligan concludes that because of the shaming nature of our attempts to gain accountability from those who commit violence, responses to these efforts cycle back and forth between violence to others and violence to self.\textsuperscript{105} As an alternative Gilligan suggests that to reduce violence and shame in our culture we must address those conditions that generate a sense of separateness, and make a commitment to addressing poverty and discrimination of all kinds.\textsuperscript{106} Gilligan also supports the attack self and others portion of Nathanson’s Compass of Shame model, stating that suicide represents the attack self response and homicide represents the attack other response to shame.\textsuperscript{107}

A concept parallel to Nathanson’s attack self and attack other responses to shame is the concept of the scapegoat as summarized by Sylvia Perrera.\textsuperscript{108} Perrera describes
the cultural and historical diversity of scapegoat rituals, variously devised to support individual and collective attempts to minimize the violence generated by shame.\textsuperscript{109} Perrera states that, “. . . riddance ceremonies . . . operate by virtue of expelling what is felt to be alien.”\textsuperscript{110} Although originally a form of collective forgiveness and healing, today scapegoating most often involves projecting overwhelming pain onto others or, at the very least, projecting it onto oneself in a way that enables one to cope.\textsuperscript{111}

Alice Miller has made a very strong case that Adolf Hitler’s scapegoating of Jews and others and the Holocaust that ensued resulted from the intense brutalization and humiliation that young Adolf experienced at the hands of his parents.\textsuperscript{112} Miller and others attribute many of the global atrocities that we witness on a far too regular basis to the experience of shame, whether personal, gender-based, racial, class-related, national, etc.\textsuperscript{113}

Rollo May suggests that shame and violence arise in response to a belief in the inability to act on your own behalf to create true community.\textsuperscript{114} May states, “Violence is a symptom. The disease is variously powerlessness, insignificance, injustice – in short a conviction that I am less than human and I am homeless in the world.”\textsuperscript{115} May goes on to say that the special power necessary to address violence is the power to make community, the power to create inclusion and belonging.\textsuperscript{116} He explains, “Communication recovers the original ‘we-ness’ of the human being on a new level.”\textsuperscript{117} May concludes that violence cannot exist in the face of compassion, and that, “Compassion arises from the recognition of community.”\textsuperscript{118}
Maslow’s order of his Hierarchy of Needs places the need to belong following the basic physiological needs and the need for safety. In their review of the need to belong, Baumeister and Leary state that rather than placing belonging after safety needs, “We suggest that belongingness can be almost as compelling a need as food and that human culture is significantly conditioned by the pressure to provide belongingness. In an exploration of the relationship between physical and social pain, MacDonald and Leary state, “Because inclusion in social groups has been a key to survival for social animals deep into the past, we propose that threats to one’s social connections are processed as a severe threat to one’s safety.”

MacDonald and Leary also conclude that shame, guilt, embarrassment, and jealousy are components of the collective affective state they term social pain that is generated whenever a threat to belonging is perceived. They emphasize that an endogenous early-warning system announcing threats to social exclusion has a very high adaptive benefit in humans and other social species. They conclude that social pain promotes aggression, and that any threat to social inclusion increases aggressive behavior. That those researching aggression use threats of social inclusion to elicit aggressive behavior in research participants provides evidence for this assertion.

Leary et al. examine the relationship between social exclusion and violence in the case of shootings at schools over the past two decades. They conclude that in approximately 80 percent of the cases of school shootings, shame and anger resulting from a perception of social exclusion precipitated the violence observed, the remaining
20 percent being explained by the presence of pre-existing psychological conditions such
as depression, which may also have been promoted by social exclusion. Leary et al.
进一步指出，耻辱是常见对社会排斥感的反应，将由排斥感所引发的羞耻感与暴力
连接起来。Robin Kowalski et al. 也指出，自杀是感知社会排斥的可能反应，为Nathanson
的《羞耻之轮》理论提供了最极端的一种攻击自我形式的证据。128

Donald Dutton 证实了暴力与归属感的威胁在亲密暴力中的关系。129 Dutton 指出，促使伴侣
谋杀的事件往往是对在那一刻将被抛弃的感知。130 Dutton 也指出，谋杀者的大脑化学特性与早
期受到的威胁对归属感的敏感性，使他们对以后的排斥感更易产生暴力反应。131

MacDonald 和 Leary 观察到，影响暴力的当前和日益增加的家族暴力现象说明，施暴者不
是异常，而是陷入了一种自我强化的暴力和被遗弃的循环，最终导致犯罪行为，包括谋杀。132

MacDonald 和 Leary 认为，暴力来自于对排斥的恐怖和恐惧，因为“……进化将排斥等同于灭
绝，所以被弃可能会成为动机层面的致命危险。”133 MacDonald 和 Leary 描述
the controlling behavior that is one symptom of domestic violence, and conclude that control is exerted in an effort to reduce and/or eliminate threats to belonging.134

In a discussion of fundamentalism and violence, Omer states, “We humans have evolved to make attachments, we require attachments for our well being . . . . It is traumatic not to be attached . . . . Fundamentalism is misplaced attachment.”135 Omer’s view suggests that perceptions of exclusion give rise not only to cultural violence, but also to genocide, war, and other forms of mass violence. Philip Gourevitch documents how the artificial differentiation created and manipulated by the Belgian government in Rwanda between Tutsis and Hutus was used to marginalize the Tutsis, that the media further dehumanized the Tutsis, referring to them as cockroaches that needed to be stamped out, and how this marginalization resulted in one of most horrific episodes of genocide in recorded history.136 Colin Turnbull documents how restricting the traditional hunting territory of the Ik people resulted in degradation of both the inclusive social relationships that previously sustained them, and of their previously sustainable subsistence life, resulting in their starvation.137 Miller states that Hitler’s characterization of Jews as vermin effectively dehumanizing them, enabled the holocaust.138 She proposes a connection between insecure attachment and violence, cautioning, “We have no need of docile children brainwashed by their upbringing to be the ideal targets of seduction by terrorists and lunatic ideologists, ready to fall in with their commands even to the extent of killing others.”139 Miller emphasizes that those who have been deeply and repeatedly humiliated will predictably respond with a suppressed
narcissistic rage that eventually erupts in violence, and claims this relationship holds for
groups as well as individuals. 140

Grant Duwe and Valerie Clark explore the relationship between perceptions of
increased social inclusion, expressed as the amount of prison visitation experienced by
16,420 offenders released from prisons in Minnesota, and the frequency these offenders
returned to prison. 141 They found that with the exception of visits from ex-wives, visits
from family and community members increases the likelihood that parolees will stay out
of prison and not commit new crimes by 25 percent, a result that holds true for all classes
of crime. They conclude that efforts to increase social inclusion, such as housing inmates
near their families, encouraging visits from a broad spectrum of an inmate’s community,
and carefully regulating problematic visitations could have a significant effect not only
on recidivism, but on community violence as well. It may be that incarceration in remote
prisons generates an additional experience of social exclusion that can promote violence
once inmates are released back into their communities, and that increased visitation
serves to reduce the sense of social exclusion imposed by incarceration and generates
prosocial behavior. 142

In this section I explore shame and the defensive responses to shame that can
emerge when shame is not embraced and processed. Emerging from this exploration is
the idea that shame and its variations are signals announcing that a challenge to the need
to belong is being perceived. The role of the need to belong in human evolution, and the
primacy of belonging as a critical survival need for humans and other social species has
also been identified. This review also described defensive strategies designed to address the unprocessed shame generated by social exclusion that are codified in Nathanson’s Compass of Shame, including both individual and group violence focused toward self and others that Nathanson has termed the attack-self and attack-other responses to shame, respectively.

In summary, shame seems to be evoked in response to, and to simultaneously announce, perceptions of social exclusion. Violence toward self and others seems to be a strategy to manage these perceived threats when the generated shame is too great to be accepted and processed. Additionally, the importance of the need for belonging and the ways that challenges to the perception of belonging contribute to violence seem to have long been underestimated among psychologists. An increase in understanding of the primacy of belonging in human relationships, including the contribution of secure attachment to a sense of belonging to self and others, may contribute to our ability to understand and address violent responses to perceptions of social exclusion. De Zulueta states, “It is the denial of our intrinsic biological and psychological need for the ‘other’ that may partly explain the length of time that it has taken to begin to understand the origins of human violence.”

The Specific Shaming of Males
Roy Scheck and John Everingham explain that males living in western technological cultures experience a particular quality of shaming that can explain why they are the effectors of the majority of violence in the world. They state that for men, “Shame is a deflating feeling of personal worthlessness . . . you’re hurting, and there’s no one to blame but yourself.” They attribute men’s violence, willingness to wage war, and their participation in the environmental destruction that endangers us all to shame and how it shapes and controls men’s lives. Further, they describe a cultural message that men hear from birth, the message that men should be ashamed simply because they are male. This message is known as basic male shame. They conclude that it is men’s avoidance of the experience of shame that results in violence because avoided shame is often internalized leading men to transform it into fear and/or anger.

Scheck and Everingham are supported by Gilligan who states that men are caught in a no-win situation; on one hand they are trained to be dependent upon others for love and belonging and on the other hand they are told to be strong and independent, and the shame of this paradox cannot be born. Robert Bly states that because of the increasing number of families with absent fathers that boys do not have male role models to guide them toward the healthy expression of anger, and they will either numb themselves or attack others as a result. Bly asserts that the lack of male role models is a major contribution to violence and incarceration noting that 85 percent of incarcerated men come from fatherless families. Bly concludes that our culture engages in
intentional ridicule of men through comic strips, television programs, movies, magazines, and university classrooms that has reinforced the cultural equation that, “. . . men are bad,” and he cautions women to deeply consider whether to have children without a dependable father as part of the family.152

John Irwin, Harvey Jackins, and Charlie Kreiner delineate additional cultural messages that promote male shame, beginning with the message that males do not feel as deeply as females so when boys cry and ask for attention when hurt, they are labeled “sissies.” 153 For males, it is considered shameful to seek attention. A second message is that men and boys are understood to be hyper-sexual, and hyper-sexuality is believed to be a inherent male trait.154 If a male doesn’t express hyper-sexuality he is suspected of being homosexual and, if in order to fit in he does behave hyper-sexually, he is shamed for being like a wild beast.155 A third cultural message offered by these authors is the idea that a male’s sole role is that of a “beast of burden.” 156 Males are valued only for their use as tools, objects to be used to create wealth, most often for others, and when used up it is understood that males are to be discarded. Males go down with the ship, while the women and children are saved, and should a male refuse to go to war, refuse to kill or be killed, they face condemnation and disgrace.157 Men are considered better workers, soldiers, and business people; women are considered more human, better friends, better parents, and better care givers, and these messages leave men knowing they are not the kind of humans they are supposed to be.158

Nita Lutwak et al. propose that male conditioning begins at, and even before, birth
and is based upon the mother’s inability to completely identify with their male children due to the difference in their genders. De Zulueta documents that among poorly attached monkey mothers their male offspring are four times more likely to be attacked by their mothers than their female offspring, evidence that differential identification can result in differential treatment of offspring. De Zulueta asserts that children showing either anxious or ambivalent attachment grow into adults who are far more likely to be violent than securely attached children. Avoidantly attached children are more likely to become abusers while anxiously attached children tend to become victims. She posits that not only is it harder for female parents to identify with their male offspring, seemingly a precondition to problematic attachment, but that male children raised by single mothers also have a very hard time breaking free of their mothers and establishing themselves as fully individuated because they do not have male role models who can provide them a sense of themselves in the context of their own gender. Males in this situation may feel rage and shame if they do not separate from their mothers, and feel fear and shame if they do successfully pull away from their mothers because they are left without a sense of belonging. Males without male role models are forced to dehumanize their mothers in order to successfully separate themselves from her, generating resentment, and shame that when accompanied by dehumanization, can promote violence, especially against women.

Fredric Rabinowitz and Sam Cochran describe four categories of challenges men face resulting from their male-specific gender programming. The first of these
challenges is contained in the messages men receive concerning the dependence that exists in their relationships with their primary caregivers. The authors note that in this culture, and in most western cultures, boys are directed toward independence and girls are directed toward relationship. Being directed away from connection, soothing, and dependence can produce challenges to secure attachment that may, ultimately, result in the tendency to pull away from relationship and intimacy at best, and violence at the worst. The result is defensive independence that both longs for connection, and simultaneously dreads relationship.  

The second challenge is that from birth, boys are instructed to suppress expression of sadness and pain which results in repression of all feelings and as a result, both boys and men can be frightened whenever feelings such as grief and sadness arise that are powerful enough to break through their socially-induced restriction. Strategies males have traditionally used to avoid powerful feelings include dissociation and numbness, and/or compensating behaviors such as the use of alcohol or other drugs that soothe and/or alter powerful and therefore problematic feelings when they emerge.

A third challenge facing males is the contradictory and un-serviceable roles men are expected to take. Among these is to both be a good provider, and to be available to your children in order to be a good father. These two roles can come into conflict in challenging economic times that require one parent, often the male, to be absent from the home in order to provide the financial resources necessary to its support. Other potentially contradictory roles include to be both in control, yet spontaneous, and to be
sensitive, yet strong. 167

The final challenge facing males is generated by the social message that men are only valued for what they do, therefore doing becomes the major focus of men’s lives. One result of this belief is that men experience an elevated risk of failure because satisfaction and success is based on factors outside of themselves. Lost to men as a result of adopting the doing mode of existence is their inner lives, their felt sense of themselves, and as a result dissatisfaction and depression arise because men become less able to respond authentically to life. Men adopting the doing mode also lose a felt sense of how their actions are affecting others, increasing the level of pain that is required before men receive enough feedback to stop what they are doing when their actions are causing another’s pain. 168

Rabinowitz and Cochran conclude that to be effective, any psychotherapy that successfully addresses men’s issues must first provide men safe and effective support in addressing and experiencing their feelings, and then provide encouragement, community, and empathy over a long enough period of time so that men are able to reconnect with the parts of themselves that have been dissociated. Essential to this process is to deepen male’s trust in relationship by building with them trustworthy social networks that they can relate to with confidence. 169

Terrance Real describes cultural programming concerning the differences in how boys and girls develop as the basis not only for much of the mythology surrounding males, but also supports and justifies the physical abuse that boys receive on their way to
becoming men. Real claims that in this culture it is believed that while girls simply grow into women, boys have to be turned into men. Real explains that the process of turning a boy into a man involves separating boys from parts of themselves; first their feelings, then their dependence on others and, finally and frequently, actual loss of parts of themselves such as in circumcision rituals. Real describes these losses as traumatic, and describes them collectively as, loss of the relational. Real divides these losses into three categories: the first to be lost is mother, then self is lost and, finally, relationship with others is lost as well. These losses generates not only challenges to attachment that can result in violence toward self and others, but the accompanying emotional numbness men experience as a result generates depression that may be treated with drugs and other compensating behaviors such as gambling, sex, fast cars, bungee jumping, and even violence, all designed to increase the intensity of their experiences. Real concludes that any therapeutic relationship that proves to be effective with men showing these symptoms, will first turn men toward service to others as a way to increase the amount of relatedness in their lives. In this way men can achieve the developmentally appropriate experience of communion lost in their youth, and restore meaning and purpose to their lives.

Kaufman provides further clarity about the relationship men have with shame, noting that not only are men told that expressing sadness, grief, fear, and vulnerability is wrong, but should a man express one of these feelings he is additionally shamed for not being a man. Kaufman calls these relationships distress-shame binds, and provides
the example of when a man wants relationship, he simultaneously understands that the touching and holding that mediates communion in relationship has been restricted for men in this culture because touching has been equated with sex, and men can be shamed for being overly sexual when they seek touch. As a result men can become depressed because they are restricted from touch that is so important for both physical and mental health. Equally, men long to identify themselves with others as a strategy to belong, to experience inclusion, and are simultaneous expected to be strong and independent, and this bind can generate shame and withdrawal as well. Kaufman suggests that men experiencing shame compensate for this experience by expressing other feelings such as rage and contempt, with other strategies such as becoming perfectionist, by both exercising dominance and building power, and by transferring blame to others.¹⁷⁶ 

Kaufman proposes that when men are feeling shame they realize that shame literally turns their gaze inward, then when they are feeling shame men can actively turn their gaze outside of themselves to promote their experience of presence and reduce the necessity of compensation.¹⁷⁷ 

Robert Bly also describes male shame binds including how family members mistakes are hidden rather than acknowledged as a strategy to reduce shame, not having a body that matches the culture’s ideals and simultaneously wanting to express yourself physically and, when you are given tasks that are outside your abilities you are expected to be able to handle them because you are male.¹⁷⁸ Bly concludes that if males can forgive themselves for the extent they are affected by male programming, men can
experience an ever-increasing sense of self that is essential in developing a healthy relationship with the shame experience. 179

Roy Schenk describes three sources of shaming that contribute to male violence: the first is the different ways boys and girls are treated from birth, boys are expected to be masters of doing, and girls to be masters of being. When these expectations are inevitably frustrated by the more equal natural expressions of these two qualities by both genders, both are shamed for not living up to expectations. 180 Second, because males, and females are respectively seen as authorities on doing and being, they are often judged using the standards attributed to the other gender; males are judged using being standards and females judged using doing standards. As a result, males and females experience alienation and anger because they rightly believe they are being judged with unfair and unequal standards. 181 Finally, Schenk supports Kaufman’s assertion that when both males and females seek touch all male efforts to be touched are understood as attempts to be sexual and as a result men are considered bad, female efforts to be touched are considered solicitations for sex and women wanting touch are labeled tramps, and as a result both genders are shamed for trying to satisfy a need essential to human physical and psychological health. 182 Schenk concludes in order to address violence, depression, and the loneliness that typifies relationships in our culture we must act to produce equality in all sectors; racial, sexual, social, financial, etc., for without equality our cultural inhibitions will continue to limit our ability to meet our basic human needs.

John Gagnon describes how prohibitions against feeling and deep relationship
restrict men from seeking the potential relief available in therapy, peer counseling, and participation in the men’s movement. Gagnon explains how the shame of being male inhibits men from establishing relationships with other men, an observation derived from participants in his men’s groups early in his career who would repeatedly express that they did not feel important to other men, and that would withdraw from connection with other men once their own needs had been met. He notes that men feel isolated because they are only able to feel satisfied if they are loved and admired by women. Like Kaufman, Gagnon concludes that therapy with men must include re-parenting, and with men, re-fathering. Men can internalize a loving, approving, and highly relational imaginal father who provides effective guidance and who does not use intentional shaming to effect behavioral change. When men can feel the presence of an inner compassionate father they relax and become present to all they are as humans, separate from their past programming, and then can choose to gather with other men on a regular basis in celebration of maleness.

Gordon Wheeler and Daniel Jones state that, “. . . all men are fathers of sons,” and explain that male-male role-modeling provides a potentially powerful point of entry to creating and sustaining an inner compassionate father. They posit that when men turn away from their mothers in an effort to adopt male-specific behavior and relationships they automatically turn toward any male in their proximity as potential role-models. The male role-modeling relationship becomes problematical, however, to the extent that a man is conditioned to be strong and independent because he will try to turn
inward for guidance that does not inherently exist, thereby limiting his access to interpersonal relational models, and generating confusion, loneliness, resentment, depression, and possibly violence. They explain that because men are both dependent on fathering relationships for healthy development, and simultaneously feel shame when they seek and fail to find them, that fathering relationships could provide a powerful point of entry for generating the inner imaginal father necessary to healthy development as men learn to transform the shame they feel when they acknowledge their dependence, especially dependence on other men.\textsuperscript{187}

Christopher Miller explains men long for male role-models, that men require what he terms, cellular-contact with other males in order to generate an inner father who supports his healthy and age-appropriate development.\textsuperscript{188} He proposes the time-honored method of male-initiation as a strategy to enable men to experience transformation of basic male shame into a deeply felt sense of being, belonging, and community. Miller is supported by Michael Greenwald who states, “...mature masculinity ... is virtually absent from technologically advanced societies (and has) ... resulted in one of the more serious moral crises ever to face Western civilization.”\textsuperscript{189} Greenwald describes how male initiation provides both a deep sense of belonging and community that supports boys to break their dependency relationships with their mothers, and role-models of how to be responsible males in their larger community as well. Greenwald describes three \textit{energies}, specific energetic qualities that are contained in effective male initiation. The first is pain intentionally generated in a wounding-testing-separating ceremony. The
intention is to both evoke pain, and to create structure and support for managing the pain generated in order to provide males with the skills and support necessary to manage the pain of separating from their mothers. This part of initiation awakens men to their bodies beginning the process of establishing a felt sense of self. The second component of initiation is teaching-bonding experiences that lead initiates into understanding the requirements of their role as male community members. Finally, initiates experience healing-spiritual ceremonies designed to introduce them to their place in the network of all life and promote their capacity to surrender to the greater wisdom that surrounds them. Greenwald posits that male initiation resolves basic male shame because men learn to understand themselves separate from their mothers, eliminating the shame, resulting resentment, and potential violence generated when males perceive themselves as less than fully human.

In summary, in western cultures men, and women as well, seem to be immersed in gender-specific social conditioning beginning at birth that can serve to separate both genders from their experience of their own essential being. Taken together the conditioning of males establishes the unconscious understanding that men are not completely human, that they are destructive to human society by their very nature, a message that generates what is known as basic male shame. The male response to this message includes powerlessness, resentment, depression, problematic dependency relationships, and even violence. One factor contributing to and perpetuating basic male shame has been the lack of available effective male role models that can support growth
and healthy development of boys when they separate from their mothers. Effective male role models provide boys with a felt sense of what it means to become and be a man, enables males to embrace and understand their place in the world, and to know how to contribute to the community as a whole. One consequence of the expansion of western technological culture has been the loss of the rites of passage that serve to initiate boys into the culture of men, a loss that marks the beginning of basic male shame. Restoration of male initiation is vital because initiation provides males a felt sense of self, a sense of their place in their community, and a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves, the web of all life. Initiation produces the qualities in men that resolve basic male shame and could serve to reduce male violence.

The Role of Empathy in Transmuting Shame

Termed by William Ickes’ *Everyday Mind Reading*, humans seem to possess the capacity to understand and respond to another’s experiences, including those of other species; this capacity is known as empathy. Lauren Wispé reviews the history of empathy and notes that the first known reference to empathy was the term *einfühlung* provided by early aestheticians who were describing the affective response experienced by those viewing visual arts. Theodor Lipps provides a psychological conceptualization of this term, concluding that *einfühlung* was effected by projection and imitation, and especially by matching of affect. Edward Titchener was the first to translate *einfühlung* into English as the word empathy. George Mead added a
cognitive component to the concept of empathy and added that in addition to the experience of affect in his conceptualization of empathy, emphasizing that an understanding of others was equally necessary for a full empathic experience. Mead attributes children’s developing capacity to empathize as the foundation of social and ethical development.

Our current understanding of the place of empathy in psychology has been deeply influenced by the work of contemporaries Carl Rogers and Heinz Kohut, who both posit that empathy is essential to all components of human relationship. Kohut states, “Empathy is the basis of all human interaction.” Rogers’ lifelong interest in empathy is illustrated by the volume of empathy research he conducted throughout his career seeking to more clearly define and understand it. Rogers first defined empathy as perceiving, “... the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the ‘as if’ condition.” Based on his clinical experiences, Rogers posits that empathy, along with unconditional positive regard and congruence, is an essential component of therapeutic effectiveness. In a later definition Rogers emphasizes the dynamic nature of empathy, stating that, Empathy means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in his/her life, moving about in it delicately without making judgments, sensing meanings of which he/she is scarcely aware... it includes communicating your sensing of his/her world as you look with fresh and unfrightened eyes at elements of which the individual is fearful... It means that
for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another world without prejudice.  

Rogers believes that non-judgmental acceptance on the part of the therapist contributes to the client’s sense of themselves as worthy human beings and promotes the client’s willingness to be accountable.  

Rogers proposes that humans have a *self-actualizing tendency*, an innate capacity for growth and development that, when arrested, can be reactivated by experiencing adequate empathy, allowing and promoting completion of the developmental process.  

Rogers’ Client-Centered Theory further emphasizes the centrality of empathy to psychotherapy.  

The development of Client-Centered Theory promoted and influenced empathy skills training that, at that time they were developed, primarily focused on reflecting clients’ affect back to them.  

Rogers’ empathic skill was often interpreted by observers to be reflection of the client’s last spoken words back to them, however Rogers objected to the idea that empathy was based solely on affective reflection, and emphasized that empathy is much more an attitude than a rote process, that empathy is a lived quality of understanding rather than a technique.  

Rogers’ Client-Centered Theory inspired one of his students, Marshall Rosenberg, to develop Nonviolent Communication, also known as NVC, a communication skill and consciousness that emphasizes empathic skill and capacity.  

Kohut is known for, among other things, developing Self-Psychology, a branch of psychology influenced by psychoanalysis that emphasizes the importance of empathy and introspection in the therapeutic process.
affected therapist is ineffective and believed that a therapeutic attitude that is experience near, a sharing of the client’s experience, is more likely to support client growth. In an early definition of empathy Kohut referred to empathy as vicarious introspection, the therapist’s experience of the client’s affect. Later in his career his definition of empathy converged with that of Rogers, stating that empathy is, “. . . the capacity to think and feel oneself into the inner life of another.” Kohut considers empathy to be necessary for healthy psychological development, and described lapses in empathy on the part of primary caregivers as empathic failures. Kohut also proposes the concept of the second chance, wherein the client is able to address the psychological challenges created by empathic failures that occurred in previous developmental stages in a therapeutic relationship with an empathic therapist. Kaufman’s description of therapy as corrective development supports Kohut’s conclusions about the relationship between empathy and therapy.

Rogers’ and Kohut’s combined influence serves to illuminate the efficacy and primacy of empathy in all human relations, and those agreeing with them that empathy is an integrated capacity also support the contention that empathy possesses high therapeutic efficacy as well. Nonetheless, the modes by which empathy effects healing and transformation are still under debate.

One discussion concerning the nature of empathy centers upon whether empathy is primarily an affective or a cognitive experience. Martin Hoffman explores the relationship between empathy and moral development, initially defining empathy as “. . .
the basic affective response to another.” Later, Hoffman extends his definition in a way that brought it more in alignment with Rogers’ when he states that empathy involves, “Other-focused role taking,” that includes both affective and cognitive components. Hoffman further states that empathy also carries the message that, “. . . we should always care for others,” a quality apparently more in alignment with Rogers’ concept of unconditional positive regard than with Rogers’ concept of empathy.

Among those who emphasize the importance of the affective component of empathy, Michael Basch concludes that empathy is the, “. . . sharing of emotional experience.” Basch posits that mature empathy includes the capacity to accept or deny the experience of another’s emotion at will. Nathanson supports Basch, and proposes that individuals can learn to establish an empathic wall, a barrier to unwanted affective resonance, to protect them from being overwhelmed with another’s emotional experience.

Alexandra Bachelor explores her clients’ experience of empathy and distinguished four different aspects of empathy that she termed the cognitive, affective, shared, and nurturant qualities. Her client’s report experiencing cognitive empathy when therapists accurately reflect the meaning clients were attributing to their experiences. Clients experienced affective empathy when therapists accurately reflect their client’s affective states. Shared empathy was experienced when therapists expressed their own feelings and the meanings arising in response to what their clients were expressing. Finally, nurturant empathy occurred when clients perceived that their therapists providing
a supportive, safe, and totally attentive presence. Bachelor concludes while clients spoke of different component qualities in their relationship with their therapists, overall clients tend to collapse these separate qualities into a single perception of being heard, seen, and understood; a quality of witnessing and seeing that embraced their whole being. Bachelor concludes that the collective experience described by her clients is the full empathic experience. Sharon Myers, who also explores the experience of empathy from the client’s perspective, concludes that, when combined, these separate components identified by Bachelor create an integrated experience of empathy, and that the empathic experience itself is a profound experience of being witnessed and accepted in your entirety. Myers posits that in many instances the quality of empathic connection established between therapist and client seemed sufficient to address client concerns, and that interventions proposed by therapists to address clients concerns must be offered in the field of full empathic connection in order to be accepted by the client. These interventions are not part of the empathic field but are dependent upon it for their effectiveness. Arthur Bohart and Leslie Greenberg define empathy as the capacity to experience the affect of another, to understand the meaning of the expressed affect in the life of the other, and to reflect this meaning back to the person without losing self. Bohart and Greenberg emphasize the integrated and comprehensive nature of empathy, and support Myers’ and Bachelor’s similar conclusions.

While current opinion seems to hold that affect and cognition among other qualities, are both necessary for the experience and expression of empathy, confusion
exists concerning the difference between empathy and sympathy, further challenging understanding the nature of empathy. The dictionary definition of sympathy, feeling what someone else is feeling irrespective of its positive or negative quality, is most closely aligned with definitions of affective empathy. David Black explains that along with affective resonance, sympathy is also equated with expressions of caring, most usually understood as condolences, especially toward those emotionally challenged in some way. Affecting clarity about empathy and sympathy is that both affective resonance and expressions of caring have been proposed as definitions of empathy.

Black states that sympathy is the, “. . . sharing of the passivities of human experience . . . . with sympathy, self and other are not distinct, with empathy they are.” Black concludes that sympathy is the capacity that makes affect attunement possible, and that sympathy is an essential part of empathy. Freud’s definitions of sympathy and empathy support Black, “Sympathy is emotional identification and empathy is the understanding of an ego foreign to our own.” Ana Sofia Nava concludes that sympathy can result in emotional contagion, when therapist’s lose control of their affective experience in resonance to their client’s affect, and that therapists need to address and control emotional contagion in their therapeutic relationships. Colwyn Trevarthen and Kenneth Aitken explore the relational capacities possessed by infants and conclude that infants share intensive sympathetic experiences with their mothers, that they are born with a protoconversational readiness that contains both sympathetic and empathic qualities, and that infants enter into both sympathetic and empathic exchanges.
from birth. Sympathy, then, is considered by these authors to be the capacity that promotes affective attunement, while empathy includes both sympathetic and cognitive understanding of others while remaining a witness to, but not becoming, the other.

Wispé’s review of the history of the concept of empathy acknowledges Titchener’s contributions, quoting Titchener’s statement that empathic understandings are, “... psychologically interesting because they are the converse of perception: their core is imaginal, and their context is made up of sensations that carry empathic meaning.” Titchener relates the capacity for empathy with the need for belonging by stating that, “... empathic tendencies were gross general tendencies to humanize and personalize our surroundings ... that provide for a kind of freemasonry among all men.” Wispé notes that Titchener’s concept of empathy is most closely aligned with Rogers’ conceptualization of empathic capacity. Wispé concludes that empathy is an essential capacity for all human endeavors, and as such must have its roots in development.

The primary literature concerning psychological development suggests that, in the absence of accidental trauma, the quality of relationship between the primary caregiver and the child determines the child’s subsequent experience of psychological health. Formal expressions of this idea include John Bowlby’s Attachment Theory, Melanie Klein’s Object-Relations, and Michael Balint’s Basic Fault. Mary Ayres posits that healthy development is promoted through a deep empathic resonance between mother and child, and that this relationship is mediated through intense eye contact. Similarly, Kohut terms the qualities of the mother-child relationship that result in
incomplete psychological development empathic failures and proposes that a second chance at healthy development can occur, especially in an appropriate therapeutic relationship.\textsuperscript{244} Kaufman’s proposal that a healthy relationship between mother and child is based upon empathy and that an empathic therapeutic relationship can promote corrective development provides further support for this perspective.\textsuperscript{245}

The discussion of the effectiveness of empathy in psychotherapy is centered around two opposing views: one, that empathy serves only to support development of the therapeutic relationship, the second being that empathy is a psychotherapeutic modality in its own right, and may even be the single most essential component of therapy.\textsuperscript{246} Dan Buie supports the first view, stating that, “Empathy occurs in an interpersonal setting between persons who remain aware of their separateness, yet in essence it is an intrapsychic phenomenon based in a human capacity to know another person’s inner experience from moment to moment.”\textsuperscript{247} Buie concludes that empathy alone is not sufficient for effective therapy.\textsuperscript{248} Conversely, Bohart and Greenberg support Rogers and Kohut concluding that empathy is not only necessary but also sufficient for effective therapy. Bohart and Greenberg state, “... we see empathy as an essential ingredient of therapeutic practice and a key concept in attempts to understand how therapy works.”\textsuperscript{249} Kaufman concurs that empathy is essential to therapeutic success, stating, Psychotherapy must mirror development by actively engaging the identical processes that shape the self. It must be rooted in precise and accurate knowledge of how the self develops, functions, and changes. A conception of psychotherapy emerges directly from such an evolving vision of the self. If affect, imagery, and language are the central processes shaping the self, then these identical processes must equally be engaged in order to effect therapeutic change.\textsuperscript{250}
Concepts parallel to empathy abound including: Bion’s Maternal Reverie, the child’s affective relationship with its mother; Stern’s Affective Attunement, essentially empathy with an affective emphasis; Buie’s Resonant Empathy, containing both affective and cognitive elements; Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence, a quality the author equates with rapport containing affective and cognitive components as well as social facility; Horvath and Greenberg’s Therapeutic Alliance, essentially affective and cognitive attunement between therapist and client; Kohut’s Experience-near Observation, including affect and understanding; Linehan’s Validation, whose definition contains the elements of Rogers’ congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard; and Yontef’s Contract Boundary, which contains both cognitive and affective components. It is possible that the amount of attention paid to empathy since its first mention illustrates the centrality of empathy in the lives of social species.

While the experience of empathic connection seems to be a human birthright, empathic capacity can be reduced and even eliminated resulting from both internal and external causes. Donald Kalshed explains that trauma causes a split between both reality and our inner world, and between various parts of our inner world. The splitting response to trauma results in separation from reality, reality is replaced by fantasy, and this separation is termed dissociation. Kalshed proposes that dissociation has the beneficial effect of psychologically removing an individual from traumatizing surroundings, and provides self-soothing fantasies that serve to reduce anxiety. Self-
soothing compensates for the experience of overwhelm that occurs when, following trauma, those experiencing normal levels of affect can no longer manage normal affect, and normal experience itself becomes overwhelming. As a result traumatized individuals tend to defend themselves from engaging their own and other’s experiences, essentially a loss of empathy for self and others.\textsuperscript{254} Kalshed concludes that psychopathology can result from the traumatized psyche’s defensive attachment of fantasy to experience, supporting Kaufman’s explanation of how both shame avoidance and shame fusion with other affects explains much of the diversity of identified psychopathology.\textsuperscript{255} Kaufman states that reduced empathic capacity typifies all psychopathology and results from the failure to self-identify that accompanies dissociation.\textsuperscript{256} Kaufman concludes that in order to restore empathy individuals must regain self-identification and internalize a felt sense of self in place of the fantasies used to soothe their traumatic overwhelm.

De Zulueta proposes that problematical attachment produces dissociation and other trauma symptoms and can, therefore, be understood to be traumatic.\textsuperscript{257} She explains that one of the consequences of insecure attachment is reduction of reflective function, composed of both a felt sense of oneself, and the ability to put yourself into the mind of another, the ability to see others as human; therefore a loss of reflective function is basically a loss of empathic capacity.\textsuperscript{258} De Zulueta posits because humans live unpredictable lives, a psychological mechanism designed to address the consequences of psychological overwhelm has the adaptive value of enabling coping, and negative consequences that include, “. . . reliving of the traumatic events as well as a pervasive
heightened state of arousal with a lowered threshold for rage,” and, “. . . avoidance symptoms such as a distressing numbing of emotional responses, loss of interest in others, estrangement, restricted affect, and a foreshortened sense of the future.”  

Traumatic events vary in their intensity and, while the symptoms of non-severe and infrequent trauma are fairly easily addressed, traumas of deep severity and those that reoccur over a long period of time tend to produce symptoms that are refractory and that can linger throughout the remainder of the person’s life.  

De Zulueta posits that the collection of symptoms collectively described as post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, can be considered an attachment disorder because trauma is so often experienced as the breaking of social bonds, and the symptoms of trauma lessen and can disappear as social bonds are re-established.  

De Zulueta concludes that trauma can occur on more than the individual level including within families, communities, states, races, and countries; that traumatic events including war, genocide, environmental disasters, large scale industrial accidents, bullying, and massive job layoffs among others create both individual and collective empathic loss, and that to address the loss of empathy and other symptoms evidenced requires that empathy building and issues of social inclusion be addressed on an ever larger scale.  

Sandra Bloom states that in order to call forth undeveloped empathic capacity, and to restore empathy when it has been lost following trauma, that, “. . . the key is other people.”  

Bloom posits that restoration of a sense of self is dependent upon being seen and witnessed as fully human, and that the rate at which empathy is restored
increases as the number of effective witnesses increases. She cautions therapists that their unconscious inability to consider their clients as fully human resulting from their trauma has the potential to reduce therapeutic effectiveness. Bloom is supported by Miller who states, “. . . I could describe the client’s defense mechanisms, especially the defense against feelings, but doing so would fail to communicate the emotional climate, which alone evokes a person’s suffering and so makes identification and empathy possible . . . his problem cannot be solved with words, but only through experience.” Miller posits that once our traumas have been faced and mourned we become free from the need to both fantasize and repeat, we regain a sense of ourselves, and a sense of others as well; we regain our empathic capacity. She describes a program in a penitentiary where recidivism was reduced to 20 percent from 80 percent by giving violent offenders small animals to care for in their cells. Inmate participants regained their ability to feel resulting from their relationships with the animals, and regaining their feelings and ability to love others was enough to support behavioral change.

Sue Hall also supports the efficacy of an empathic approach for restoring empathy that has been lost following traumatic events. Hall describes her work to restore empathy in perpetrators of intimate violence and concludes that the ability of perpetrators to feel and understand how their behavior is affecting themselves and their intimate partners results in, “. . . their being connected to the emotional wisdom that enables them to assess situations and make choices that are in their best interest.”

Jaenke emphasizes how difficult addressing dissociation can be remarking, “It is
quite a psychological feat to turn consciously toward one’s own soullessness, inclusive of its behavioral manifestations and the defensive, shamed, traumatized, and numb layers from which it emanates. Still, unpeeling each layer in the presence of awareness is necessary for the restoration of experience and re-awakening.”  

Jaenke’s statement supports Bloom’s contention that restoration of empathy is dependent upon others, aware present others.

In an effort to increase safety in schools David Levine teaches empathic capacity to school children, faculty, and staff. Levine states that returning learners to an experience of feeling is the cornerstone of their curriculum, and they use story telling and community activities designed to increase the participation of the entire community as their main active empathy-evoking modalities. He posits that school safety is dependent on increasing the number of relationships contributing to the school experience, and that the basis of increased relationships is increased understanding of another’s feelings and their lives. Levine concludes that the emotional violence created by anti-social behaviors in schools is most effectively addressed when teachers effectively teach pro-social skills including empathy, compassion, caring, and generosity; especially empathy. Levine is supported by Daniel Goleman who in his formulation of emotional intelligence, essentially a synonym of empathy, proposes that an emotional malaise is settling into the United States and in other westernized cultures that is typified by withdrawal and social problems, anxiety and depression, attention disorders, and delinquency and aggression. Goleman equates loss of good social support systems
with the erosion of emotional intelligence and proposes that rather than relying on the
stability of our increasingly at-risk families, teaching emotional intelligence in schools
may prove to be the most effective strategy to generate peace.\textsuperscript{274} Goleman concludes
that irrespective of a child’s racial, social, economic, or cultural background, emotional
intelligence is the fundamental human quality promoting personal and social agency, and
the only effective education is one that teaches emotional intelligence.

Franz de Waal posits that an increase in empathic awareness is the basis of peace
because empathic responses engage not only our general understanding of others, but also
our willingness to ensure that another’s basic needs are met.\textsuperscript{275} De Waal, a primatologist
working mostly with monkeys and chimps, states that empathy exists in all the primates
he has studied, and that empathic capacity can be built and expanded to include ever-
increasing levels of sophistication. He concludes that monkey, chimp, and human
societies as well all depend on the unseen reaching out toward others that is supported
and enabled by empathy, and that we need both our understanding of and concern for
others in addition to our intellectual capacities to address the social inequities that
surround us.\textsuperscript{276} J.D. Trout cautions that empathic capacity is not enough to promote
peace because, while empathy will respond to any social injustice, we require strategies
to address injustices that are both realistic and effective, and far too often humans get
catch up in the emotional intensity of a concern and respond without determining
whether their responses are realistic and/or effective.\textsuperscript{277} Trout posits that effective and
realistic social policies are first based upon an understanding of what creates social well-
being, and that government’s primary job is to not only to bridge recognized gaps in well-being, but to actively search for these gaps and create policies to address them when individual responses are based on a lack of information that reduces their effectiveness and can render them ineffective.  

Trout concludes that only by bringing a broader and more integrated approach to social pain will our individual responses serve to address it.

Noting that, “Empathic distress is a prosocial motive,” Martin Hoffman posits that empathic capacity places humans and other empathic species in the position of either helping the one in pain or numbing empathically-experienced pain as a way to reduce pain. Hoffman notes that justice in its various forms is a strategy to address individual and social pain, and very often the strategy to achieve justice serves to generate more pain than was originally being experienced. Hoffman concludes that empathy training serves to wake feelings in those who have been numbed by emotional overwhelm, and can serve to increase the capacity to manage powerful emotions before they become overwhelming. Further, increased empathy capacity is the basis for a, “... universal secular ethics – an ethics that demands basic human rights everywhere.” Hoffman proposes that our capacity to manage social pain will be the key to human survival.

In their consideration of the relationship between social and physical pain, MacDonald and Leary observe that, “... for social animals, being excluded was often equivalent to death. As a result, the processes of natural selection favored those who were motivated to be included.” They conclude that strong selective pressure exists for...
physiological mechanisms that provide individuals messages about the state of others as a tool to aid inclusion. In their discussion of the relationship between social exclusion and aggressive responses to exclusion, MacDonald and Leary state that, “In essence, then, a perceived lack of adequate social connections is the **sine qua non** of social pain.”

MacDonald and Leary also note the increasing evidence pointing to the involvement of specific regions of the brain in responses to the perception of exclusion, indicating that the empathic response is supported by neurological structures in the brain.

Ross Buck and Benson Ginsburg propose the communicative gene hypothesis as an alternative to Richard Dawkins’ selfish gene hypothesis to explain how selection pressure motivates individual members of social species to stay in a state of connection and understanding with other members of their groups. Buck and Ginsburg state, “We regard empathy, rapport, intuition, altruism, and related concepts as emergent properties of a primordial biological capacity for communication that inheres in the genes.” Jean Decety and Philip Jackson agree, stating, “It is unlikely that empathy is the product of random mutation and just happened in humans without any evolutionary history.” Decety and Jackson conclude empathy is composed of three components: affective sharing, self-other awareness, and mental flexibility, and go on to describe specific brain structures and responses associated with these three activities.

Bilyana Martinovski explores the Theory of Mind (ToM) concepts of imitation, simulation, and representation in an effort to understand their relationship to an empathic capacity and determined all three of these components, and their associated neurological structures,
were necessary for an integrated empathic response. Martinovski concludes empathy is an integrated response to social inclusion, that it, “. . . functions as the glue among interactants,” and that empathy “. . . is a manifestation of the fundamental responsibility to and for the Other.”

In their meta-analysis/review of the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior, Paul Miller and Nancy Eisenberg conclude when the basic capacity for empathy is increased, aggression and anti-social behavior decrease. Mark Umbreit et al. explain that restorative justice practices, alternatives to our current punitive justice system, achieve their effectiveness by increasing the amount of empathy experienced between victims and offenders, and that increased empathy promotes a future reduction in anti-social behavior on the part of offenders as well. In an exploration of the relationship between intergroup conflict and communication processes, Walter Stephan and Krystina Finlay determined that increasing empathy between groups is the factor that contributes to successful conflict resolution which succeeds by reducing intergroup scapegoating and creating a deeper sense of inclusion. Camilla Pagani examined the cross-cultural significance of empathy and found that, “Empathy is a process that permeates all social relations.” Finally, in exploring how corrective efforts are expressed in the face of social pain, Neal Roese proposes that the phenomenon of counterfactual thinking, in which the mind reviews instances of social exclusion and proposes alternative behaviors that could possibly be corrective, forms the basis of what he terms the Social Reconnection Hypothesis, essentially efforts made to re-establish
social ties when relationships have been challenged or lost due to painful interactions.\textsuperscript{295} Roese reports that negative affect activates counterfactual thinking, and documentes that brain damage in the same regions that support an empathic response inhibit counterfactual thinking.\textsuperscript{296} Jon Maner et al. extend Roese’s contributions and concluded that an experience of social exclusion promotes longings for new social bonds.\textsuperscript{297}

This section reviews the place of empathy in the human experience. Empathy seems to be an integrated human capacity that among other things, functions to mediate the human need for belonging, not only by providing affective and cognitive information about the state of others, but also serving to restoring contact with others when behavior has stimulated pain in others. The capacity for empathy seems to be supported physiologically by connection to physical pain mechanisms and neurologically by brain structures including mirror neurons, neurons that are activated when we mirror another’s postures and behavior and provide individuals and groups the capacity to feel and understand others as if they were themselves without giving up their individual identities.\textsuperscript{298} While the matter is still being debated, many agree an integrated experience of empathy is a sufficient therapeutic tool that can be used to address the empathic failures of childhood as well as the empathy-reducing effects of trauma. Trauma seems to both reduce empathic capacity by breaking the connections to the feeling state, and to generate fantasies that are designed to soothe affected individuals. Therapeutic interventions emphasizing restoration of feeling regenerate a felt sense of self and serve to both increase empathic capacity and bring affected individuals into a more immediate
Increasing the intensity of the empathic experience seems central to effective restoration of empathy. One strategy to increase empathic intensity is to participate in group therapy, because groups increase the number of individuals engaging the client. The effectiveness of therapy at restoring empathy and a felt sense of self can be reduced if therapists relate more to their diagnoses and treatment plans than to being fully present to their clients.

Empathic failures occurring between individuals, especially failures at a level defined as criminal acts, can apparently be addressed using restorative justice practices that increase the amount of empathy between victims and offenders, with the observed result that prosocial behavior generally increases and community violence decreases. In addition, although the pain of social exclusion can promote aggression and antisocial behavior, when empathy is present counterfactual thinking occurs that serves to expand the possibilities individuals have to increase the extent of their social connections.

Empathy can also be lost at higher levels of human aggregation such as families, villages, counties, states, nations, races, etc. Trainings designed to increase empathic capacity have been shown to increase peace and reduce aggression and violence in those communities, schools, etc. implementing empathy training. Over all, peace seems to be more dependent upon the amount of empathy between people than the amount of punishment extended to right wrongs that have been done. Additionally, while empathy seems to respond to any social pain, the effectiveness of strategies designed to address
social pain require broad-scale thinking and planning in order to increase their social
effectiveness, empathy alone is insufficient.

Taken together, these findings suggest empathy promotes and maintains a sense of
belonging, mediates a return to belonging when belonging has been challenged by
antisocial acts, and, in light of the extensive physiology and neurology apparently
involved in expressing this capacity, seems to have a very high adaptive evolutionary
value in humans as well as other social species. Given human beings’ interdependent
social nature, the vast majority of human experience can be considered to be empathic
experience. Unfortunately, the extent to which empathy permeates all aspects of social
life still appears to be under-appreciated in our culture, especially the direct correlation
between the extent of empathic connection within a group, and the experience of peace
and safety within the group be it a family, town, state, or nation.
Imaginal Approaches to Shame, Empathy, and Belonging

In his formulation of script theory, Tomkins proposes that the nature of consciousness is images assembled by time and repetition into scripts, and that affect is attached to these scripts in order to inform us of their relative importance. Tomkins’ formulation is supported by Omer, who states, “The soul expresses itself in images.”

Standing in a gallery dedicated to images created by Thomas Kinkade, I ask others viewing the paintings and prints, “What do these images mean to you?” The answers are invariably some version of, “They remind me of home, of family, of having some place that I can be that is peaceful, where I am welcome.” According to his corporate headquarters there are currently 49 franchised international galleries and nearly 1000 national franchises selling Kinkade’s art; he is the most-sold artist in America. The deep response people have to Kinkade’s images supports my sense that a deep and largely unacknowledged need for belonging exists in our culture.

While the need for belonging seems to be a relatively new topic in the psychological literature, belonging, shame, and strategies such as empathy to resolve shame is expressed in countless plays, songs, novels, fairy tales, religious tales, elements of mythology, and components of social structure. For example, Cain slew Abel when God rejected Cain’s offerings but accepted Abel’s. Perhaps Cain felt shame in response to his experience of being rejected and, believing that he did not belong, struck down his brother. When Adam and Eve were cast out from the Garden of Eden no animal
went with them; even the serpent stayed in the garden when they were excluded; only the humans no longer belonged. In a more recent depiction, in the final scenes of the 1970s Star Wars movie trilogy Darth Vader, Luke’s father and an exiled Jedi warrior, becomes conflicted as he observes the torturing of his son. He finally acts to protect his son and, as a result, at the end of the film Darth Vader is back where he belongs, among the Jedi.

Linda Sussman’s exploration of the tale of Parzival provides another example. Parzival meets the Fisher King, who has been speared and poisoned as punishment for breaking the taboo of loving someone outside his community. The tale contains the prediction that someone will come and speak words that can heal the Fisher King. Yet Parzival, who is the chosen, fails to speak the necessary words at his first opportunity and is disgraced as a result. That night Parzival dreams of violent jousts and future suffering, waking the next morning to be ejected from the castle accompanied by verbal abuse. Sussman states the repeated experiences of shame Parzival encounters are what promotes him to learn. The rest of the story can be understood as a recounting of the process by which Parzival develops the capacity to understand and resolve his shame, in particular his capacity for empathy, as he works to developed a holistic and integrated sense of himself. At the end of the tale Parzival asks the necessary question, the king is transformed and restored to full health and community, and Parzival’s family and extended community gather for a celebration to honor his achievements. Sussman concludes, “Speech of the Grail transmits meaning and
inspires change or movement by opening a space in which its recipients experience the freedom to choose, the freedom to create. And it must be remembered that one of these recipients is always the speaker.” 312

In his formulation of Imaginal Transformation Praxis, Omer offers the concepts of *multiplicity*, *disindentification*, and *empathic imagination*. Multiplicity, defined as, “. . . many distinct and often encapsulated centers of subjectivity within the experience of the same individual,” explains the condition of the human soul. 313 The process of welcoming disenfranchised subjectivities back into the conscious experience of an individual is supported by *disidentification*, “The transformation of identity associated with the emergence of a spacious awareness free from frozen images of self.” 314 Omer states that empathic imagination is, “. . . how we engender curiosity; empathy promotes a person’s curiosity about how to let their own experience unfold.” 315 Omer concludes that empathic imagination is the magnification of human experience especially in the realm of human relatedness, and as empathic imagination is magnified it promotes *primal trust*, a felt sense of relatedness to all existence.

Omer states an adaptive identity is composed of reactive self-images that become maladaptive when brought into new contexts. For Omer, forms are structured inquiries that promote disidentification from an adaptive identity and promote emergence of a participatory consciousness free to respond genuinely to the requirements of the moment. Omer explains that accountability, as both a concept and a practice, is the willingness and ability to both make and keep agreements, and to provide restitution when agreements are
broken. Omer also offers the practice of reflexive participation, the act of surrendering to
the present, as a mode to build capacities, the potential to respond to the calls of life.
Finally, Omer states reflexive participation requires addressing gatekeepers, the
personified dynamics restricting experience, and progress on the path of identity
transformation, shifting our relationships with gatekeeping, is marked by key moments,
moments full of personal meaning.

Bringing Omer’s lenses of multiplicity, disidentification, and empathic
imagination to the discussion of Parzival’s progress, consider the moment Sussman
describes when Parzival turns himself over to his greater will and allows it to guide him
forward. Sussman states this is the moment when, “Parzival’s personal struggle,
which is not even a ‘story’ for him earlier, is now woven into a much larger story.”
Sussman continues, noting, “In psychotherapy one is put together with oneself.” As
a reward for his efforts Parzival is provided with a new symbol to accompany him, the
mark of the Grail knights, denoting Parzival has entered more deeply into his spiritual
journey. At the end of this chapter Sussman observes that Parzival is now,
“Reinvigorated and renewed through his reconnection to a larger pattern, self-forgiving
because he has been courageously honest enough to receive forgiveness.” She
explains the most powerful effector of Parzival’s transformation is the oral tradition.
Sussman posits because he participated in an oral tradition, Parzival learns to occupy a
felt sense of self aligned with his greater story and as a result, he experiences a new truth
for himself instead of continuing to live by others’ rules. She claims that Parzival’s
quality of self-connection is imaginative, promotes full responsiveness, and the empathy he received from his teacher was essential to his transformation. Sussman concludes Parzival’s teacher, “. . . re-contextualizes his thinking, provides him with new images and a new story to occupy.”

Kaufman describes a process he terms reparenting imagery, which occurs in a therapeutic relationship when the client learns to occupy images describing outcomes different from those remembered from painful past experiences. Supporting clients in creating new scripts and scenes that replace their maladaptive ones is integral to this approach. Kaufman proposes therapy involves, “. . . reowning disowned parts of the self,” and that reowning involves active imagery. Kaufman goes on to explain that internalized images of disenfranchisement contribute to a variety of symptoms of psychopathology, including depression are shame-based symptoms based on scripts describing abandonment resulting from a lack of worth. Kaufman concludes when a client imagines inclusion and self-worth, an integrated sense of self develops that serves to resolve depressive symptoms.

In the final moments of Arthur Haley’s Roots, following a long search the author, a descendent of slaves brought from Africa to America, goes to Africa, finds his African family, and is welcomed and celebrated home again. In an equivalent personal history, Australia author Sally Morgan describes the efforts she made to understand her aboriginal heritage. As she finds and records the stories of her elder relatives and extended family, each says to her that now she knows where she belongs, who her people
are, and who she belongs to. As a result, a profound change comes over her and her siblings; a sense of confusion and shame is replaced by pride and peacefulness.

Morgan’s grandmother recounts the efforts made on the part of racially mixed children to become white by peroxiding their skin, and about the shame of not fitting in anywhere.

In a metaphorical passage her grandmother, who cooked for a white family, talks about the attitude the people she was enslaved to had about the dark part of bread:

“Course you never left the crusts on sandwiches, that was bad manners. Funny, isn’t it? I mean, it’s all bread after all.”

Haley’s and Morgan’s stories end with a resolution, a rejoicing. What happens when resolution fails is explored below.

Using Euripides’ story of Medea, Marvin Lansky explores the consequences of the failure to grow when encountering the shame of social exclusion. In this tale Medea and Jason fall in love and prepare to leave together over her family’s objections. In order to escape her family, Medea kills her brother and then leaves her home, marrying Jason and giving him two children. Later she discovers that Jason intends to leave her and marry the daughter of the local king. In response to her shame and fury at Jason’s shamelessness, she kills the king and his daughter, and then kills the two children she bore with Jason. Finally she leaves, riding in a chariot drawn by dragons.

Lansky observes that throughout this story no one supports Medea with empathy or provides her with a sense of belonging. Her resulting wrath is terrible. Medea states, “Yes, I can endure guilt, however horrible; the laughter of my enemies I will not endure,” and responds violently to the pain of social exclusion. Lansky concludes
that Medea believes that she has no honorable alternative, and because she believes that she is trapped, shame arises that she cannot bear, giving rise to her violence.\(^3\) Lansky cites Medea’s “... unconscious shame fantasies ... of social annihilation and irreversible disgrace,” as the source of her vengeance.\(^4\) Lansky posits that Medea’s vengeance is an effort on her part to free herself from her own suffering by, “... injecting her helplessness, powerlessness, and despair into Jason.”\(^5\) Lansky concludes Medea’s violence is the result of her not being able to forgive, which is to, “Let go of resentment, grudge, and hatred to the extent that the betrayed person can mourn what has been lost and carry on with life.”\(^6\) Leon Wurmser notes, “Soul blindness by the other creates massive shame in us: Our own being is as nothing, not worthy of being noticed.”\(^7\) The ability to move forward fostered by self-forgiveness is illustrated in the example below.

Benjamin Kilborne uses the story of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* to contrast outcomes when self-empathy is either absent or present.\(^8\) In this tale the town’s pastor has fathered a child with a married woman, and she has been found guilty of adultery and made to wear a scarlet A on her clothing, naming her crime. His identity is hidden and the child’s mother does not identify him.\(^9\) In this tale the woman’s accusing husband transforms when he is confronted with his wife’s scarlet letter.\(^10\) Kilborne posits the husband glimpses himself, understands his persecution of his wife and, although he does not become more supportive as a result, he does stop his persecution of her.\(^11\) Kilborne states the wife’s relationship with her child enables her
to meet the eyes of her neighbors and bear their condemnation. In contrast, her lover, the pastor, stays hidden. His shame consumes him because he is unable to re-imagine himself in his community and as a result he succumbs, literally, to self-abuse.

Kilborne states the pastor resorts to self-abuse because he, “. . . feels falsehood, emptiness, and death because his selfhood is profoundly threatened and he is unable to make connections with anyone.” Kilborne concludes that the pastor’s eventual death resulted from his inability to imagine himself being restored to community; his shame was to be, “. . . borne in solitude.” At the conclusion of this tale the pastor seems to be saying, “I am so ashamed; I don’t belong anywhere.”

Wurmser emphasizes the importance of belonging to the process of re-imagination of self, noting, “Without a connection and relationship you can’t create an identity.” Wurmser posits that an increasing ability to imagine accepting and navigating ambiguity, to be responsive moment by moment to our changing nature, is necessary in order to resolve our inner self-judgments about our state as unfit for human society.

In a case study involving early parental loss, Shahrzad Siassi concludes when she provided empathy for her client’s loss he was then able to re-incorporate disenfranchised components of his psyche and begin the process of mourning and forgiveness. Her client was then able to re-imagine both his relationship with his lost father as well as his relationship with himself as inclusive relationships containing belonging and acceptance. Leonard Horwitz concurs with Siassi, stating forgiveness, “. . . consists of
developing a more realistic, integrated view of the other in which the good and bad aspects are combined into a whole-person view.” 358 Horwitz further concludes mourning what is lost is necessary to create forgiveness, because mourning enables healthy development.359

This section has addressed factors affecting the human capacity to occupy an integrated imagination of self and others when confronted by perceptions of social exclusion and their associated shame. In summation, violence seems to result from perceptions of social exclusion persisting after the precipitating events. Empathy for self and others appears to allow resolution of these imbedded states, supported by and enabling the capacities for mourning and forgiveness. While a specific connection between the capacity for empathy and the experience of belonging did not emerge from the literature reviewed, in each case descriptions of events following application of empathy seem to promote a direct experience of belonging, suggesting perceptions of social exclusion mediated by empathy may resolve into perceptions of belonging, and in turn enable mourning and forgiveness.

Together, these five sections have explored the place of shame in its various guises in the lexicon of human affect, and the role of contribution of shame to the diversity of psychopathology. The diversity of shame expression seems related to the diversity of social contexts in which challenges to social exclusion can occur, because shame seems to announce perceptions of social exclusion. Shame, when coupled with other affects, can generate distinct symptoms that serve to explain some of the diversity
in psychological diagnoses. Effective shame interventions require addressing and engaging shame responses to environmental challenges. The need for belonging is increasingly acknowledged in the literature for its importance in the human experience, especially in view of the apparent relationship between violence and the need to belong; not belonging appears to be a survival issue for members of a social species and perceptions of not belonging seem to evoke a survival response.

Men often experience culturally specific programming that contributes to their shame including such messages as their being seen as ineffective at creating and sustaining relationships; being valued only for what they do rather than who they are; are understood to be interested in sex whenever they try to meet their basic need for touch; and other similar messages that contribute to a condition previously described as basic male shame. Males compensate for their experience of shame and the numbness resulting from both trauma and the male-specific prohibition against feeling by engaging in compensating behaviors that include drugs and alcohol, and behaviors increasing the intensity of feelings including sexual addiction, risk-taking, and violence. Gender specific challenges to attachment can also contribute to a male’s experience of belonging and inclusion, and our culture’s increasing loss of both our male role models and our rites of passage have served to magnify males perception of not belonging. Male violence seems to be related to attempts made to compensate for basic male shame. Efforts to address the dramatic gender imbalance in the expression of violence may be enhanced by providing men with good role models, with empathy training, and with therapy designed to restore
their felt sense of themselves.

The capacity for empathy is increasingly being recognized as a major component of the everyday human experience. Indeed, many authors conclude that everyday experience itself can be understood as empathic experience. Less clear is the relationship between empathy and the need for belonging, although circumstantial associations between the two seem overwhelming and, in the words of MacDonald and Leary, “Because the need to belong is a fundamental aspect of human experience, a system to protect social well-being has great adaptive value for human beings.” Indeed, not only does empathy have a documented positive effect on prosocial behavior and reduction of aggression, it also seems to be a necessary, and perhaps even sufficient, component of effective psychotherapy, essentially restoring presence and a felt sense of self. In contrast to punitive approaches, empathy training has served to reduce violence and increase peace in schools, among families, within organizations, within communities, and has even served to reduce violence in prisons.

The ability to re-imagine perceptions of social exclusion appears to be central to transform shame and violence into perceptions of inclusion. Psychotherapies that specifically engage the imagination can create cooperative, inclusive experiences and images of relationship, and seem able to address the challenges created by problematical attachment and other traumas. Empathy seems to be central to these transformations, fostering a capacity and willingness to grieve loss, to forgive, and to make amends.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Overview

This study explores the content of shifts in subjective states that arise in men when shame, accompanied by the attack-self and/or attack-other response to shame, is met with empathy. The hypothesis explored is: When shame for having done harm is met with empathy, imaginal structures associated with not belonging and/or exclusion will shift to allow a felt sense of belonging accompanied by an imagination, and even eagerness to address and correct whatever harm has been done.

This exploration was conducted using the theoretical framework of Imaginal Transformation Praxis and the methodology of Imaginal Inquiry, which elicits integrated involvement from all those participating and is, therefore, considered part of the participatory paradigm of qualitative research.\(^1\) Imaginal Inquiry is comprised of evoking experience, expressing experience, interpreting experience, and, finally, integrating experience.\(^2\)

Men who had previously committed an act of violence were first asked to create a drawing depicting the subjective state they remembered experiencing during their violent episode and then, after receiving empathy for having acted in the way they did, they were
asked to create a drawing depicting their current affective state. The research design assumed that any shifts observed in participants’ subjective states from their first depiction to their second were a result of the empathy that they received prior to creating their second depiction. Also collected were subjective material in the form of words and other vocal expressions, and written journal entries in order to expand the amount of information available to our initial interpretations.

To stimulate participant feedback about our initial interpretations, a collage of the participants’ drawings was created and presented, and we crafted and told a story that we believed captured the meanings contained in their expressions up to that point in the exploration. Participants viewed the collage, listened to the story, and then journaled their feedback about our summations. To increase the validity of our conclusions we asked the participants to create a sculpture that summarized their experiences in the exploration up to that point. We then assembled their verbal, sculptural, and journaling feedback and used them to refine our original summations. The final portion of the exploration offered an integrative experience in the form of an empty-chair exercise, the results of which were compared to our previous summations in an effort to further increase the validity of our final conclusions.3

To evoke shame and its correlated responses, participants were asked to remember times in their lives when, while in relationship, they did something they now regret. Participants were then asked to tell the story of one of these interactions during the exploration. For the experience of empathy, participants engaged in an empathy dialogue,
a conversation that included making guesses about both the affects expressed in participant’s stories, as well as the meanings announced by the affects expressed.\(^4\)

Participants expressed what arose in them through drawing, journaling, speaking, and sculpting. Participants first drew what arose in them when remembering the regretted event about which they told their story, and then created another drawing after the empathy dialogue, forming a before and after book of drawings. Participants spoke what arose in them while viewing the individual and collective drawings and while viewing the collage, and spoke what a sculpture they had created would say if it could speak. Participants wrote in their journals about what arose in them following each participant’s storytelling, after each participant’s empathy dialogue, and after experiencing the entire exploration. Participants also sculpted a clay figure and then placed it in relationship to the clay figures sculpted by other participants in a way that represented what it was like for them to engage in the explorations.

Participants interpreted their experiences by giving names to their drawings and sculptures, by giving meanings to their drawings and sculptures, by journaling about the significance of their exploration experiences, and by identifying key moments that they noticed arose for them during the explorations.

Participants integrated their experiences by collectively viewing participants’ assembled drawings and the collage created from participants’ drawings, by viewing the assembled sculptures, by participating in two verbal feedback sessions, one following the empathy dialogues and another at the end of the explorations, and by participating in an empty-chair dialogue with the victim of their act. To further support integration, participants were read Mary Oliver’s poem, *Wild Geese* at the end of their exploration.\(^5\) Each participant was also mailed a summary of the learnings from this dissertation.

**Co-researchers**
Co-researchers for this study were recruited from members of Cohort 11 who had at least two years of clinical experience as a psychologist, therapist, or counselor, and who had completed Ph.D. coursework at Meridian University by the beginning of the exploration. A clinical criterion was established because I believe that those with clinical experience are more likely to be aware of subjective material when it arises, and might also be more practiced at processing their own subjective material if and when it arose. My friend and former Meridian student Steve Woolf responded to my request and participated in all three of the explorations.

Limitations and Delimitations

Because as the principal researcher I am a tall, healthy, white male who uses at least high school level language, it is possible that participants could have experienced restrictions in their willingness to participate fully based on perceptions of differences between us. The nature of the researcher-participant relationship and the process of audiovisual recording may also have affected participants’ willingness to reveal sensitive material. Additionally, some spontaneous expressions may have been missed because of the group format of speaking in turn during the personal story telling, empathy dialogues, and during feedback sessions. Finally, at the time of this writing, I was dealing with hearing loss that was compensated for by hearing aids. My reduced hearing may have restricted my ability to transcribe the recorded sessions accurately.

Because this exploration was limited to nine participants, it was also restricted in
exploring the contributions of race, class, sexual orientation, and other distinctions to the outcomes observed. I was less concerned about this restriction because the vast majority of violence is perpetrated by men regardless of their race, sexual preference, access to resources, or any other potentially mediating social factor. However, it is possible that gender specific aspects of the expression of violence were overlooked as a result of this restriction.

Each of the three explorations were conducted on a different day and, except for sending the learnings summary to participants, no follow up was conducted. Therefore, the long-term effects of empathy on perceptions of exclusion and/or the expression of violence were not addressed, even though other research has documented the positive relationship between empathy training and increased prosocial behavior, and between empathy training and reduction in aggressive behavior.

A pair of drawings was collected from each participant, however the meanings of the individual drawings themselves was not explored, the greatest emphasis was placed on whether shifts in subjective state were discernable between the two drawings. It is possible, therefore, that a rich store of personal information about each participant was missed as a result. Focus was limited to shifts evidenced between the drawings because without knowledge and experience in analysis of art confidence in the accuracy of any learnings or interpretations that might have derived from the analysis of participants’ individual drawings would have been severely limited, and this outcome of study is based upon the shifts in perspective observed between the first and second drawings among
other data.

Participants

Participants were recruited from men in the Portland, Oregon area who stated that they were over 18 years of age and who had done something while in relationship that they now regret. Each applicant was informed that we would explore why men seem to commit the vast majority of violence in the world in a hope to contribute to peace in our communities. Successful applicants were informed that a summary of learnings derived from in this exploration would be mailed to them when the study was completed.

Eleven men volunteered, nine men participated, and three sub-sets of the pool of nine men participated in three separate explorations. “Ted,” “Ben,” and “Sal” (pseudonyms) participated in the first exploration termed “A.” “Jay” and “Sid” (pseudonyms) participated in the second exploration termed “B.” “Hal,” “Bob,” “Tom,” and “Sam” (pseudonyms) participated in the third exploration termed “C.”

All explorations took place in a borrowed room in a local church in Portland, Oregon. The room allowed participant chairs to be placed in a circle, provided enough space and electrical power so that two video cameras on tripods could be set up outside the circle to record each exploration, and provided enough space outside the circle for a tea table as well. This room also provided adequate floor space inside the circle for the art-making portions of the explorations.

Audiovisual recordings of the explorations were captured using digital
camcorders mounted on tripods and focused so that the entire area of the explorations was in focus for both cameras. These audiovisual recordings were transferred to DVDs that were subsequently used to transcribe the explorations into text files stored on a computer.

Each exploration started at nine in the morning and finished at approximately three thirty in the afternoon. Exploration “A” was held on January 23rd of 2010, exploration “B” was held on February 27th of 2010, and exploration “C” was held on April 18th of 2010. A one-hour lunch break was provided during each exploration.

Participants ranged between 26 and 62 years of age and all were educated beyond high school. Each was capable of reading the informed consent form and signing his name. All participants spoke English as their primary language, all arrived at the time requested, and all stayed throughout the entire exploration.

Participants were initially recruited by posting flyers at two Waldorf Schools in the Portland Oregon area, and on the bulletin boards of other organizations. Very little response was received to this effort, and no participants who met the exploration criteria emerged as a result. Announcements were also placed at two different Farmer’s Markets in the Portland area, one day weekly at each market for three months in the fall of 2009. No participants who met the exploration criteria were recruited from this effort. Announcements were then sent to everyone in my social circle and all those attending and who had attended my Nonviolent Communication classes in the Portland area. This effort recruited 11 potential participants who were given my email address and a local
phone number where they could contact me.

Prospective participants were then pre-screened over the telephone to determine whether they met the exploration criteria. Applicants not meeting the exploration criteria were informed of this by mail within one week of their initial interview. Applicants were excluded from the prospective participant pool if they did not meet the age requirements, if they were unable to identify acts they regretted while in relationship, or if they had a significant pre-existing relationship with another participant. Applicants who met the exploration criteria were informed both by mail and by telephone that they met the criteria and were invited to participate in the exploration. Through this effort eleven men agreed to participate.

Originally, only one group meeting held over two consecutive days was intended for all participants. However, I was unable to identify two consecutive days when all could attend. As a result, the exploration was divided into three groups that were discrete subsets of the total participant pool. On the days scheduled for explorations “A” and “B” one of the men who had previously agreed to participate did not appear at their respective exploration, and did not return my subsequent phone messages inquiring about them. Their absence reduced the total participant pool to nine men.

Participants were provided with an Informed Consent Form that included a confidentiality agreement they signed on the day of the exploration they participated in, prior to beginning the exploration. The Informed Consent Form is included in Appendix Four. During the introduction to each exploration, participants were reminded of the
parameters of the confidentiality agreement.

**Four Phases of Imaginal Inquiry**

Each exploration opened with the ringing of a bell followed by three minutes of silence. Following the silence an overview of the day’s activities, including the timing of the breaks and logistics such as bathroom locations, etc. was provided. Each exploration was closed with a reading of Mary Oliver’s *Wild Geese* followed by the ringing of a bell.

**Evoking**

The experience of shame in participants was perhaps first evoked during their pre-screening phone interviews when participants were asked to recall three situations that occurred while they were in relationship that they had responded to with verbal and/or physical violence in a way they now regret. They were also asked to attempt to remember what they were hoping to accomplish by their actions, and whether they would be willing to tell the story of one of these interactions in the group during the exploration they would participate in. Participants were originally limited to five minutes each to tell their stories, however because ultimately each exploration was composed of a subset of the total participant pool, this time restriction was not adhered to.

When participants told a story of an act they regret, it was assumed that shame was being expressed because the correlation between shame and violence is so well documented; the vast majority of violent acts can be understood to have shame at their
However, the speed with which an experience of shame is expressed as an attack-self and/or others response can be extremely high, thereby rendering shame potentially most accessible through its correlates, anger and scapegoating.

Nathanson states, “Shame becomes the most social of the negative affects because it modulates, regulates, impedes, contains, the interest and enjoyment that power all sociality.” Additionally, Geoff Baumeister and Mark Leary state that, “An increase in social complexity would have been accompanied by new clues of exclusion threats, such as averted eye gaze.” Shame, then, may have the social function of announcing any perception of social exclusion. When participants remembered a time they acted in way that seemed to be in alignment with the attack-self/attack-others axis of Nathanson’s Compass of Shame, is most likely that what was evoked in them at the time was shame in response to a perception of being excluded even if participants were unable to specifically articulate this perception.

Telling the story of their violent event in the whole circle seemed to deepen the shame experience, as participants’ behavior was revealed to others. An unexpected result that arose was the reduction of avoidance behavior such as dropped eyes during the story telling, possibly because group participants realized they were not alone in their behavior, contributing to a sense of acceptance and belonging in the group as a whole and, simultaneously, reducing any experience of shame.

The experience of empathy was possibly first evoked when each participant engaged in an individual empathy dialogue with the researchers that was witnessed by the
group. The researcher, and to a lesser extent the co-researcher, provided empathy in the form of a guess about the both the participant’s affects and the meaning of their affects at the time of the event they told their story about.\textsuperscript{15} This activity was derived from the Empathic-Understanding Response Process developed by Carl Rogers and extended by Marshall Rosenberg and others.\textsuperscript{16} In this exercise, guesses about participant’s affective state and the meaning behind the expressed affect are offered accompanied by the unspoken question, “Is this accurate?” \textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Expressing}

Participants were asked to express their evoked experiences by drawing both what arose in them while recalling the events leading up to and including their verbal and/or physical violence, and what arose in them after engaging in an empathy dialogue about this event. Each participant was provided with 2’x3’ heavy art paper folded in half as well as oil pastels and colored pencils. Prior to telling their stories, participants depicted what was going on just before and during the event on the outside fold, then depicted their state after the empathy exercise on the inside fold, forming a two-page book of expression. Participants were given fifteen minutes to complete each drawing. Participants were asked to name their drawings and to write both the name of their drawing and their initials in the lower middle of each of their drawings. Participants were then asked to place their completed drawings on the floor in front of them, walk around them viewing all of the drawings created by those in their group, and then were invited to
express, popcorn-style, words and sounds about what had come up for them as they viewed the drawings. Ten minutes were provided for this expression, with participants informed when one minute remained in this period. All vocal expressions were recorded and then I collected the artwork for further interpretation.

Karen Jaenke explains that when drawing is used to capture shifts in subjective states, what is expressed is holistic and integrated.\(^{18}\) The before and after empathy drawing exercise was developed during work with a therapy client and was used as an initial exploration of shifts that may occur in response to empathy; the outcomes I observed suggested that subjective shifts were indeed captured using this method.\(^{19}\)

Jaenke further asserts that what is expressed through sounds, sculpture, and journal writing is equally holistic and integrated.\(^{20}\) Participants also expressed what was arising in them by journaling immediately after each story; after each empathy dialogue; after viewing the collages; after hearing a story that summarized their expressions prior to the lunch break, and at the end of their exploration as a whole. The instructions for journaling encouraged participants to, “Express what was coming up for them in response to the experience they had.”\(^{21}\)

Finally, participants were asked to express what had arisen in them as a result of participating in the exploration by using modeling clay to sculpt a figure that reflected their experiences.\(^{22}\) A two-pound block of gray modeling clay and a 16 inch square piece of \(\frac{1}{4}\)” Masonite were provided to each participant. When finished, participants were asked to name their sculptures, engrave the sculpture’s name into the clay, and then place
their sculpture on the floor in front of them in relationship to the other participants’ sculptures. Participants were told they could place their sculpture anywhere that appealed to them, but they may not move another’s sculpture. Participants were then asked to speak what the sculpture would have said if it could speak. Participants were allowed one hour for the sculpting and speaking portion of the investigation. The sculpture placements were photographed and the expressions recorded (Appendix 14).

**Interpreting**

Participants interpreted their experiences by naming the two drawings they created before storytelling and after the empathy dialogue, by journaling their responses to viewing a collage of participants’ before and after drawings (Appendix 14), and after hearing a story designed to elicit a feedback response about our initial summations about the meaning of the data collected so far (Appendix 9).

Participants also interpreted their experiences by placing their sculptures on the floor, moving them until they found natural associations among them, speaking the sculpture’s name, stating what the sculpture would say if it could speak, and speaking about the associations represented by participants’ assembled sculptures. Jaenke suggests naming the drawings and sculptures engaged participants in making meaning of their work, and supported participants in developing an interpretative relationship with the material.²³

Intuitive and narrative approaches were primarily used to interpret the expressions
obtained during this exploration. During the lunch break and following each exploration Steve and I independently listed key moments we identified during each exploration. Then, in recorded focal space both during the lunch break and immediately following each exploration, we compared our experiences in an effort to distinguish commonalities and differences. Convergences and divergences between us were noted and all divergences received additional focal space time.

We also reviewed the books of drawings, looking for stories that seemed to connect all the participants’ drawings. During our meetings we developed a convergent narrative for each individual participant’s pair of drawings, and then synthesized a single consensus concept that encompassed the stories derived from the participants’ drawing pairs.

After reviewing all of the material collected from participants, we concluded that two themes had emerged. The first, captured in the drawing pairs, was progress toward unity; the second, collected in the journaling, empathy dialogues, and sounds expressed, was the collective loneliness the men had felt prior to their attending the exploration, and how some of that loneliness was being ameliorated by participating in the group.

A collage of the collected art from each group was then assembled that depicted both our convergent and divergent interpretations. To create this collage, each group’s drawing pairs were laid on the floor with the first drawing closest to our feet and the second drawing above the first. As we circled the drawing pairs, both of us independently concluded progression toward healing and integration was being more or less clearly
expressed in each pair of drawings. We then considered if the drawing pairs depicted progress toward healing, what was the ultimate state a person could achieve when fully healed? I was holding a whole apple at the time. We both looked at the apple and then I laid it in line with one pair of drawings above the second drawing. Lastly, we connected the top corners of all of the group’s second drawings so that all the pairs radiated out from the apple in the center. We agreed that this assemblage represented how the relationships emerging among the participants were contributing to individual healing. I proposed the name, “Progress Towards Unity” for this collage, and Steve agreed.

Each group’s collage was placed on the floor in the middle of the circle so that it was the first thing participants saw when they returned from lunch. After the participants viewed the collage, I told them a story representing Steve’s and my integrated interpretation of the results of their exploration so far. The story script emerged from reading participants’ journal entries and reviewing the drawings created by participants before the lunch break. Participants were then asked to journal their responses to the collage and the story.

Finally, to promote further interpretation, within a week of each exploration Steve and I each wrote a summary and sent it to the other. Our summaries focused on identifying any remembered key moments and interpretations that had not yet been captured. Then, during the following week, we discussed and resolved any divergent interpretations we found in our summaries.

The interpretation that initially emerged from our viewing and journaling about
the paired drawings was a sense that the first drawings depicted experiences of blockage, of being different, of being separate in some way, of being singled out for special punishment, and of not being seen. The contents of the empathy dialogues confirmed these early interpretations: participants spoke of their longing to be accepted, to be included, to be equal in someway that they had not up to that time perceived in the relationship under discussion. When we compared the first drawings with the second drawing, the possibility that perceptions of exclusion had stimulated the acts of violence began to emerge as a central organizing theme. This supposition was confirmed by the feedback participants gave following the empathy circle, in their journaling after viewing the collage and hearing the story, and after the empty-chair dialogues.

One unexpected corollary that emerged from the drawings, journaling, and spoken material in addition to the learning that perceptions of exclusion were stimulating their violence was the possible finding that Steve and I initially captured as, “She has the key to belonging.” Each of the participants described being in heterosexual relationships and, although four of the nine men offered stories where the perception of exclusion occurred in their primary romantic relationship, for five of them the relationship described in their story was with someone other than their romantic partner, such as a boss, members of a performance group, or their children. We also noted that the drawing pairs and about 25 percent of the journaling suggested there might be a gender-related response, but none of the rest of the exploration contained material that supported this finding. As a result, we concluded although the perception of exclusion by another was consistently and clearly
being described, we could not determine whether the perception of being excluded had a
gender-specific component, or if the apparent gender association was an artifact resulting
from the heterosexual nature of their primary relationships.

Both Steve and I were both aware that resulting from our upbringing we both
have absorbed the cultural messages that responsibility for connection and relationship is
in the hands of females. As a result, we may have inadvertently seen what we expected to
see in the data, when in fact no real association exists. In any case, the results of our
explorations were not definitive in regard to the question of gender-related influences in
the art, and we chose not to include this possible finding in the formal learnings.

The second learning, that the group nature of the explorations contributed to the
willingness of our participants to tell their stories, emerged spontaneously from the
explorations and was not included in the original hypothesis under investigation. We both
noticed that participants repeatedly commented that having others support them in telling
their stories made it much easier for them to do so. Participants also frequently spoke of
their relief that they were in a group setting, and their sculpture placements consistently
reflected their longing to be part of a community. When we inquired about our emerging
understanding of the effects of group experience, participants unanimously confirmed our
summation, especially in the feedback to the story I told, and in the feedback about
participating in the exploration as a whole. This learning initially was given the title,
“Many hands make light work,” but the current poetic title, “Together we will make our
way hand holding hand,” spoke more clearly to me. It is a line from a South African folk
song written during the Apartheid era, a song I have sung many times and that has significant energetic resonance for me because of its expression of overcoming apparent pain, trouble, and strife by marshalling an indomitable collective spirit. Steve was satisfied that either title accurately represented this learning, and was glad for me to choose the one that spoke most deeply to me.

The third learning, that empathy, because it supports a perception of belonging and inclusion, enables a turn toward the deepest individual pain first emerged while we were examining the shifts depicted between the first and second drawings. Our initial sense was the second drawings depicted greater freedom, an opening in tightly held imaginations, some sense of hopefulness and inspiration, increasing ease, and the cooling of hot passions. After engaging in focal space about key moments we identified from the empathy dialogues and paired drawings, we gradually coalesced a perception that what participants were expressing was a sense of belonging, including belonging to the very relationship in which their original perceptions of exclusion had stimulated their violent act. The feedback collected about the collage and story served to further refine and clarify that as a result of the empathy dialogue, participants were experiencing a deep sense of belonging serving to transform their relationship to imaginal structures describing them as inhuman and unforgivable was also confirmed by the depth of relief each participant reported experiencing following their dialogues.

The idea that empathy dialogue fosters a sense of belonging received its strongest confirmation when participants placed their sculptures in relationship to the others. In
each exploration, participants stated they wanted their group’s sculptures placed as close together as possible, even to the point of actually mixing their sculptures together. We both noted that while the group nature of the explorations seemed to promote participants’ willingness to tell their stories thereby taking the risk of turning toward their pain, the empathy dialogue had a different effect on participants, generating a much deeper sense of belonging and of being seen. One result of this experience is the participants in exploration “A” remain in contact to this day and consider each other as friends after having met for the first time on the morning of their exploration.

The final learning, that receiving empathy may promote accountability, emerged spontaneously from both the empathy dialogues and the empty chair dialogues. Toward the end of both dialogues, all but one of the nine participants stated they longed to make amends for how they behaved, and the remaining man stated he had been in contact with his victim and had already made amends as a result of inner work he had done in therapy concerning his violent act. Steve and I both wrote the words, “I want to know how to make this right,” as part of our listings of key moments. We also both observed that when first telling their stories participants occasionally used blaming language. However, throughout the later empathy dialogues and during the empty chair dialogues participants did not use blaming language, and the change in affect witnessed between the blaming and non-blaming states seemed to also be the moment when participants began to express willingness to both be accountable and make amends.

The poetic title for this learning emerged from our sense participants were letting
us know as long as they would be experiencing discomfort while telling their story, they might as well tell their whole story because they could trust the support they were experiencing generated both by the group and by the experience of being heard and seen in the empathy dialogues, and by their sense that they could finally lay down their burden, and might not get another chance to do so. Our conclusion that accountability was promoted by an experience of being seen as fully human even though they had committed a violent act was confirmed by the feedback we received from participants at the close of each exploration.

**Integrating**

Participants integrated their experiences when they walked around a collage assembled from their drawings, and when they listened and responding to the story I told. Participants also integrated their experiences when they placed their sculptures in affinity groups, even though the resulting assemblages may have represented inchoate and unarticulated realizations. Integration deepened when participants spoke what their sculptures would have said if they had voices.  

Integration was also prompted by the reading of a poem at the end of each group’s exploration that spoke to the need for belonging and self-acceptance. Integration was additionally promoted when participants engaged in an empty chair dialogue with the victim of their act. Integration was further supported by providing each participant with a copy of a summary of the learnings gleaned from this inquiry. summaries of the
learnings were mailed to the participants following approval by my dissertation committee (Appendix 11).

Integration on a cultural level is already occurring as a result of these explorations through my incorporation of the learnings into the curricula used to teach NVC to two hundred Oregon inmates and parolees each year. These learnings have also influenced the content of my public offerings that serve an additional approximately three hundred individuals annually. Further, I am incorporating these learnings into a curriculum I have been developing that will be used in Batterer’s Intervention Programs. Peace in our families could increase to the extent perceptions of exclusion are understood to be one possible basis of intimate violence, and to the extent empathy is used to mediate these perceptions.

CHAPTER 4

LEARNINGS

Introduction and Overview

This exploration sought to uncover the perceptions that stimulate and promote violent acts, and any shifts that occur in these perceptions when they are met with empathy. Myself and my co-researcher, plus nine participants who have all been given pseudonyms throughout, shared in exploring the Research Problem: What subjective
shifts occur when shame that is accompanied by the attack-self and/or attack-other response to shame is met with empathy? The hypothesis guiding this study is: When shame for having done harm is met with empathy, imaginal structures associated with not belonging and/or exclusion will shift to allow a felt sense of belonging accompanied by an imagination and even eagerness to address and correct whatever harm has been done.

The cumulative learning emerging from data analysis is that when males commit violence, their acts seem to occur in response to perceptions of social exclusion, and that receiving empathy for their violence can promote a felt sense of inclusion and belonging that then seems to promote spontaneous willingness to make amends. This exploration revealed the central place that the need for belonging holds in the human experience, and the importance of empathic connection in mediating that need. A largely hidden perception of social exclusion seemed to promote every violent act described during this exploration, with the contexts roughly evenly divided between relationships with intimate partners, relationships with children, work environments, and social settings.

After receiving empathy in response to the story of their violent acts, participants expressed a sense of relief, remorse, and belonging that promoted their willingness to be accountable for the harm they had done. Each participant reported that, when receiving empathy, they experienced an unexpected release of tension that enabled them to acknowledge and explore their violence and to develop curiosity and concern about how their victims were affected by their acts.

The cumulative learning was informed by four individual learnings that emerged
from data collection and analysis. Learning One describes how the participant’s violence seemed to emerge from perceptions of being excluded rather than resulting from a genetic predetermination making men violent. Learning One also describes how confusing and mysterious the act of violence often seemed to perpetrators. Each participant expressed surprise and shock at their behavior, behavior that they often spoke about with disowning comments such as, “That’s not me!” These and other data provide evidence participants may have dissociated from the pain caused by the acts they described.

Learning Two describes how essential group experience can be in promoting a turn toward unprocessed violence and pain. Participants expressed feeling powerless and hopeless about ever being able to address the consequences of their violence, both in their sense of themselves and in their relationship with the victim of their act. The group intention and activities seemed to enable them to engage and process the parts of themselves they had denied as a result of their violence.

Learning Three contributes when men receive empathic responses to the story of their violent acts, they seem to experience both a sense of belonging, and a perception of being included. In each participant receiving empathy seemed to evoke the perception, “I belong.” Perceptions of otherness and exclusion seemed to dissolve in the empathic field, revealing a collective longing for, and willingness to, connect with others.

Learning Four posits that willingness to be accountable for the harm caused by one’s violence might be a spontaneous response to a sense of communal belonging that can emerge when people receive empathy for their violent acts. After empathy
participants consistently expressed what Steve and I paraphrased as, “Now how do I make this right?” They also expressed willingness to make restitution for their acts and to provide assurance the act would not be repeated, willingness to learn from and be accountable for their mistakes.

We further concluded willingness to be accountable was not dependent upon the amount of time that had passed between the event and the explorations. This idea was illustrated by the wide variation in the elapsed times reported by participants between the original acts and the explorations, which ranged between one month and 25 years, and how similarly participants’ were affected regardless of the length of this interval. The only additional factors we identified affecting participant’s willingness to be accountable were the extent participants previously processed the event in therapy, and efforts they had already made to make amends.

Learning One: It Came Out of the Blue

Learning One posits that men committing violent acts, rather than being motivated by innate and therefore un-resolvable natural tendencies to be violent, instead seem to be responding to perceptions of being excluded. Those participating in these explorations reported being surprised by their acts and view their behavior as being not part of their normative personalities; uniformly they reported their actions reflected neither their ideas of who they were nor the values that they believe guide their lives.

1. What Happened
Before they arrived at the group session, participants were asked to remember three incidents in their lives when they reacted and did something they now regret. They were also informed they would be expected to tell the story of one of these events during the group session. Participants reported initially feeling wary and concerned about how they would be received in the group, and that they felt shame and anxiety imagining they would be telling their story to others whom they did not know or trust.

As participants arrived for each group meeting they were greeted individually and then asked to choose a chair in the circle facing one of the two video cameras that recorded each session. Participants were then invited to introduce themselves by stating their names and the current condition of the relationship they would be telling a story about. Participants expressed concern and wariness during their introductions, for example by shifting their eyes from side to side and glancing around the circle, an action I believe represented an effort to determine how safe they were in the circle.

“Bob” (pseudonym) from group “C,” “Tom” (pseudonym) from group “C,” and “Sal” (pseudonym) from group “A” each said they felt intimidated and unsure about whether their story could be held in the group. For example, Bob said, “I haven’t told this story to anyone,” and “Hal” (pseudonym) from group “C” stated, “I didn’t tell my wife how close I came to being unemployed!”

Next, participants created the first of two drawings. For their first drawing participants were asked to depict what was going on for them at the moment their violent
act occurred. The sounds participants expressed during collective viewing of the first drawings indicated dismay, concern, frustration, anguish, sadness, and shame, among others. At the same time, while making the first drawing and during the collective viewing immediately after they were created, participants seemed to relax, as if communally creating and then viewing each other’s representation of the state they were in at the time of their act fostered a sense of trust among them.

Then participant’s were invited to tell the story of the act they regretted, and each did so in turn around the circle. Participants consistently expressed surprise and astonishment at how they had behaved, revealing the hidden nature of the motivations behind their violent responses. “Ted” (pseudonym) from group “A,” “Ben” (pseudonym) from group “A,” and “Jay” (pseudonym) from group “B” were each lying in bed when, as a result of being stimulated, each suddenly leapt up out of bed and committed the acts they now regret, without understanding why they had gotten so angry. Hal described, “snapping and walking into my boss’s office and quitting.” “Sam” (pseudonym) from group “C” described how the moment that he heard what was said to him he completely lost his voice. Sal, Bob, and Ted each said, “I watched myself do it,” and said they were completely unable to intervene with themselves during their events. Ted also stated, “Yeah, it was almost a total loss of willpower. And of course there’s almost something like an agreement at some level to let it run its course, and there’s something exhilarating in having that expression of power.” It seemed for each man that his normative identity was unable to recognize or embrace the parts of himself that had reacted, indicating that
he had dissociated from those parts.¹

Participants’ stories seemed to support the hypothesis that perceptions of exclusion had stimulated their violent acts, and that shame experiences accompanied them as well. As an example, Sal stated that, “I felt completely dissociated from everyone in the family, including myself. So much shame and anger, it just sent me for a loop. I couldn’t talk to anyone for a day or two.” Sam stated, “There was a core part of me that had suddenly found a way to bloom and blossom and it had just gotten shut down.” Bob said, “She said that she would refuse to do things just because she knew that I wanted her to do them.” Hal said, “I felt betrayed, victimized.” Ben stated, “I am out – an outcast. I don’t accept a large part of myself, am astonished about how I am behaving. Don’t banish me! Understand me! I want to be loved!” Tom stated, “As old as it is it still bothers me and I feel embarrassed when I think I might run into someone that knows about it.”

Participants’ Empty Chair dialogues with the victims of the act they now regret also seemed to reveal perceptions of exclusion promoting the violent responses they described.² Sam said, “I want to know that I am welcome and will be treated just like everyone else!” “Sid” (pseudonym) from group “B” said, “I feel inadequate in our relationship.” Bob said, “I know that I cannot connect with you the way others can.” Ben said, “I am afraid that the act of telling you how I feel will drive you away.”

2. How I Was Affected

When eight of the nine participants expressed shock and surprise about how they
had acted, I felt shame remembering the times I have reacted and caused harm. I felt further shame remembering those moments when, in response to the overwhelming nature of the shame I was feeling, I caused harm and then refused to be accountable for my actions. Throughout the three explorations I felt sadness and compassion for the depth of the pain expressed by the participants, and by the length of time it had gone unprocessed. When participants were expressing their pain, I felt inspiration and hopeful that I could do the same with the unprocessed pain I have yet to address. When participants expressed relief at participating and their willingness to be accountable for their actions, I felt confidence and pride I am actively able to facilitate the transformational processes of others, and felt hope that one day I will find those who can support me in processing my own pain.

I was especially saddened to learn that among the participants only Sid and, to a lesser extent, Sam had previously achieved any sense of release and/or closure concerning the violent act they told their story about. When I heard about how these men had been suffering silently, longing for release and accountability, I noticed a sense of fierceness and resolve within myself to contribute more time and energy to promoting men’s healing, and to promote my own entry into more genuine relationships.

3. Imaginal Structures In Use

When eight out of nine participants reported feeling shocked, surprised, and astonished about how they had behaved, I felt shame when my imaginal structure
associated with being hopeless about ever having the skill and awareness necessary to be fully responsive and present to myself and others expressed itself, and I took time to remind myself of my continuously developing skill and action-grounded dedication to developing reflexivity.

My wounded child imaginal structure longs for forgiveness for my own unskilled acts because it believes that when I am forgiven, I will again be welcome in human society. This structure felt pride when acknowledging the number of socially conscious communities that I actively participate in. My child structure felt envy when participants went to lunch together while Steve and I stayed behind to process the morning’s work, and I spent a moment calming this structure by reminding it that I have many opportunities to enter into transformative relationships.

A structure challenging my sincerity and integrity arose repeatedly when participants expressed themselves with particular openness and authenticity. This structure also required soothing and assurance I am willing to grow, that I am dedicated to achieving inner peace, and that I have the courage and willingness to be accountable for my behavior.

As each of the three explorations progressed and participant affect lightened, my structure associated with skill and competence felt glad and hopeful I not only had the understanding necessary to effectively promote my own personal transformation, but also the inner capacity to sit with the pain evoked in me, even though it might be very intense. Finally, a structure associated with a sense of “otherness” was activated when I heard that
the participants from one of the three explorations had formed friendships and are still meeting.

4. Theoretical Concepts Upon Which These Interpretations Are Based

Aftab Omer’s Imaginal Transformation Praxis emphasizes the primacy of turning toward overwhelming experience in order to transforming that experience. According to Omer, in turning toward experience, adaptive identities formed as a result of overwhelming experience are transformed through the process of disidentification into a participatory consciousness supported by and that experiences primal trust. Additional concepts used in data interpretation included accountability, the willingness and ability to both make and keep agreements and to provide restitution when agreements are broken, capacities, the potential to respond to the calls of life, empathic imagination, the magnification of human experience especially in the realm of human relatedness, form, structured inquiries that promote disidentification and that are marked by key moments, moments full of personal meaning.

5. My Interpretations of What Happened

Learning One proposes when men commit violent acts, the perceptions promoting violence seem to be hidden and, further, seem to be perceptions of being excluded.
During this exploration participants were invited to engage in activities designed to explore the perceptions that stimulated an act they now regret. Participants almost unanimously declared they were shocked and surprised by what they did, and were unable to verbalize the parts of themselves being expressed by their act.\(^5\) Participants either attributed their responses to the actions of others or to a momentary lapse of self.\(^6\)

Among the participants, only Sid and Sam connected their violent acts to even earlier experiences, spoke to their similarity, and related what they had done in counseling and in active practice in the world to address what they acknowledged was a reactive response to the situation. Sid spoke of identifying a voice inside himself that spoke of his inadequacy, and said he recognized he was responding to that voice when he performed the act he now regrets. Sid also reported he had been in therapy many times throughout his life in order to build skills to address this voice, and today he still hears this voice but no longer responds to it as if it is true. Sam spoke of being shocked the leader of a group he thought he was being welcomed into would act in a way he interpreted as excluding him, and noted he could remember carrying the belief he was being excluded since childhood.

Participants’ adaptive identities, then, each seemed to be influenced by imaginal structures proclaiming otherness in one form or another, and in each case this perception was traceable back into childhood. However, the pain of believing a structure imagining exclusion and otherness was so great in nearly every case it required separation from it.\(^7\)

6. Validity Considerations
The results of any exploration using the participatory paradigm are increasingly valid when they account for ever-greater portions of the subjective fields contributing to the data. Inter-subjectivity possibly first began to be addressed by meeting with my co-researcher, Steve, prior to the explorations to gain mutual clarity and understanding about how the research design served to explore the research hypothesis. We met again prior to each of the three explorations to refresh our understanding and engage in dialogue about how what had happened in previous explorations might affect our expectations about upcoming explorations. We also met during the lunch break of each exploration and when each was complete to compare key moments and note and identify common themes that we agreed were emerging from the activities. We especially focused on any differences in interpretation we might have had, in an effort to achieve mutual clarity.

Throughout the explorations, we were both struck by the shift in experience evident in the two drawings and in the sounds participants expressed before and after empathy, during the empathy dialogue, and in their journaling. We each noted how the energy in the room seemed to continuously lighten throughout each exploration. Steve noted integrative shifts evidenced in the drawings, commenting, “The latter drawings seemed to have clearer boundaries that seemed to indicate a change in how the experience was held. In the latter drawings, it seemed as if the boundaries represented containment for material was previously more unbounded.” We agreed the results we observed represented a shift from reactive enactment toward a more integrated,
participatory consciousness. Our conclusion was supported by participant journaling after the activities provided before the lunch break and following the collage and story, and by the results of the sculpting exercise and the empty chair dialogues.

Steve and I were both struck by the similarities in our own experiences, analyses, and conclusions. We consistently noted the same key moments, derived common themes, and found the participants also acknowledged these moments, as evidenced by their journaling and verbal process feedback.

As the explorations progressed, I noticed my imaginal structure associated with my skill and longing to be recognized emerging and supporting me in seeing all of the data collected as confirmation of my hypothesis. Throughout the explorations and during data analysis, I attempted to remain in reflexive relationship with this structure. As a result, I believe that I have been able to bring discernment to this analysis. However, I am aware this structure may have an unintended effect on the validity of this exploration by inflating the significance of the data and obscuring other principles that may be operating.

Learning Two: Together We Will Make Our Way Hand Holding Hand

Learning Two posits group experience can be essential in promoting a turn toward unprocessed pain and violence. The group format used in these explorations seemed to catalyze participants disidentification from imaginal structures formed around perceptions of exclusion. Participants initially expressed wariness and uncertainty about telling their stories. However, during the initial introductions and art making participants
seemed to begin to relax and become more willing to tell the stories of the acts they now regret. As each participant told his story each also expressed relief and said they never imagined they would find a way to tell their stories and feel safe, seen, and understood for their intentions, and further expressed they were grateful for the other participants because their presence promoted their willingness to express themselves.

1. **What Happened**

Following initial introductions, participants engaged in making a drawing of how they were affected at the time they committed the act they now regret. Making the first drawing started slowly in each exploration, accompanied by participants glancing sideways at each other and “nervous” shifting around with the paper and drawing materials. However, once begun participants became more engaged in the process; their eyes dropped to their drawings, when they needed new drawing materials they selected them rapidly and returned to their drawings, and at frequent intervals they would examine their work, apparently assessing completion. The sounds associated with collective viewing of the first drawings were noticeably fewer and had less volume than the sounds expressed in response to the second drawings.

Following their story telling and empathy dialogue, Ben commented in his journal, “... finding kindred spirits always makes me feel better, and realization that they’re out there helps me relax and be more at peace. But most importantly, that I don’t have to leave all my current relationships to be whole.” Sal wrote, “I feel a lot lighter, I
didn’t expect to find release from this here.” Tom’s comment that, “I get that my story is different than the others, I broke a taboo . . . . It’s been good, I feel lighter, and I have a sense that no one is judging me right now, even though I told that story,” further suggests that greater trust in a group promotes more willingness to explore unprocessed pain.

Jay’s statement, “I think it would be really interesting to see how it went if there had been four or five different people that could of, you know, been sharing each other’s stories, to take it to some other level. I just love reflection and bouncing it off others. For me it could have been even more beneficial and helpful and more would come if the group had been bigger,” expressed his longing for group support. Sid stated that he agreed with Jay.

Ted also expressed a longing for group support in his journaling when he wrote, “Comfort in community. Normalizing of our . . . . primate worries or fears. We are alone together.” He continued, ”It reminds me that I have very few places in my life where I am confident that I am accepted for who I am. I have a good relationship with my father-in-law, but with few others. We all are pretty connected right now and that feels good to me.” Ben declared his need for community when he said “I want them all close,” referring to the placement of participants’ sculptures. He also said to Ted, “I am glad that you came today even though your back hurts. Your coming has meant a lot to me because we all have more support.” Sam shared about how members of a group he joined had invited him to come back into connection with them following an incident that left him believing he had been excluded by the group leader saying, “Yeah, but it was the rest of the group which made it possible, actually it helped it was a group situation rather than
just one on one with me and him . . . . If it had just been him and me I probably would have just walked away.” Sam expressed surprise at what it was like for him to participate in the exploration, explaining, “This has been good for me. I didn’t know what would happen and seeing that all of us have done things that didn’t turn out very well, I am relieved that I am not alone.”

Taken together, these and other data suggest social fields seem to promote both turning toward experience, explaining the longing individuals have to engage in groups because they intuitively know group experience can support and promote healing.

2. How I Was Affected

In all three explorations my most powerful affective responses arose in relationship to this learning. I repeatedly felt sadness in response to the loneliness and sense of isolation expressed by the participants. This feeling was especially magnified when Bob spoke because even when he was speaking about the moments that were the most important to him, Bob’s affect remained flat. Bob’s disconnection from his feelings magnified my own sadness and, based on other participants’ journaling and spoken responses to various activities in the exploration, apparently also deeply affected them as well. Providing empathy for myself enabled me to reconnect in this field. This learning was significantly influenced by key moments in relationship to Bob.

When participants expressed shyness before and during the first part of the exploration I felt anxious, wanting each of them to have a sense of safety, trust, and
connection. As their affect shifted during the art making and especially during the empathy dialogue connection, I felt relieved and happy the exploration activities were producing obvious shifts, for example, a shift toward relaxation and ease. I also repeatedly experienced a longing to participate in the exercises that seemed to be bringing relief. I was especially affected when I read Sal’s journal entry following the empathy dialogue sessions: “We’re the same!” In response to his statement I felt both sadness, and longing to have the same experience for myself. This experience was repeated and magnified when we were providing one exploration’s participants with clay for the sculpting exercise and Ted said, “You should cut some clay for you and Steve.” I was deeply touched by his invitation, which seemed to acknowledge that Ted recognized and understood both Steve and I experienced the same longing for belonging and inclusion Ted and the other participants expressed.

A sense of connection and belonging was evoked in me when Steve and I met over lunch and began to discuss what had happened in the explorations up to that point. As we read through the material and began to identify key moments, Steve reported a deep sense of satisfaction about what we had accomplished so far stating, “The most striking aspect of the research was the way the participants’ drawings had changed between their first and second drawings, after empathy, and after they had expressed and shared their stories . . . . It was as if something had happened that allowed the participants to separate themselves from the experience in a way that allowed enough space to differentiate more clearly.” Each time I viewed participants’ collective work, I felt a sense
of communion with something fundamental in these and all men, in particular how they long for companionship so they could turn towards their pain.

3. Imaginal Structures In Use

In each case, I felt a longing to be in the role of participant in order to have a chance to address my own unprocessed pain. This longing results in part from an imaginal structure that perceives myself as being deeply ‘other’ and therefore separate from other people. My corollary imaginal structure associated with a perception of never being able to achieve release and forgiveness also felt envy towards those who were having that experience. I provided these two structures lots of empathy throughout the exploration process. Connecting with my own need for healing brought me back into full presence whenever I felt myself move away from participants’ expressions and concerns and toward my own longings. 10

An imaginal structure associated with effectiveness was deeply gratified when participants bonded and provided each other support in turning toward their experiences. My imaginal structure associated with longing to be heard both for my unprocessed pain, and for my longing to achieve release was inspired when exploration participants expressed their relief. This structure demanded the most from me in my efforts to stay present to the process, because my personal need for healing and relief is very deep. In order to stay present I again provided myself with empathy for the depth of my longing, an effort that promoted reconnection with myself and enabled me to be present to the
participants.

My imaginal structure associated with longing to effectively contribute to peace in our world was especially activated when participants were viewing the collage Steve and I had assembled. Our intention for the collage was to provide a visual indication of the movement from separation to wholeness that can take place when processing pain in a social field. When participants viewing the collage raised their heads and smiled, I told myself they understood our intention. Careful review of the journaling collected after the collage viewing revealed partial alignment with my interpretation.

4. Theoretical Concepts Upon Which Interpretations Are Based

Omer’s Imaginal Transformation Praxis proposes that a culture of conviviality, a culture that maintains the significance of another’s being, is central to transforming otherness, the collective barrier to recognition, empathy, and engagement that when transformed, promotes restoration of experience, the individual and collective ability to experience what has been diminished by traumatic events.11 Omer posits the transformation of otherness is essential to regaining an experiencing I, a quality of existence typified by the ability to embody and personalize experience.12

Sandra Bloom proposes other people are central to treating post-traumatic stress.13 Bloom is supported by Felicity de Zulueta who states, “. . . we matter deeply to one another for our very well-being . . . . Our social interactions play an important role in the everyday regulation of our internal biological systems throughout our lives, such an
important role that we cannot do without significant ‘others’ and remain in health.”

5. My Interpretations of What Happened

Participants consistently experienced anxiety about whether they would be accepted and receive support if they openly expressed their pain, in some instances days before the explorations occurred. As they gathered, their collective longing to turn toward and transform their experiences promoted their willingness to participate in unfamiliar activities and to cautiously engage with each other. Participants’ increasing willingness to turn toward and embrace dissociated material was catalyzed by the first drawings and furthered by the ever-increasing intensity of the stories that were told. Participants expressed increasing hopefulness, inspiration, and willingness in response to their increasing understanding that the deepening social field was trustworthy and capable of supporting exploration of their violent acts.

The empathy dialogue promoted an ever-increasing shift toward embracing the pain generated by violence, a shift most clearly captured in the differences between the first and second drawings and in the before and after journaling. Participants seemed to achieve a culture of trust and mutual understanding as a result of the morning’s activities, qualities they continued to nurture during and after their lunch break. Participants expressed trust and hopefulness in their new transformative community relationships through their reluctance to shift away from these connections when it came time to turn toward the remaining exploration activities, and by their expressions of mutual support.
for each other throughout the remainder of the day. Participants longed for support in addressing and being accountable for the pain generated by their unskilled acts, further evidenced by the observation that members of two of the three explorations were still meeting together two years after the explorations were completed.

6. **Validity Considerations**

It is possible the validity of this learning was diminished because belonging and inclusion are such central issues in my life. Although I was aware of many of the ways I was affected during the explorations, and although I was able to return to presence when I responded to imaginal structures that longed to belong and be included, it is possible I was not fully present to the process. Therefore, it is possible the conclusions related to this learning are less robust than they might be.

The validity of this learning was enhanced when Steve and I both repeatedly noticed the extent of the bonding that took place among participants during the sessions. Similarly, a large proportion of participants’ feedback about their experience in the explorations addressed the positive effect group work had on them. Steve and I were struck by the amount of relief participants expressed about having found a venue where they could process their pain. Participants’ joy at unexpectedly being able to accomplish this work reinforced our conclusion that the group experience was not only necessary, but very welcome as well.

**Learning Three: “We’re the same!”**
Learning three captures the essential role empathic connection seems to play in mediating shifts from deep and persistent perceptions of exclusion and separation toward a direct experience of belonging and inclusion. Participants reported feeling surprised, even astonished, at the amount of relief they felt in response to engaging in the empathy dialogue. Their relief was accompanied by the disappearance of long-standing beliefs they were fundamentally wrong in some way, that they did not deserve to be considered good men or even as human. Further, participants stated after receiving empathy they had both a felt sense and a perception of belonging. They expressed feeling they were seen as fully human, even though they had performed unskilled acts that they regretted.

1. What Happened

The research design seemed to foster and deepen empathic connection throughout the explorations by repeatedly bringing participants into contact with each other’s experience. The initial nervous expressions expressed by participants such as fidgeting and not making eye contact began to disappear beginning with collective viewing of the first drawing, and disappeared completely by the end of story telling. Simultaneously, Steve and I both experienced a steady increase in our affective experience of authenticity, especially in response to the empathy dialogue.

After participants told their stories and wrote in their journals about how they were affected, they were asked to briefly restate their story, after which Steve and I
engaged them in an empathy dialogue. The empathy dialogue consisted of repeatedly attempting to identify and reflect back to participants the affects that arose for them at the time they committed their violent acts, and the meanings expressed by these affects. Participant dialogues are included in Appendix 10, and an excerpt from one of these dialogues is provided below.

The efficacy of empathic dialogue at promoting a turn toward the needs and longings expressed by their acts is demonstrated by Ben, who expressed the following concerning his sexual relationship with his wife. I asked, “Were you wanting her to know how important that quality of connection is for you, to be sexual?” Ben nodded yes. I then guessed, “Has it been frustrating to you because it seems that she hasn’t heard that?” Ben replied, “She doesn’t believe it because her experience is different. Sex to her is just sex. There is no emotional connection for her at all. She doesn’t believe that it could be that way because it doesn’t connect for her.” I then asked, “Are you wanting her to respect you for who you are, how you operate, and what is true for you?” Ben responded, “Yeah, and that my passion is part of who I am as a person and a part of the joyful part of me that I want to share.” When I guessed, “Do you want to be seen and accepted for that part?” Ben said, “Yeah, and I do not want to have to smother it. That’s one of the big things, for years I have had to hold that in abeyance because it’s offensive to her.” Then I asked, “And you long to be fully in the relationship with all parts of you?” and Ben said, “Uh huh [nodding yes].” When I guessed, “And you want all those things to be OK in your relationship?” Ben replied, “Uh huh, I want to be myself and I want to be close to
As we proceeded through this empathy dialogue, Ben uncrossed his legs and arms and leaned forward in his chair. The frequency with which he made eye contact with Steve and me approximately doubled until he was making almost constant eye contact with us.

Leaning forward and making increasing eye contact was a typical participant response to the empathic dialogues. Steve commented about my empathic dialogue with Bob, stating, “Other key moments with Bob included an exchange with you, Fred, in which Bob received some information that was difficult [for him to] take in. I don’t remember the specifics, what I do remember is Bob’s posture changing from slouched, to squirming around, to sitting more upright and . . . making eye contact with you.”

Participants were then invited to take turns telling their story and engaging in individual dialogue with me, receiving empathic responses from me while being witnessed by the rest of the group. As a result of this exercise, participants seemed to turn toward the unconscious longings expressed by their violent acts. During each empathy dialogue, participants expressed an increasing sense of being heard and seen, evidenced by uncrossing their arms and legs, turning toward me, making and sustaining eye contact, and making affirmative statements. For example, when asked if he was longing to be fully accepted in his relationship, Ben said, “Uh huh, I want to be myself, and I want to be close to her. I don’t want to have to keep being in two worlds.” Jay responded to the question, “Did you want respect for your sensibilities around this
issue?” by saying, “Absolutely! She seemed to just decide how I was going to be about it.” Ted replied to the question, “Were you wanting to be effective in that moment?,” by saying, “Yeah! I don’t want to be a passive sufferer of these circumstances, to believe that things are out of my control!”

Following the empathy dialogues, participants were asked to make a second drawing to represent how they were in this moment about what had happened at the moment they committed their violent acts. The contrast between participants’ first and second drawings supported the hypothesis that the perceptions of exclusion that seemed to be expressed in the first drawings had altered and participants now seemed to be experiencing a sense of inclusion, of being seen and understood. The paired drawings are presented in Appendix 12.

As examples, Bob’s first drawing depicted only his daughter, screaming; in the second drawing created immediately after the empathy dialogue, both he and his daughter were depicted, both screaming. Ben’s first drawing depicts himself as an eye with a thick, crisscrossing network of jagged, scattered shapes within a thick, red border. In his second drawing, the border is gone and both Ben and his wife are depicted as fields at the top and bottom of the page, with a space between them with objects in it, but clearly allows for connection. Ted’s first drawing is a red figure “zapping” a figure in green; in his second drawing the red figure is gone, all the figures are similar colors, and all are connected by similarly colored lines.

When participants returned from lunch, Ted and others stated they longed to
remain with the connection and conversation they had been having with each other and were sad to return to the less spontaneous structure of the exploration. The relief these men apparently felt as a result of their sense of connection to each other provided further evidence of the loneliness and unmet needs for belonging experienced by those who perceive themselves as separate and as “outsiders” as a result of their violent acts. The apparent effectiveness of empathic dialogue in supporting turning toward experience was also reflected by some of Sid’s remarks during his empathic dialogue. When I asked him, “So it felt kind of good to take some action?” Sid replied, “Yeah! And it felt kind of unnatural too. I was thinking that, ‘This can’t be right.’ So, I stopped her hitting me, but that was, no, I cannot say that it did feel good. It felt very awkward essentially.” Then I asked, “Even the whole situation was confusing and unbelievable?” Sid said, “Good, good words. Uh huh. And, ‘Is this going to happen again? Where did that come from?’ This was like a person that I didn’t know. Yeah, that’s a good description, confusing.” Sid also stated during his feedback conversation about participating in the exploration, “This [the drawing] showed me that there is stuff working, stuff I need to think about that I haven’t addressed yet. I might think I don’t need to or that it’s still subconscious kind of stuff. I know that keeping working is important. It feels good to be reminded of that.” When I followed up to ask, “Is there something that stood out for you that supported you in choosing ‘Tommy’ [the name of his second drawing],” Sid replied, “Yeah! It was what you were saying about seeing me. That’s right out of the Avatar movie. But that’s something that has been very important in
relationship for me to be seen for who I am. No matter whether it’s male friends or female friends, just knowing that I am being seen. It is actually a very important thing. And I guess that part of that is that I am not trying to pretend anymore that I am something that I am ‘supposed’ to be.” Sam added, “This [experience] has been good for me. I didn’t know what would happen, and seeing that all of us have done things that didn’t turn out very well, I am relieved that I am not alone.”

Jay commented about what it was like for him to hear others’ stories during the empathy dialogue, stating, “I didn’t really know what was going to occur. I was trying support you when you asked and so I came. I feel lighter and definitely wanting to know how to expand; it’s been good.” When Steve asked, “Were there moments during which you felt a shift?” Jay replied, “Talking about it, telling others about it. Going over the story again, re-delivering it.”

Engaging in the explorations clearly contributed to a sense of belonging and inclusion among participants. As participants placed their sculptures for viewing, Ted said, “I want to create a gathering place.” This desire was reflected in the other explorations when participants placed their sculpture display boards as close together as possible. Jay picked his sculpture up and placed it among the several pieces of Sid’s sculpture. Ted noted the experience of connection the activities generated for him, saying, “The intimacy that we shared over lunch was natural yet would not have happened without the deep sharing and vulnerability which arose from the story and exercise.” Ted also offered, “It reminds me that I have very few places in my life where I am confident
that I am accepted for who I am. I have a good relationship with my father-in-law, but
with few others. We all are pretty connected right now and that feels good to me.”

2. How I Was Affected

I felt ease and a sense of communion when I participated in the empathic
dialogues, especially when participants expressed the contents of their unprocessed pain
and began to feel a sense of relief that quickly permeated the room. I felt connected and
very present whether participants responded affirmatively or negatively to my guesses
about their affects and the meanings attached to them. I felt joy and challenge in
following the individual meanings and affects expressed throughout the explorations. I
also felt a sense of determination not to leave “any stone unturned.” I was especially
touched when, following an empathy dialogue guess I made about his relationship to his
situation, Bob turned toward me, made eye contact, and his affect changed from flat to
what I sensed and interpreted to be a combination of relief and affirmation.

I felt encouraged and relieved when participants made sounds and gestures
expressing relief during the collective viewing of the second drawings. These affects
increased in me when participants laughed and joked with each other during the sculpting
exercises of all three explorations, especially when placing their sculptures for display. I
felt particular joy, satisfaction, and relief when participants placed their sculptures as
close together as possible within the available display space.

3. Imaginal Structures in Use
A structure that expressed concern about my ability to make sense of differences between the first and second drawings emerged during the collective art viewings. This structure faded away in response to the focal spaces Steve and I held after each exploration, and in response to the fascination we both felt as we observed and recorded the similarity of our responses to the data.

A structure expressing relief arose at the close of every empathy dialogue throughout the explorations. This structure was tensed and worried about doing harm and/or not supporting the emergence of the imaginal structures active in participants when their violent behavior was stimulated. I gave this structure empathy throughout the explorations.

An imaginal structure concerned about my knowing the “right thing to do” began to operate at the beginning of the empathy dialogue of each exploration. This structure had little weight when compared to the sense of presence that I also felt during those moments, and as a result I believe it had little influence on the proceedings. An imaginal structure stating that the collage design was inadequate to express our intention emerged in two out of the three explorations, in response to the participants’ puzzled looks. This structure’s impact on my ability to remain present was lessened through self-empathy, and diminished further when I remembered Ben’s look of absolute delight when he viewed the collage during the exploration that he participated in.

A structure expressing concern about the “frivolous and ineffective” nature of the
sculpting was managed again with self-empathy and with reminders about how I was affected by the same exercise when I participated in it as a student in a Meridian class. A structure stating, “This is such great material!” also expressed itself during the explorations, especially when participants spontaneously placed their sculptures in the closest possible proximity to each other. I found it difficult to simply observe rather than be influenced by this structure, and my sense of how well the data collected supports my hypothesis may have been affected by this structure.

4. Theoretical Concepts Upon Which Interpretations Are Based

According to Omer, *authentic power*, “the spectrum of human capacities and qualities that are responsive to various domains of life experience,” emerges when we turn toward “. . . the sensitivities that embody the soul’s passionate nature.” 18 Omer posits that one function of imagination is to “. . . integrate and amplify the somatic, affective, and cognitive dimensions of experience,” and in particular, empathic imagination amplifies experience in a human’s relationship with self, others, and all life.

Omer also asserts reflexive participation involves surrendering to the present moment, and that surrender is fostered through the practice of reflexive dialogue, one result being the restoration of experience. Omer states *trusticity*, a sense of curiosity about one’s experience, is one of the central qualities that supports reflexive participation. 19
5. My Interpretations of What Happened

Participants’ empathic imagination increased throughout the explorations, promoted by the inherent empathy-evoking qualities of group experience, the intentional design of the exploration activities, and the deeply personal exploration of the feelings and needs accompanying their violent acts. Beginning with the art making and viewing exercise, participants reported noticing the commonalities in the experiences each were having prior to and during their violent acts. Participants’ behavior also changed in ways indicating a greater sense of inclusion and connection: heads lifted, they began to make more eye contact, and nervous expressions such as tapping feet or hands largely disappeared. As empathy increased among the participants, they became increasingly willing to express material they had previously banished as not being part of who they believed they were.

One example from the key moments we recorded was when Ben began the storytelling exercise: the other participants sighed in apparent relief. Ben also stated, “. . . we talked about men’s groups and the place where if they are working well you can let down all of the masks that life teaches you to wear, posturing and projections of self, and then you can be vulnerable. So we felt that we have all done that this morning and come to a very human place. It’s a relief actually to be away from the less authentic self that we present in public or the feeling of being too well known for our flaws in our
intimate relationships, it’s a relief to be vulnerable and to be accepted and real.” Sal stated that, “We can be released. There’s nothing about our bad choices that is keeping us back or inhibiting us. Why do I protect these choices from the light? I didn’t want to talk about this story, but now that I did – so much lighter. I made a wrong choice. I make them all the time. I see that it had no effect, now that light is shining on it. Healing begins on its own.” These and other moments provide evidence authentic power seemed to be emerging in the social field of the explorations, and the most noticeable increase occurred during the empathy dialogues.

Empathic imagination increased dramatically during the empathy dialogues as unconscious and largely dissociated affects and their meanings were acknowledged and embraced. Ted stated the differences between his first and second drawings represented a shift in both the connection and in the quality of connection depicted in his drawings: one-way and dominating in the first drawing, and two-way and integrated in the second. Steve and I concluded the differences between participants’ two drawings indicated that the empathy dialogue had actively mediated re-association of participants’ banished parts.

In all three explorations, participant engagement in the remainder of the exercises was marked by a sense of connection and companionship. Ben stated that, “We are all the same inside. The same shit, the same goodness . . . . The most important thing is what we have in common, what we hold dear together, anything else is just a distraction.” Ben also expressed this sense of connection and belonging when placing his sculpture in
relationship to the others, saying, “I want them all close.” Ted invited Steve and me to also contribute sculptures to the collective. Sal said, “We’re the same! Everyone’s story is my story . . . I didn’t want to talk about this story but now that I did I feel so much lighter.” Finally, Sal observed about the second drawings, “Much more whole, less pain . . . I am at peace with our situations and with each of the stories that were told.”

Taken together, these and other expressions suggested participants had not recognized the extent to which they were still affected by the unprocessed pain of past events, and an increase in empathic imagination had seemed to both support them to turn toward their experiences, and to provide a sense of relief from their individual and collective pain, one result being a spontaneous turn toward community and connection.

Finally, participants’ expressions during the empty chair dialogues uniformly included a full range of what appeared to be freely expressed affect, suggesting participants had gained a new and more integrated relationship with the acts they now regret.

6. Validity Considerations

Among the key qualities Steve and I noticed was the extent to which participants were affected during the separate sections of the explorations. Participants expressed their affect more intensely while telling their stories, during the empathy dialogues, while viewing the drawings that were produced immediately after the empathy dialogue, and during the empty chair exercise. To increase the validity of our conclusions about the
meanings associated with these shifts, while participants were on lunch break Steve and I engaged in focal space immediately following the second part of the art making and viewing activity. In addition, after each exploration we compared our notes identifying key moments and positing their significance, immediately reconciling any differences in interpretation. We were struck by the amount of congruence that existed between our independent identification of key moments, and by how much agreement there was in the meanings we separately gave to the shifts we observed, interpretations that were further corroborated in participants’ journal entries about the same events.

We recognize, however, that we were significantly focused on the dramatic nature of the shifts we observed, and as a result may have been less effective at noticing more subtle nuances in meaning. For this reason, our interpretations of what we observed may be incomplete.

**Learning Four: In For a Dime, In For a Dollar**

Learning Four posits that a positive relationship seems to exist between empathy-mediated new perceptions of belonging and inclusion, and possible spontaneous willingness to be accountable for harm caused. After participants received empathy for their violent acts, they expressed awareness and acceptance of the needs that seemed to contribute to their violence, and then spontaneously expressed what co-researcher Steve and I paraphrased as, “Now how do I make this right?” Participants repeatedly expressed the willingness to make restitution for their acts and to provide assurance the act would
not be repeated, to learn from and be accountable for their mistakes.

We further surmised willingness to be accountable seemed not to be dependent upon the amount of time that had passed between the event and the explorations. This was illustrated by the wide variation in the elapsed times we observed between the original acts and the current explorations, which ranged between one month and twenty-five years, and the similarity in how participants were affected, regardless of the length of this interval.

1. What Happened

Empathic imagination seemed to be increasing throughout the explorations, nurtured by the group nature of the explorations, the empathy dialogue, the collective viewing of the collage, the storytelling, the sculpting, and the sculpture placement process. Spontaneously throughout the explorations, participants made statements Steve and I believed represented a willingness to be accountable for their acts. In reference to how he would behave in future relationships Sid said, “. . . I did some counseling work after that, to figure out what was in me that was feeling like I wasn’t good enough . . . . And I worked extra nights and I did pay for someone to try and straighten me out . . . . I am more assertive about myself now, and I’m much more honest about myself.” Jay stated, “I am feeling grateful for being here now and lighter and more open. Being excited to find and develop some tools and skills for dealing with all situations be it joy, strife, conflict, stress, anger, etc. Still a bit frightened of anger and the power of the
emotion, but confident in possibility of redirecting that power into positive.”

Sam spoke of his efforts to change his self-destructive behavior, “It’s been a very long road to learn how to express myself when I am having very strong emotions. Usually in the past what would happen is that I would end up tearing up and choking up and end up crying because I am trying to express something that is personally [sic], I’m trying to express strong emotion. And I’m getting, now that I’m 51, I’m finally getting to that ability and to be able to say, ‘No, this is the situation, this is where I’m coming from’.”

During his empty chair exercise Tom expressed a willingness to make amends, saying, “I want you to know that I wanted almost anything else to happen than what did happen, and if I could change it I would . . . I would go a long way to be able to work it out with you.” During his empty chair dialogue Bob said, “. . . all I know how to do right now is to try to help you learn how to tie your shoes. I am hoping that you will understand that, and you are a child and are probably very disturbed when you are with me because I am different and it’s difficult for you to trust me. At some point I hope you know how much I want it to be different between us and at this point I cannot imagine how to make it up to you.”

Ted expressed his willingness to make amends to his daughter when he said, “I want to reach and hold her right here.” Ted pantomimed picking up his daughter and holding her on his chest as he lay back down on the floor. He pantomimed stroking her back. “While she cried I just held her. I don’t think I have anything to say.” [He tears up
and wipes his eyes]. During his empty chair dialogue, Hal also spoke directly about his desire to make amends, saying, “... Hey boss! I am confused and angry about what you did in there! I think you sold me out! I regret yelling at you and quitting after the meeting, and I will do whatever I need to, to make it right between us, and I just don’t know how to trust you because of what you did in the meeting. I want to know what is going on that you would treat me like that in front of management.”

Although the empty chair dialogues contained some of the participants’ most direct expressions of willingness to be accountable for their violent acts, this willingness was also suggested during the empathy dialogues. Ted stated, “... to know and to be aware that when I am in a place of anger if I act that it will almost certainly be a destructive act rather than the constructive act that I am wanting. So, it’s okay to be in a place of anger, but I need not to act from that place. I need to remove myself, get out of the place of anger, and then decide to act. And that’s what I want, self-connection, self-control, and self-awareness.” Sal said, “He’s a beautiful boy and we have a very deep relationship today. He is always wanting to stand next to me, hugging me even though he is almost twelve years old. We went on as if nothing happened and I have never done anything like that to him again. It touched me and I was worried how he might have been affected.” In his expressions about his second drawing, Sid said, “Thinking about the whole thing of feeling inadequate, and stressing because of that. About 10 years ago I started martial arts with my daughter and I really liked the part where the Sensi said, ‘There is no first strike.’ I’ve taken this in and it’s a very different mindset, its very
relaxed, confident, not inadequate feeling.”

Sid and others shared both the actions they had taken to address harm and the new mindsets that support their capacity to choose strategies to express themselves that do not cause harm. Describing his participation in the exploration, Ted said, “One of the things that came up at lunch was that we talked about men’s groups and the place where if they are working well you can let down all of the masks that life teaches you to wear, posturing and projections of self, and then you can be vulnerable. So we felt that we have all done that this morning and come to a very human place. It’s a relief actually to be away from the less authentic self that we present in public or the feeling of being too well known for our flaws in our intimate relationships, it’s a relief to be vulnerable and to be accepted and real.”

Throughout the explorations participants expressed a longing for the skill to respond in a different way from how they had behaved in the story they told, and a willingness to make amends, especially if they were seen for their intentions.

2. How I was Affected.

I felt relief when participants expressed relief while participating in the empathy dialogues, because I hope that my own unprocessed pain can also be seen and heard.
When participants expressed their willingness to make amends I felt relief and joy, because I also long for more forgiveness and accountability in my own life. I felt sadness and despair when participants expressed justification for or dissociation from their acts. I felt longing for everyone to have the capacity to turn toward how they and others are affected by their own and others’ unskilled acts. I also long for widespread acceptance that trial and error are part of the human condition, and widespread understanding that people are willing to learn from their mistakes if they are first accepted as fully human.

3. Imaginal Structures In Use

When participants demonstrated increasing willingness to turn toward and express their pain, an imaginal structure emerged that described my inability and lack of willingness to do so as well. I felt shame when telling myself that I lack the courage to surrender myself to the same processes that exploration participants experienced. Another imaginal structure describing my “special understanding” of empathy and its place in the human condition arose when participants expressed relief and willingness to be accountable for their acts during the empathy dialogues and other exploration components.

An imaginal structure proclaiming the distinct lack of accountability in current American culture arose when any participant used justification or blaming during their stories or empathy dialogues. These were often followed by a structure proclaiming my own lack of accountability, both of which received self-empathy as a strategy to increase
the amount of presence I had for the process. Finally, a structure describing how hopeless I believe the lot of men to be in this culture emerged as each group left the exploration, and I especially required self-empathy and empathy from co-researcher Steve in order to be able be fully present in our focal space.

4. Theoretical Concepts Upon Which Interpretations Are Based

Accountability is the ability to both make and keep agreements, as well as provide restitution when agreements are broken. As part of Imaginal Transformation Praxis, Omer posits authentic power “. . . emerges through enduring and transmuting the vulnerabilities we experience when we turn toward the sensitivities that embody the soul’s passionate nature.” Omer states that authorizing, facilitating a turn toward enduring and transmuting in others, contributes to disidentification with adaptive identities restricting authentic experience. Because of its amplification and integration functions, empathic imagination also contributes to disidentification, promotes identity transformation and reflexivity, and serves to restore experience, thereby permitting trusticity to emerge.

5. My Interpretations of What Happened

When imaginal structures describing exclusion in participants were met with empathic imagination in an authorizing environment created either through group structure or group activities, those imaginal structures seemed no longer able to
determine the quality of consciousness of those attending and as a result, participants spontaneously began to occupy more authentic relationships with themselves and others. Further, participants seemed to spontaneously express willingness to be accountable for their behavior and to attempt restitution as a result of turning toward their individual and collective experiences because their consciousness was no longer burdened with “. . . a delusionary sense of a separate self.” Ben’s comment about his participation illustrates this idea: “It confirmed something that I deeply believe in that I do not get to experience as much as I like which is if you pretty much get any group of people together and they open their hearts and start trusting each other it allows you to be immediately intimate with people.”

Ben and others stated the current social structure does not promote getting together with open hearts. Ted noted, “One of the things that came up at lunch was that we talked about men’s groups and the place where if they are working well you can let down all of the masks that life teaches you to wear, posturing and projections of self, and then you can be vulnerable. So we felt that we have all done that this morning and come to a very human place. It’s a relief actually to be away from the less authentic self that we present in public or the feeling of being too well known for our flaws in our intimate relationships, it’s a relief to be vulnerable and to be accepted and real.” These and other comments illustrate how participants longed for an authorizing environment that could facilitate their experience of trusticity, increase their capacity for reflexive participation, and support their capacity to be accountable for their violent acts.
Learning Four posits when men state willingness to be accountable for the harm caused by their violence, their willingness seems to be a spontaneous and automatic response to the sense of communal belonging and resulting re-association that can emerge when people receive empathy for their violent acts. Each of the men participating in this exploration spontaneously offered to make amends after being supported to come back into relationship with the dissociated pain stimulated by and resulting from their violence. Receiving empathy seemed to support participants in both bringing into conscious awareness the needs they were trying to meet by committing their violent acts, and to acknowledge and accept them as well. For the men participating in these explorations it seemed that re-association involved recognizing and accepting one’s own humanity, and to experience being part of humanity as a whole. This learning illustrates the idea that accountability seems to be based not upon the amount of punishment a person experiences but, rather, upon empathy-mediated perceptions of being seen and accepted.

6. Validity Considerations

The validity of this learning was enhanced by the number of expressions of willingness to be accountable for their behavior that we recorded from the participants. Only Jay diluted his expressed willingness to be accountable and make reparations by using blame and justification, and then only partially. Ted, Ben, and Sal still meet together on a regular basis to discuss what is emerging in their lives and how to manage
it, supporting the hypothesis that given the opportunity, men will spontaneously turn toward their experiences and enter into cultures of conviviality and accountability. Co-researcher Steve and I both noted as participants left the room we longed to stay in connection with them, rather than staying and cleaning up, again demonstrating men’s collective unmet need for connection, longing for authentic power, and for participation in transformative community.

It is possible that Steve’s and my personal longings for inclusion in transformative community affected the validity of our conclusions by masking other factors that may have been operating. However, both Steve and I made special efforts to identify and describe imaginal structures that may have been attached to our experiences and, although we might have not been as present as we could have been, no other explanation for our experiences emerged either between us or from the participants.

Conclusion

The learnings from this exploration illustrate the central place that the need for belonging seems to have in the human experience; that perceptions of exclusion could be an important part of the foundation on which violence is built; and that experiences of inclusion seem to promote accountability. The data collected in these explorations, including the data harvested from participant responses, the ways in which co-researcher Steve and I were affected, the imaginal structures that arose within Steve and I during the explorations, and our interpretations of the data nucleated the formation of four
individual learnings that were condensed into a single, cumulative learning.

Learning one posits that violence seems to emerge from the unconscious in response to perceptions of exclusion, and in a way often surprising and possibly shocking to those experiencing it. Learning two describes how the group experience itself seemed to catalyze and promote an authorizing environment that supported a turn toward experience. Learning three contributes how an increase in empathic imagination seems to promote not only a willingness to turn toward experience, but potentially carries the message, “I belong,” as well. Learning four proposes that empathy-mediated re-association and resulting experience of being seen as fully human seem to catalyze a spontaneous willingness to be accountable and make reparations for harm caused.

The cumulative learning derived from the individual learnings posits that violent acts may result from perceptions of being excluded, that empathy seems to mediate a return to a sense of belonging which in turn, also seems to stimulate spontaneous willingness to be accountable for the harm caused. In this exploration, unresolved pain generated by violence to self and/or others was expressed in an authorizing environment that supported disidentification with pain that had been previously untended. In all cases, the quality of the group experience and the planned exercises supported turns toward banished pain and promoted spontaneous formation of cultures of conviviality. The data and analysis consistently supported the increased empathic imagination is essential in effecting identity transformation. Empathy seems to generate initiatory thresholds in those previously held static by gatekeepers describing otherness, by generating ritual trust.
that, in turn, serves to restore an experiencing I. Once an experiencing I operates in an authorizing environment, accountability seems to spontaneously emerge to sustain the individual’s connection with their authentic power.

The men who participated in this exploration seemed to receive a powerful lesson in how to live more authentic lives. They potentially learned to seek out and trust authentic relationships and to ignore relationships that encourage them to remain asleep in their adaptive identities. They also possibly experienced the efficacy of participating in transformative learning communities as a method to address untended pain, and to promote their capacity to acknowledge and make amends for their violent acts. Finally, participants expressed surprise and confusion about how little was needed to create these experiences, and a sense of curiosity about what else in their lives they could be accountable for, if provided with similar support.

This exploration was guided by the Research Problem: “What subjective shifts occur when shame that is accompanied by the attack self and/or attack other response to shame is met with empathy?” This exploration explored the hypothesis: When shame for having done harm is met with empathy, imaginal structures associated with not belonging and/or exclusion will shift to allow a felt sense of belonging accompanied by an imagination and even eagerness to address and correct whatever harm has been done. The Research Problem enabled me to address the confusion and despair I feel when I realize that men are the gender identified as responsible for the vast majority of violence perpetrated on this planet, whether that violence is physical, emotional, financial,
environmental, social, or personal in nature. Through the vehicle of the exploration activities, the research hypothesis seemed to answer the question proposed in the Research Problem and revealed two further learnings as well. The first of these is that an empathic group field combined with individual empathy promotes a turn towards pain and re-association of dissociated material, respectively. The second is that re-association, and its resulting felt sense of self seems to stimulate spontaneous accountability.

I was surprised by the depth of dissociation expressed by exploration participants, reflected in comments such as, “That’s not me,” and, “I haven’t told this to anyone.” I was also surprised by the significant amounts of relief expressed by participants when they were able to identify and express what had been hidden for so long. These expressions validated the efficacy of an authorizing environment in catalyzing a turn toward experience.

Also outside my expectations was the extent of the longing and despair men seem to feel as a result of believing that, because of their gender, there is something inherently wrong with them that cannot be remedied. Participants’ belief in their powerlessness to ever be free from the consequences of their violence was almost overwhelming, and I remain concerned that their exploration experience alone will not provide them with a lasting capacity to turn toward experience. Finally, I was extremely surprised and pleased the empathy-mediated willingness to be accountable required so little to evoke, often being expressed spontaneously as soon as participants sensed their pain had been heard. This result has given me increased hope the human species can survive because, it seems
that to the extent that we can find ways to hear each other’s pain we can become accountable for our violent or otherwise unskilled acts, be they personal, social, environmental, and otherwise.

The learnings derived from the explorations answered the Research Problem by exposing the perceptions of exclusion that seem to stimulate acts of violence. Both preventing and addressing violence, then, may require engagement in activities providing experiences of inclusion and belonging.

From the beginning to the end of each exploration, participants consistently expressed a longing for a sense of inclusion, a sense that steadily increased throughout the explorations, facilitated by the sharing of common experiences, especially participation in the empathy dialogue. Sal’s comment, “We’re all the same!” was stated as a revelation, and his tears and words announced an experience of profound relief. When mediated by an empathic experience allowing them to more fully occupy their participatory consciousness, participants spontaneously released their imaginal structure describing exclusion. Once they were able to more fully occupy their participatory consciousnesses, participants spontaneously acted to create community and expressed willingness to be accountable for their unskilled acts.

The data revealed that, in every participant, each turn toward the dissociated parts of themselves generated an increasing willingness and capacity to turn toward the pain of other unacknowledged acts and dissociated parts. Uniformly, participants stated they wanted more, and expressed dismay they did not know of other opportunities so they
could continue this simultaneously personal and communal work after they returned to their communities. Finally, participants’ increasing sense of primal trust promoted greater accountability, as evidenced both in their more authentic self-connection and in their repeated expressions of willingness to “make things right.”
CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS

Significance of the Learnings

The cumulative learning emerging from this exploration is that male violence, rather than being the result of an innate propensity for violence, seems instead to result from perceptions of being excluded. Further, empathy seems to both mediate re-association and return to a sense of belonging, and to promote spontaneous willingness to make amends for the harm done. Four individual learnings contributed to the cumulative learning. Learning One posits male violence, rather than resulting from innate aggressiveness, instead seems to result from deeply hidden perceptions of having been banished from humanity in some fundamental way. Learning Two proposes group experience is a powerful mediator that supports the ability and willingness of participants to turn toward their dissociated experiences. Learning Three reveals the efficacy of direct empathic connection at calling back into belonging the parts of ourselves that have been the most deeply dissociated. Learning Four proposes accountability for harm done seems dependent upon an experience and perception of belonging and inclusion.

The research design was crafted to explore the hypothesis; When shame for having done harm is met with empathy, imaginal structures associated with not belonging
and/or exclusion will shift to allow a felt sense of belonging accompanied by an imagination and even eagerness to address and correct whatever harm has been done. Participants engaged in a diverse set of activities designed to expose and articulate both the affects and meanings being expressed by their violence, and the perceptions supporting these acts.

Data analysis first reveals that each violent act described seemed to have been supported by a perception of being excluded, especially of being excluded from a relationship perceived as essential to the experience of being fully human and an accepted member of their communities. Essentially, violence occurred whenever participants perceived they had been banished from humanity itself, felt shame about being excluded, and as a result, were now alone because of their inherent lack of humanity. The men participating in this exploration seemed to be affected by two sets of imaginal structures, each describing them as less than human. The first contained the immediate perceptions of exclusion arising from and surrounding the violent act they described during their participation in this exploration. These perceptions were supported and magnified by a second set of imaginal structures describing already being less than human because of being born male. Together, these additive perceptions seemed to dominate the normative personalities of the men participating in this exploration at the time they committed the acts they now regret.

Perceptions of exclusion were also supported as the basis of violence by the high level of congruence among the results obtained from each of the different approaches.
designed to reveal them. For example, during his Empty Chair dialogue Bob stated, “. . . Susan (pseudonym), I know that I cannot connect with you in the same way that others can, that I have limitations in my ability to express emotions and engage in relationship. And I want you to know that I am trying even though I don’t have role models that I can trust.” In addition, in the first of his paired drawings Bob depicted only his step-daughter. In the second Bob drew both of them indicating that, possibly as a result of the empathy he had received, he could now place himself “on the same page” as his step-daughter. Similar results were obtained from each participant.

Over half of the participants describe shame as the primary affect arising during their violence. The remainder report anger as the affect they first noticed. Both of these feelings were followed first by astonishment at how they had behaved, and then by anguish and regret. Taken together, these results suggest that when men perceive that they are being excluded, essentially banished from an important relationship, and then feel shame as a result, their shame quickly becomes anger that can be further expressed as acts of violence.

Participants who expressed astonishment at perpetrating the acts they reported seemed to have dissociated from their shame that arose as a consequence of their acts, as a strategy to manage it. Dissociation from shame may also explain the difficulty I had in recruiting men to participate in the exploration. Not only was more than a year of effort required to recruit nine participants, but I also found it necessary to divide the exploration into three subsections in order to accommodate participants’ schedules. Each of the
approximately thirty men initially interviewed stated they were not violent and therefore had nothing to contribute to the exploration. The nine who agreed to participate did so only after hearing I was looking for any reaction that resulted in an act they now regret.

The conclusion empathy seems to mediate return to a sense of belonging was supported in two ways: first, through results indicating an empathic field generated by group experience supported participants in turning toward their experience and, second, the direct empathic dialogue occurring between the co-researchers and the participants seemed to enable participants to fully integrate the parts of themselves that had previously been split off as too horrible to bear.

One unexpected finding was the spontaneous formation of what Omer terms *cultures of conviviality* that, “. . . support and maintain the significance of the other’s being.” 3 Participants repeatedly report feeling both relief there were others present and longing for more participants. Jay states, “I think it would be really interesting to see how it went if there had been four or five different people that could of, you know, been sharing each other’s stories, to take it to some other, oh, oh, that’s how I felt. I just love reflection and bouncing it off others. For me it could have been even more beneficial and helpful and more would have come if the group had been bigger.” There was consensus among participants and co-researchers alike that group experience itself was sufficient to enable the participants to have what Karlfried Durckheim refers as, “. . . the courage to face life.” 4

Participants report that their sense of relief increased as they experienced being
heard and seen by the others in the group, an experience of increased empathic understanding and experience that arose from realizing others have had similar experiences. However, although the amount of empathic connection generated by group experience may have enabled participants to turn toward their experiences, group experience alone seemed insufficient to call the most dissociated parts of those attending back into a full sense of belonging. As a result, a deeper, more focused and personal approach seemed necessary to facilitate full acceptance and reintegration.

In response to the empathic guesses contained in the empathy dialogues each participant indicated he had been heard for something he had not realized about himself, something that had been buried since the act he now regretted had occurred, a truth that brought his full humanity back into view once again. After his empathy dialogue, Ted stated, “I’m feeling hopeful – want closure, healing, believing it is possible.” Although the group experience enabled Ted and others to turn toward their experiences, only the direct personal intervention of the empathy dialogue and, to a lesser extent, the empty chair dialogue seemed to enable participants to fully reclaim the dissociated parts of themselves and to achieve, as Ted and others said, “. . . closure, healing, believing it is possible.”

Although the origins of violence and their relationship to empathy were the focus of this exploration, a relationship between empathy and accountability seemed to emerge from this exploration as well. As a result of being seen, heard, and understood each of the participants spontaneously offered to make amends and restitution for the pain and
suffering generated by their violent act. In his empty chair dialogue, Tom said, “I don’t know what to do to make this right . . . . I would go a long way to be able to work it out with you.” These and other similar statements seem to express both willingness to make amends and a deep longing for inclusion and forgiveness, underscoring how important the need for belonging is in promoting accountability in the human experience.

Originally, I was interested in the origins of violence in order to be more effective at addressing the cultural and social conditions generating violence, and to also more deeply understand the anger and rage I have felt throughout my own life. Discovering that empathic connection not only transforms the perceptions of exclusion that may promote violence but may also establish the basis for healing and restitution for violent acts provides me with hope and confidence I will be effective in addressing both the causes and consequences of violence in our culture, as well as in achieving peace within myself.

**Mythic and Archetypal Reflections**

The relationship between perceptions of social exclusion and violence is illustrated by the story of *Medea* by Euripides. In this story Medea leaves her home and family to follow and marry her lover Jason, with whom she bears two children. Medea learns that Jason intends to leave her for the daughter of his king, and she also hears members of the king’s court laughing at her and her situation. As a result, Medea not only kills the king and his daughter, but also kills the two children that belong to her and
Jason. The story ends as Medea rides away in a chariot drawn by dragons. The outcome of this tale mirrors the way I have responded in my past when I have told myself that I was being excluded: I have felt rage and then I have hurt those around me without regard for the consequences. In both Medea’s and my own experiences, violence resulted from not being able to turn toward and embrace the shame associated with perceived social exclusion. Following every act of my own violence, I experienced loneliness, longing, and a perception of being less than human. Medea’s story illustrates the hot rage that can arise when shame and humiliation are felt. It also serves to explain the anger, rage, and violence that I have expressed throughout my life, and the violence that arose in the men participating in this exploration. Although Medea’s tale ends with her rageful flight, my own story and the experience of the men participating in this exploration move forward on a path illustrated by another archetypal story, that of Parzival as presented by Linda Sussman.

In this tale Parzival is ridiculed and banished for failing to offer compassion to the Fisher King. He rides away vowing to learn what was needed in order to not fail again. Using Omer’s definition of Reflexive Participation, we understand that Parzival fails to, “...surrender through creative action to the necessities, meanings, and possibilities inherent in the present moment.” The Fisher King had broken a taboo, loving someone from outside his community, and as a result he was attacked, wounded, and alienated by his community. Parzival fails in his initial attempt to offer support and healing to the Fisher King because he makes decisions about how to behave based upon
outside authority; he has not yet developed a capacity for authentic response.\textsuperscript{14} The men participating in this exploration seemed to a varying extent to not yet have addressed the pain that had both stimulated and resulted from their violence. As with Parzival, they seemed to have been responding to cultural messages about what it means to be a man and what constitutes appropriate male behavior.\textsuperscript{15} According to Jackins et al., in this culture men are specifically instructed to turn away from their pain, leaving them, as Parzival was left, separate from the inner resources that would enable them to act authentically. Jackins contends that in spite of cultural beliefs to the contrary, men are not inherently violent. He states, “Boys [men] are never violent or aggressive except as a result of having been brutalized.”\textsuperscript{16} Jackins further asserts that the most effective strategy for men to overcome the internalized oppression restricting reflexivity is for men to, “. . . find ways to become intelligent parts of each other’s lives.”\textsuperscript{17}

Parzival joins the Round Table of knights; participants volunteered for this exploration. Each joined what Omer refers to as a \textit{Culture of Conviviality}; an assemblage that, “. . . maintains the significance of the other’s being.”\textsuperscript{18} Sandra Bloom proposes that when groups form, a \textit{group mind} will inevitably emerge.\textsuperscript{19} Bloom contends that group mind supports cooperative and creative action that is not accessible by individuals. Bloom’s claims seemed to be supported by the findings of this exploration. Participants reported that their sense of being included and seen for both who they are and for their intentions, in a group setting focused on exploration and growth, enabled them to explore their pain. To learn what is required of him in order to heal the Fisher King, Parzival
presents himself to the Round Table and is invited to join. He is also reminded of his failure and told what is necessary for him to grow. Although group participation promoted growth for both Parzival and for exploration participants, much more personal interventions seemed required for each of them to achieve reflexive participation.\textsuperscript{20}

Parzival is called to a final integration that provides him with both the insight and strength to heal the Fisher King; he is called to “. . . force your horse to a mighty leap.”\textsuperscript{21} Sussman explains the leap Parzival makes opens the final door to true responsiveness by integrating the parts of him that had been dissociated, enabling him to hear the Fisher King’s pain and, now freed from externally based learned restrictions, to respond genuinely.

Bloom reports that at some point each individual attending her trauma groups also took a leap of faith by telling their story, a leap that enabled them to occupy a new truth about themselves, to live a new life story that was more integrated and whole.\textsuperscript{22} After engaging in the empathy dialogues, exploration participants were apparently able to reintegrate parts of themselves they had dissociated as a result of their violent acts. During his Empty Chair dialogue Ted said, “I want to reach out [to his screaming daughter] and hold her right here.” Ted pantomimed picking up his daughter and holding her on his chest as he lay back down on the floor. He pantomimed stroking her back. “While she cried I just held her. I don’t think I have anything to say. [He tears up and wipes his eyes.]” It appeared that, following his participation in the exploration, Ted was finally able to respond genuinely and creatively to the demands of the moment.
The final learning arising in this exploration was accountability seems to arise spontaneously when empathic connection has supported reintegration of parts that have been dissociated. Parzival, then, has one more task in front of him: he must make amends for his past mistakes. As a result of his great leap, Parzival is now ready to not only approach the Fisher King and speak words that heal, but also to ask what he must do next in order to “Live God’s will.”  

Sussman states Parzival’s reintegration enables him to respond to necessity throughout the rest of his life, including being able to express regret and sorrow for the results of his acts and to ask what is necessary to make things right.

As a result of the empathy generated within and among the participants in this exploration, each made a gesture or a statement indicating they wanted to make amends for the harm their acts generated. The day after his incident, Hal went into his boss’ office and said, “So, is this the office I should be in or should I be in the personnel office looking for something else?” His boss said, “Go to work.” Hal reported that over the next few weeks he and his boss worked through the incident, and he felt a lot of gratitude because he had a sense of being forgiven. Hal stated he was surprised by how much relief he experienced while participating in this exploration, because he had already spent years in therapy working through his perceptions of betrayal and exclusion. He said, “My story turned out well, I got my job back and retired on time, all because he forgave me and let me come back to work. And I didn’t tell my wife until years later. I am surprised that I had anything left over from that experience because it did come out well. I’ve enjoyed getting to know these guys, and I feel a little relieved that I got through it all so well, both
that event in my life and the time I spent with you telling about it. I’m glad I came.” Hal’s statement suggests he was experiencing residual shame concerning the incident, possibly arising from not telling his wife for so long about how he nearly lost his job, or from telling himself that he was not quite human because of the way he had behaved. As with Parzival, Hal has grown, as Sussman describes, slowly wise.25

At the end of his tale Parzival earns the title of Grail King; however, my quest to turn toward and integrate my own pain continues. Sussman claims whoever asks a transforming question will be transformed as well.26 I am grateful that at one point in my life I dropped the reins of my own horse and said yes to a very insistent inner voice that guided me toward psychology and teaching; today I teach others how to give themselves and others empathy. Sussman promises each time I make an empathy guess or help others learn how to give empathy I am also transformed, and I am hoping that as a result, like Parzival, I will eventually become a Grail King.27

Implications of the Study

The outcome of this exploration has deeply influenced my relationship with my concept and experience of empathy. For most of my life I have suffered from what Real terms, covert depression.28 Real uses the story of Narcissus to describe the qualities of covert depression, qualities that include grandiosity designed to fill up an inner emptiness typified by gut-wrenching longing. Narcissus is constantly looking outside himself for a sense of self, a pattern that looking back at this point in my life, I find easy to recognize
in myself. Real states that Narcissus is suffering from paralysis, from immobilization due to lack of self-love. Far too often I have placed my sense of self into the hands of others and, when my hopes of validation were not met, I judged myself as unworthy.

This exploration has highlighted for me the primacy of empathy in mediating my relationship with myself. Whenever I begin to feel a sense of powerlessness and also notice that I am looking for food, sex, or approval as a way to address it, I have learned to instead seek empathy, either from myself or, if I am too deeply activated to support myself in the moment, from trusted others. As a result, my sense of self and of my place in the world is expanding constantly, and I feel increasingly at peace. Equally gratifying has been a very noticeable reduction in the frequency with which I feel rage or shame. My expanded awareness of my propensity to see situations in terms of inclusion and exclusion, coupled with my deepened connection with myself, seem to be working together to provide me choice and spaciousness in those moments where in the past I might have perceived exclusion. My personal outcome of this exploration alone has justified the effort that I have expended to achieve it.

I am increasingly confident that my deepened sense of self-awareness, especially concerning my relationship with depression, will support me in being effective in addressing men’s gender issues, especially depression, anger, and shame. I am currently drawn to supporting returning veterans who are suffering from PTSD to attain reintegration and healing.

Each of the men participating in this exploration expressed relief and gratitude for
how they were affected by it. At least three of the participants have formed friendships and remain in contact with each other, spontaneously creating one of Omer’s cultures of conviviality that may enable them to become, as Jackins et al. said, “. . . intelligent parts of each other’s lives.”

The finding empathy seems reduce both violence and depression could have a profound effect on men’s lives because it provides a simple and direct method to address what Jackins et al. terms the oppression of men. Central to the oppression of men is the belief that men are in some way sub-human, that because of their gender they are not fit for full citizenship in the human race.

Empathy skill and consciousness may be ideally suited to address false impressions of otherness because the message they carry, “You belong,” directly affects the imaginal structures supporting them. Any effective treatment for the violence and depression that have such devastating consequences in American culture could have a profoundly positive social impact.

There are many social agencies whose efficacy could potentially be affected by the learnings of this exploration; Justice and Corrections is one such agency. In Oregon alone, 91.4 percent of those incarcerated are men. If the underlying factors promoting violence were effectively addressed, our prison population could potentially be reduced to about 10 percent of its current level. The learning that rather than punishment, empathy seems to promote accountability, also serves to explain the effectiveness of the justice and corrections practices known collectively as Restorative Justice. Restorative justice prioritizes restoration of relationships and community rather than punishment of offenders, an essential part of the restoration process is making amends for the pain and
harm caused by unskillful acts. A central pillar of restorative justice principles and practices is that all who are affected by an unskilled act, including both victims and perpetrators, are heard and understood for the pain generated because it is believed that mutual understanding is the foundation on which willingness to make amends is built. The financial implications of restorative justice and rehabilitative practices are immense, with an average of six dollars and twenty five cents in social costs being saved for every one dollar spent on restorative approaches. It is possible were it corrections policy to place empathy training high on the list of qualities necessary for rehabilitation, recidivism, and therefore prison populations, could decline significantly, freeing up enough public resources to fund the provision of empathy training in our schools and to parents, thereby potentially dramatically reducing the numbers of our children who end up in prison in the first place.

Therapists have long understood the primacy of empathy in establishing an effective therapeutic relationship. Identifying empathy as a, and perhaps the, mediator of the need for belonging could increase therapeutic effectiveness by providing both an easily accessible, understandable indicator of empathic connection, the extent to which their clients believe they belong and are included, and with an equally effective method to increase a sense of belonging should it be lacking. Additionally, relating reintegration and a sense of belonging with a spontaneously expressed need for accountability could support therapists seeking to increase their clients’ ability to turn toward and process their pain, rather than avoiding it through compensating behaviors or dissociating from it.
through scapegoating of self and others.

The efficacy of empathy in mediating and restoring a sense of belonging could also increase the effectiveness of therapists and social workers working with suicide and domestic violence issues. Thomas Joiner explains those attempting and committing suicide have one or both of two self-impressions operating at the time of their attempts: thwarted belonging and/or being a burden to family. 39 Engaging those threatening suicide empathically may an effective suicide intervention method because empathy addresses both of these perceptions, especially if being a burden on one’s family is understood as a perception of no longer belonging. Dutton documents that homicide in domestic partnerships occurs when one partner perceives that he/she is being left or abandoned by the other. 40 Again, because empathy carries the message, “You belong,” empathy may serve to reduce at least some of the homicide observed in family violence cases.

Nathanson states suicide and homicide represent two ends of the spectrum of violence; violence toward self and violence toward others. 41 Between these two extremes we find violent acts such as those described by the participants of this exploration. These acts, which seem to have been stimulated in response to perceptions of exclusion, are examples of the everyday violence forming the greatest proportion of violence in our culture. 42

Baumeister and Leary state in their review of the need for belonging, “If psychology has erred with regard to the need for belonging, in our view, the error has not
been to deny the existence of such a motive so much as to under appreciate it . . . . The desire for interpersonal attachment may well be one of the most far-reaching and integrative constructs currently available to understand human nature." The learnings of this brief exploration reinforce and extend Baumeister and Leary’s conclusion by both identifying obstacles to experiencing a feeling of belonging expressed as perceptions of exclusion, and by identifying empathy as a potentially effective mediator of the need for belonging.

Perceptions of exclusion seemed to form the central experience of the men participating in this exploration and their resulting violence suggests that images of exclusion have far-reaching consequences. MacDonald and Leary state, “. . . for social animals, being socially excluded was often equivalent to death.” They conclude perceptions of exclusion could activate the same kinds of primitive threat defensive mechanisms as snakes and spiders. Piers and Singer state that when shame arises, it stimulates, “. . . the fear of contempt which on an even deeper level of the unconscious spells fear of abandonment, the death by emotional starvation.”

The violent responses of the men participating in this study could, then, be understood as unconscious survival responses to perceptions of threats of death. Coupled with a societal image depicting men not only as less than human but also as increasingly obsolete as providers and protectors, I believe it is possible a very large proportion of the images constituting men’s lives contribute to their shame, depression, anxiety, fear, anger, and acts of violence. Imaginal Psychology could, then, emphasize development of
empathic imagination in men as one strategy to address not only violence in our culture, but because men are so deeply involved in physically structuring our societies and lives, could also serve as a major vehicle for cultural transformation.

Jaenke notes that dissociation can become a cultural phenomenon and is thereby taken as normal.\textsuperscript{50} I believe when, as in the case of men, dissociation is perceived to be a normative state, a collective hopelessness can arise dependent upon images of powerlessness to support it, hopelessness that perpetuates violence because it lacks inspiration and understanding about the mutable nature of dissociation.\textsuperscript{51} Imaginal Psychology, then, could emphasize the role empathic imagination may play in enabling both those suffering from dissociation due to individual trauma, and those experiencing hopelessness and despair from imagining their current situation cannot be addressed, to turn toward these experiences and, as stated by Omer to, “. . . surrender through creative action to the necessities, meanings, and possibilities inherent in the present moment.” \textsuperscript{52} I believe Imaginal Psychology to be uniquely positioned to address both the current personal and cultural soul loss affecting our lives because of its emphasis on imagination as an entry into soul retrieval, and its dedication to cultural transformation.

I volunteer in prisons, teaching communication skills and empathy. As I’ve spoken with and come to know the mostly male students in my courses, I have been repeatedly struck with how we as a culture have abandoned hope that rehabilitation is possible. For example, in 2011 the state of Oregon passed a law that lengthened sentences and mandated treatment while simultaneously removing rehabilitation programs from the
prison’s budget, in spite of the mounting evidence that rehabilitation programs reduce recidivism. 53 I interpret this apparent paradox as representing our cultural inability to turn toward the cultural pain that seems to be intensifying daily. Jaenke states that, “. . . soullessness is a layering process that builds up through successive strata that progressively distance an individual from the soul’s deeper sensitivities.” 54 She posits that cultural soullessness manifests as a mechanical and unfeeling approach to existence that eliminates feedback about how our individual and collective actions affect us, others, and the life surrounding us. 55

I believe our cultural inability to effectively address the kinds of behavior labeled criminal activity is a symptom of our collective inability to recognize and understand how we are affected by our actions. To effectively address the increasing individual and cultural malaise arising from our turning away from this pain, we must come into a new relationship with both the pain stimulated by our unskilled acts and the pain generated from our soul-deadened lack of response. I feel deep and abiding sadness remembering all of the men who have come to my classes expressing anguish and grief at not being able to make amends for their acts, who are desperately seeking anything that will support them in achieving inner peace. These men express a profound willingness to be accountable in a cultural environment that to me does not seem to value accountability.

The results of this exploration, combined with my increasing understanding of trauma and soullessness, have led me to conclude individual and cultural transformation will require a new relationship with accountability, which is defined by Omer as, “... the
ability to make, keep, and renegotiate implicit and explicit agreements as well as remedy broken agreements.”

Each of the men participating in this exploration spontaneously offered to make amends after being supported to come back into relationship with the dissociated pain that both stimulated and resulted from their violence. Participants in my prison classes where I stress self-empathy and self-forgiveness for one’s past violent behavior repeatedly express willingness to be accountable for their acts evidenced by volunteering as surrogates in Victim/Offender dialogues, and by writing letters of regret and/or independently arranging to make restitution with their victims and their families. As individuals, psychologists, and community members, we must, then, turn away from our current strategy of punishment that has been so unsuccessful at eliciting accountability and turn toward strategies that expand inclusion and belonging, and foster accountability.

For the men who participated in this exploration, engaging in the six hours of exploration activities clearly began what could be a long process of learning to be accountable for the violent acts each participant described. For the men who come to my prison classes, participating in approximately 100 hours of communication and empathy training seems to consistently evoke a willingness to make amends for even the most violent of crimes. Jaenke suggests staying present when engaging those who, as a result of their trauma and violence, have dissociated is a powerful method to restore soulfulness. Nurturing the empathic imagination, then, may be among the most effective strategies to restore soulfullness. I am gaining a growing understanding that a
personal quality I call my fierceness, currently focused on supporting those who are incarcerated and the students in my other classes as well, is also a response to my longing to restore my own soulfullness. A decade of this work has served to ever increasingly awaken me, and I am very clear that it is my ever-increasing ability to provide empathy for self and others that is promoting my soul’s restoration.

As a result of this exploration, I believe empathy training could serve to address a significant portion of the violence existing in our culture. One potentially effective strategy to increase the availability of empathy in our culture would be to train parents and teachers to teach children empathy for self and others, enabling empathic capacity and consciousness to accrue from the bottom up. In this way, I believe that the incidence of violence in our culture could be significantly reduced and, potentially and ideally, even the concept of violence would fall out of use because we would come to understand pain, when inflicted, reflects a lack of skill rather than ill intent. The words violent and violence, then, might one day be replaced in common usage by the terms unskilled and lack of skill, respectively, and rather than calling for punishment, instead be seen as an opportunity and invitation to grow.

This exploration has inspired me to further explore the concept and experience of empathic imagination and to develop strategies to effectively disseminate empathic imagination in our culture. That empathic connection seems to influence and perhaps even define human relationship has been confirmed repeatedly by advances in neurobiology. I am interested in understanding what many therapists and
grandmothers seem to be able to accomplish intuitively, the expression of empathy through clear and present witnessing, which I personally experience as being warmly seen, heard, and compassionately supported as I struggle to turn toward my own pain. As a practical consideration, I believe discovering how to increase the efficiency of teaching and promoting empathic imagination will increase the effectiveness of my prison education programs and could potentially influence corrections policy in Oregon. I intend to establish a research component in all of my programs designed to provide both qualitative and quantitative measures of any changes in empathic capacity resulting from our teaching. Irrespective of my future research findings, the Oregon Department of Corrections has invited my program to begin teaching to prison staff; it seems they have noticed such positive results in those attending our classes they want to make our classes available for prison staff as well.

This exploration’s findings have also aroused my curiosity about why turning toward pain is so difficult. Omer states that, “Shame is being’s call to belonging.” As a result of this exploration I am now convinced that empathy mediates the return to belonging. And yet if empathy can so easily mediate return, why do people struggle so hard to heal and grow? I am interested in exploring the resistances that keep us from returning to our soulfullness, and to our natural heritage of beingness. I want to examine and understand what resists our individual and collective returning to lives lived with fullness. Marianne Williamson said that it not our darkness but our light that we are the most afraid of; I am astonished hearing this, and deeply wonder why this should be so.
However, I do believe that everything anyone says or does is an attempt, however unconscious or unskilled, to meet their authentic human needs and to thrive in their lives. With this in mind, I would like to turn myself now toward understanding what operates to restrict soul work. 62
APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

ETHICS APPLICATION

ETHICS REVIEW

1. Participant Population. Ten participants will be recruited in order to accommodate possible attrition; ideally seven will participate fully. Participants will be informed that I am longing to understand why men seem to commit the vast majority of violence in the world, and that I am hoping to gain understanding in order to contribute to community peace. Participants will be English-speaking males over 18 years of age related to the communities described below that do not have pre-existing personal or professional relationships with the other participants. Chosen participants will send me three written descriptions of having used verbal and/or physical violence with others and will agree to tell a story about one of these incidents during the exploration. Participants will be asked to commit to all of the time requested. Participants will be recruited from communities, such as the Portland Oregon Waldorf Schools and City Repair Project, composed of those acting through both alternative education and city planning to promote community interactions and awareness. The community meetings of both organizations have been anecdotally reported to be very, and painfully, difficult for those attending.

2. Participant Procedures. I will advertise for participants by posting flyers in two Waldorf Schools in the Portland Oregon area, and on the community bulletin board of the City Repair Project also of Portland Oregon. Participants will be given my email address and local phone number as contact points. Enough time will be allotted at the beginning of the first meeting for participants to read and sign the Informed Consent form and to ask questions they might have about the exploration.

3. Informed Consent. Participants will be asked to arrive at the first meeting ten minutes prior to our start time. Upon arrival participants will be asked to read and sign the Informed Consent forms. As part of the introduction to the exploration participants will be reminded of the confidentiality portion of the informed consent agreement and will be asked if anyone objects to its terms. Clarification of what is meant by confidentiality will be provided upon request prior to beginning the exploration. Participants will be assured that I, my co-researcher, and any transcriber that I might use will hold their identities completely confidential and protect recorded material in a locked cabinet in my office.

4. Risks. The experience of shame and its’ possibly associated material such as anger and depression can be quite debilitating and may require intervention and tending. Recalling and telling three stories of personal failure, especially events that led to physical or verbal violence, may evoke deep pain, especially if participants have not addressed these issues in the past. Participants may also feel further pain and shame when
drawing, sculpting, and participating in the empathy exercises, especially if they compare their efforts with others.

5. **Safeguards.** I have offered similar and more intensive experiences to over one thousand men in a variety of settings including prisons, jails, and Batterer’s Intervention Programs and, as a result, have grounding and experience with tending to material similarly evoked. I will request that participants contact their private therapists should they require support outside of the time provided during the explorations, and participants will also be provided with the contact number for the local crisis line. Participants will engage in Council practice at the end of each exploration providing a venue for expression and integration of unresolved material that may have been evoked during the day’s activities. Additionally, group processes themselves provide some relief because of the experience of realizing that you are not alone, of having a common experience with others. Participants will be assured during the introduction on the first day that they can withdraw from the process any time they feel overwhelmed and that they will receive support from the research team for what has been evoked. Participants will be informed in the Informed Consent form that they can choose how deeply to engage.

6. **Benefits.** Violence has a huge social cost; California alone spends over 8.5 billion dollars a year on incarceration, more than on public education. I believe that any intervention that supports reduction of violence will serve to make our country a more peaceful place to raise our children in safety and happiness. Because empathy training has an observed effect on violence (recidivism of men graduating from my classes was less than three percent), any effort made to understand the observed efficacy of empathy in violence reduction could contribute to our ability to reduce violence in our country, and by potentially increasing the ability of men to turn toward shame, possibly reduce violence worldwide. Individual participants may be inspired to seek further support to build the capacities necessary to address the issues they bring to the exploration.

7. **After the Study.** Participants will be provided with a summary of the Learnings Chapter that will be mailed to participants upon approval by the dissertation committee. The summarized results of this study will be submitted to the emerging Journal of Imaginal Psychology for possible publication. Summarized results will influence the emphasis and completion of a curriculum for Batterer’s Intervention Programs that I have been developing, and is currently being distributed free to all who request it. Following this exploration I will offer men’s groups addressing the contributions of shame and the need for belonging in violence.

**APPENDIX 2**

**CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE**

**Evoking Experience**

**Prior to Meeting One**

- Participants were asked to speak to me on the phone about three experiences of
having either verbally and/or physically assaulted someone

Meeting One

- Participants report the current condition of their challenged relationships
- Participants view collectively the “before-empathy” drawings
- Participants tell the story of their aggression
- Participants recap their story
- Collectively view “after-empathy” drawings
- View co-researcher’s collage
- Hear co-researcher’s summations in a story
- Hear poem, *Wild Geese* by Mary Oliver

Expressing Experience

Prior to Meeting

- Participants will describe three events where they expressed verbal and/or physical aggression during a phone conversation with the principal researcher

Meeting One

- Participants draw what emerges in them remembering aggressive acts
- Participants speak what emerges when viewing the collective “before-empathy” images
- Journal reactions to individual stories

  Participants engage in empathic dialog with the co-researchers

- Participants draw what is emerging in them concerning the remembered aggressive event after receiving empathy
- Participants speak what emerges when viewing the collective “after-empathy” images
- Participants speak what has stood out for them during the day’s exercises
- Participants speak what emerges when viewing co-researcher’s collage
- Participants journal what emerges after hearing co-researcher’s story
- Sculpt clay figure
- Place clay figure
- Speak for clay figure
- Participants speak what is emerging in them resulting from the day’s exercises, especially those moments that stood out

Interpreting Experience

Meeting One

- Participants name their before and after drawings
- Participants speak what has stood out for them following viewing the collages and hearing the story
- Participants name their sculptures and speak what the sculptures would have said if they had voices
- Participants speak what is emerging in them resulting from the day’s exercises, especially those moments that stood out

Integrating Experience

Meeting One

- Participants speak how they have been affected by the day’s exercises, especially moments that stood out for them
- Participants view co-researcher’s collage and hear their story
- Participants engage in reflexive dialog with the victim of their aggression imagined to be sitting in an empty chair
- Participants speak their responses to the two days of exercises focusing on moments that were especially important to them

Following the exploration
• Participants receive a Learnings Summary upon approval of the DPC

• The learnings of this exploration were incorporated into a curriculum currently used to teach empathic capacity and communication skills to inmates in Oregon Prisons

• I have started a men’s group focusing on how shame, the need for belonging, and empathy contribute to reducing male violence

**APPENDIX 3**

**CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE**

Prior to Meeting One

I. Evoking – Expressing sequence

A. Obtain three spoken stories about having verbally or physically assaulted someone during an attempt to accomplish a goal.

1. Request that each selected participant tell me about the three events described above to me on the phone one week prior to Meeting One

**Participant Meeting One (09:00 – 3:30)**

I. Informed Consent, and Orientation (09:00 – 09:20)

A. Obtain each participant’s signed *Informed Consent* form (10 minutes)

1. Greet each participant, show each to their seats (5 minutes)

2. Request each participant’s *Informed Consent* form (2 minutes)

3. Once forms are obtained review guidelines on participation and confidentiality (1 minute)

   a. Participation is at all times voluntary

   b. Researchers will keep all identities confidential and participants are asked to do the same

• Respond to any questions participants might have (2 minutes)

B. Orientation (2 minutes)
1. Researcher provides general information
   a. Space (bathrooms, exits, water and tea)
   b. Schedule (breaks, ending time, etc.)
   c. General overview of procedures involved during the meeting

II. Introductions (09:20 – 9:40)
   A. Each participant expresses a three-minute introduction that includes their name and what is the current condition of the relationship in which they acted aggressively (20 minutes)

III. Evoking-Expressing Sequence (9:40 - 10:00)
   A. Art-making: Participants draw their reactions to remembering one of their aggressive acts. (15 minutes)
   B. Speaking: Participants express words or sounds that are evoked while walking around and collectively viewing the art that has been placed on the floor (5 minutes)
   C. Break (10:00 – 10:15)
   D. Story telling and journaling: Participants will tell their stories and then journal about how they are affected for three minutes following each presentation (30 minutes)

III. Evoking – Expressing - Interpreting Sequence (10:30 – 12:30)
   A. Story telling: Each participant provides a brief recap of his story
   B. Receiving empathy: participants engage in an empathy dialog with the researchers and journal how they have been affected following each dialog
   C. Drawing exercise: Participants draw what their current state is in relationship to their story (15 minutes)
   E. Speaking: Participants express what is evoked in them by collective viewing of the second drawings (5 minutes)
   F. Speaking: In a circle participants share their reactions concerning
participating in the day’s exercises focusing on moments that stood out for them (60 minutes)

G. Lunch (one hour)

Co-researcher Meeting One (12:30 – 1:30)

I. Evoking – Expressing – Interpreting – Integrating sequence (12:30pm – 1:30pm)

A. Speaking: Co-researchers express what emerges when viewing the before/after drawings generated by participants (5 minutes)

B. Journaling: Co-researchers read the before/after journaling generated by participants and journal their responses to each. (10 minutes)

C. Journaling: Co-researchers list key moments they experienced during the exploration (10 minutes)

D. Dialog: Co-researchers compare their lists of key moments looking for convergence and divergence (10 minutes)

E. Art making: Co-researchers generate a collage made from participant’s before/after drawings (10 minutes)

F. Story making: Using consensus co-researchers craft a story about the participant’s art and journaling (10 minutes)

G. Closing

Participant Meeting One (1:30 – 3:30)

I. Evoking-Expressing Sequence (1:30-2:00)

A. Seat participants, silent reflection (3 minutes)

B. Speaking: Participants circle co-researcher’s collage and speak what comes up for them (10 minutes)

C. Story telling: Co-researcher’s tell their story (5 minutes)

D. Journaling: Participants journal what comes up for them hearing co-researcher’s story (5 minutes)
II. Expressing-Interpreting Sequence (2:00-2:35)

A. Art making: Participants sculpt and name a representative figure (15 minutes)

B. Speaking: Participants speak what sculpture would have said if it had a voice (10 minutes)

C. Placing art piece: Participants place their sculptures in relationship to each other’s figures (10 minutes)

B. Break (15 minutes)

III. Interpreting-Integrating Sequence (2:35-3:30)

A. Speaking: In a circle participants will speak how they have been affected by the exploration especially key moments (15 minutes)

B. Speaking: Participants will engage in an empty chair reflexive dialog with the victim of their aggression expressing what they were hoping at the time would have been the outcome of their interaction (20 minutes)

C. Closing (10 minutes)
   a. Remind Participants of confidentiality agreement
   b. Remind Participants about the Learnings Summary
      i. Learnings Summary will be sent upon approval of the DPC
   c. Read Poem, *Wild Geese* by Mary Oliver, thank participants for attending

Co-researcher Meeting Two (3:40 – 5:00)

I. Evoking – Expressing – Interpreting – Integrating sequence (3:30 – 5:00)

A. Speaking: Co-researchers express what emerges when viewing the sculptures created by participants (10 minutes)

B. Journaling: Co-researchers read the journaling generated by participants and journal their responses to each. (20 minutes)

C. Journaling: Co-researchers list key moments they experienced during the exploration (10 minutes)
D. Dialog: Co-researchers compare their lists of key moments looking for convergence and divergence (10 minutes)

E. Focal space to reinforce agreement and explore differences in interpretation (20 minutes)

F. Discussion of the organizing principles emerging from the exploration (20 minutes)

G. Closing

APPENDIX 4

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent Form

Frederic L. Sly ● 503-953-0333

To the Participant in this Research:

You are invited to participate in a study on the contributions of gender conditioning to violence. The study’s purpose is to better understand the effects of internalized beliefs on subsequent behavior.

Participation will involve telling a story about your life, drawing, participating in a group exercise, sculpting with modeling clay, and journaling. This exploration will take place at the Friends Meeting Hall, 4312 Stark St., Portland, Oregon. Participation will include attending two group meetings the first of which will be seven hours long, the second is four hours long. Ten-minute breaks will be provided during the meetings. Each meeting will be audio and video recorded for later transcription. Meetings will take place on one weekend, Saturday and Sunday.

For protection of your privacy, all recordings and transcripts will be kept confidential and your identity will be protected. All documents and recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in Fred Sly’s home office and will only be available to a co-researcher and a professional transcriber. In any publication that may result from this exploration your identity will be altered to ensure your anonymity.

This study is of a research nature and may offer no direct benefit to you. The published findings, however, may be useful to all those longing for a more peaceful world, especially men, and may benefit our understanding of and ability to address male violence. This study is designed to minimize potential risks to you. However, some procedures such as telling the story of a past painful event to the assembled group may touch sensitive areas for some people and it is possible that you may experience fear,
shame, anger, and depressive symptoms as a result. If at any time you develop any concerns or questions, I will make every effort to discuss these with you. I, the researcher, however, cannot provide psychotherapy, but at your request or using my personal judgment, will facilitate referrals to an appropriate mental health professional, if such need were to arise.

If you decide to participate in this research, you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time and for any reason. Please note as well that I, the researcher, may need to terminate your participation from the study at any point and for any reason.

If you have any questions or concerns you may call me at 503-953-0333 Monday through Friday 08:00am until 06:00pm, email me with your questions at any time at: fsly@pacific.net or you may contact the Dissertation Director at the Institute of Imaginal Studies, 47 Sixth Street, Petaluma, CA 94952, telephone: 707-765-1836. The Institute of Imaginal Studies assumes no responsibility for any psychological or physical injury resulting from this research.

I, ______________________________________, consent to participate in the study of the nature of male violence. I have had this study explained to me by Frederic L. Sly. Any questions of mine about this research have been answered to my satisfaction, and I have received a copy of this consent form. My participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

___________________________________                 ______________________
Participant’s Signature    Date

APPENDIX 5

EXPLORATION NOTICE

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

What: Violence is a plague in our culture, and men perpetrate the vast majority of the violence observed. Over 96 percent of those in jails and prisons are men, and any effort made to understand and address the conditions and factors that support male violence could have significant social benefit. The results of this inquiry will be submitted to an academic journal of psychology for possible publication.

Who: Men over the age of 18 years who are inspired and willing to participate.
Participants may have challenging and/or painful experiences during this research and
every effort will be made to support those willing to participate.

**When:** Participants must commit to attend one day-long meeting held on a weekend. Meetings will occur on Saturdays, beginning at 09:00, ending at approximately 4:00pm.

**Where:** All meetings will take place at St. David of Wales Episcopal Church, 2800 SE Harrison St., Portland, Oregon. 97214

**How:** Interested? Please contact Fred Sly at 503-953-033 Monday through Friday between 08:00am and 06:00pm, or email Fred at fsly@pacific.net Fred will return your call and interview you over the phone. No compensation of any kind will be offered for participation.

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**APPENDIX 6**

**SCREENING PHONE SCRIPT**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q: Hello, may I speak to _______ please? This is Fred Sly returning your inquiry concerning possible participation in my research project. I have a few questions I would like to pose to you to aid me in selecting participants; do you have about ten minutes right now to talk?

Q: How old are you?____________, When is your birthday?_______.

Q: What drew you to this study? ______________________________

Q: Would you be willing to tell me in a separate conversation before the exploration three remembered instances when you physically and/or verbally assaulted someone during an interaction with them?____________________

Q: As part of this exploration would you be willing to tell one of these stories to the other participants ________________?

Q: If you are chosen to participate I would want assurance that you have complete freedom of expression without concern that your words might affect your working and/or your private life. Would you be willing to tell me where you work and give me the names of your supervisors and those co-workers that you work with on a regular basis? ________________________________

Q: Is there anyone that you would definitely not want to be part of this exploration?

Q: Are you free to participate during the published dates and times that are (read DPC approved dates, times, and locations)__________________?

Q: Would you be willing to commit to attend the meetings for the full time involved and to participate fully______________________________?

Q: Would you be willing to agree that the results of this exploration can be published if your identity is protected?____________________

Q: Thank you for answering these questions. Is there anything you would like to ask of me concerning this research project?____________________
Q: I will finish my screening process by (DPC approved date not more than two weeks following this or any initial phone contact) and will contact you by letter informing you of my decision. What is your mailing address?

Thank you for your time today.

Notes about the call:

APPENDIX 7

ACCEPTANCE LETTER

To: Participant
Street address
Town and state; zip code

Date

From: Fred Sly MA
2800 SE Harrison St.
Portland, Oregon 97214
(503) 953-0333
fsly@pacific.net

RE: Participation in upcoming study

Dear Participant, I am inviting you to participate in my study. To confirm your participation please phone or send me an email message by (one week prior to session one). If I do not hear from you by that date another applicant will be invited to participate in your place. I will mail you additional information and requests to complete once I receive your acceptance message.

The exploration will begin at 09:00am and will end by approximately 3:30pm that day. Please arrive ten minutes early in order to get settled please bring your completed Informed Consent form to the first session.

We will meet at 2800 SE Harrison St., in Portland, Oregon, 97214, in Room 10 of the St. David of Wales Episcopal Church. Park in the church parking lot and enter the red back door. Go downstairs to your left and enter Room 10, which is the first door on your left in the downstairs hallway. For your comfort please wear casual clothes and be prepared for drawing using oil pastels and pencils, and to sculpt using modeling clay. Tea and snacks will be provided during breaks.

I am pleased that you are willing to participate in this study and look forward to meeting you in person.

Cordially,

Frederic L. Sly
APPENDIX 8

NON-INCLUSION LETTER

To: Name                                      Date
Street Address
Town, State, ZIP

From: Fred Sly MA
2800 SE Harrison St.
Portland, Oregon 97214
(503) 953-0333
fsly@pacific.net

RE: Participation in upcoming study

Dear Applicant, you were not chosen to participate in my study, however I am very grateful that you applied for and were willing to participate.

Your not being chosen for participation in no way reflects on you as a person; I am exploring a specific characteristic and have established very narrow criteria in order to assist my exploration; others fit these criteria more closely.

Again, I am grateful for your willingness.

Cordially,

Fred Sly

APPENDIX 9

MEETING SCRIPTS

Exploration Script

(To arriving individuals) “Hello. What is your name? Welcome. Have you brought your completed informed consent form? Would you be willing to write your name on this nametag and wear it? Here is your seat.”

(Ring Bell: to the assembled group) “Hello everyone, my name is Fred Sly; this is Steve Woolf who will supporting today’s enquiry. Are there any questions about the Informed
Consent Form that you might like to ask? Please remember that participation is at all times voluntary and that you may leave the session at any time. Additionally, I may ask you to leave the session at any time. I would like to remind you of our confidentiality agreement. It is fine with me if you share in general terms with others what we are doing here however, what individuals say and/or any information about participant’s identities are to be kept is strict confidentiality; is there anyone here that believes that you cannot keep this agreement? (If yes, I ask the person to leave) I would like to remind you that our sessions are being both video and audio recorded, that these recordings will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office, and will only be available to Steve, myself, and a professional transcriber.”

“I would now like to attend to the details of being here in this space. Bathrooms are across the hall; in order not to affect the exploration please go during breaks if at all possible. There are exits down the stairs using the front or back doors. Water, tea, and snacks are on the side table. This morning there will be a break at 09:50, lunch will be at 12:30, and the afternoon break will be at 2:20. We will close at 3:30 pm today. Today’s session will involve telling a story, drawing, journaling, sculpting, and participation in group exercises. Some general agreements I would like are these: please do not respond to another person’s sharing, please do not speak when another person is speaking, and please leave a moment between each person’s sharing. Further, in order to stay within our time limits please end with the sentence you are speaking when the bell rings announcing the end of your time; you will be given a one-minute warning prior to the end of your time. Any questions?”

“To begin today’s enquiry, please introduce yourself to the group by telling us your name and the current condition of the relationship in which the event occurred that you will be telling a story about. You each have two minutes to introduce yourselves.”

“I would like to continue today’s session by asking each of you to remember the event that you told us the current condition of at the beginning of the session, and to draw what comes up for you remembering that situation using the paper, pastels, and pencils provided. Please do so silently. (After about ten minutes) Please begin to wrap up your drawing, and as part of completion please name your drawing and write its’ name somewhere on the drawing. Please ensure that it can be read. (At 15 minutes) Please stop now. (When everyone has finished) Now please place your drawings on the floor in front of you touching each other’s in a circle. (When completed) Lets now circle counterclockwise around the drawings. (Letting one complete transit of the circle occur) Now let one or two words and/or sounds emerge in you in response to the collected drawings and speak them into the circle as they occur to you. This does not need to be done in any particular order, just as they arise. Any more? Please take your seats.”

“To continue I would like each of you to tell the story of the event that you made a drawing about and told us earlier about the current condition of the relationship. You will have six minutes for telling your story and I will notify you when one minute remains so that you can begin to summarize your story. When each person finishes I would like each of you to write what is coming up in you after hearing what each person has shared; we will provide three minutes after each story for writing. Please do so silently. I would like a volunteer to start and then we will continue counterclockwise around the circle. Who would like to begin? (When all have shared) Thank you. We will now take a 15 minute break.”

“I would now like to continue our exercise by engaging each of you in dialog about the
event you shared with us. Please give a brief recap of your story as a way to begin.”
(When all of the empathy dialogs have completed.) “Now again please use the art
materials provided to draw what is coming up in you right now resulting from our dialog
about the event you told a story about. Please again name your drawing making sure to
make the name readable. (After 15 minutes) Now place your drawings in a circle on the
floor and walk around them letting them affect us. (After one complete transit of the
circle) Now as you view the drawings let any words or sounds emerge and be spoken into
the circle. You do not have to do this in order nor one at a time; speak them as they arise.
“Our last exercise of this morning’s session is for you to speak about how you have been
affected by today’s exercises so far. We especially would like to hear what has stood out
for you as most important during our time together, what moments spoke to you, and how
has it been for you to participate so far today. One person can go first; we will proceed
clockwise from there. Thank you, now let’s take a lunch break. Please be back by
1:30.”

(Ring Bell) ”Hello, welcome to afternoon session. Lets take five minutes of
silence. Now please stand and circle around the collage that Steve and I have assembled
in response to your drawings, journaling, and what you have spoken during the morning.
(After two complete transits have been completed) Now, as in the past, as you continue to
circle let words and sounds that want to be expressed as a result of this viewing come
forth into the room; express them when you are moved to do so. (When they seem to
have finished) Is there more? Thank you.”

“Now I would like to tell you a story, it is a story that Steve and I created after
reviewing this mornings results. (I read the story) Now, please journal what is coming up
in you hearing the story we have told, and viewing the collage. (After five minutes)
Thank you.”

“We will now provide each of you with a block of modeling clay and a board on
which to sculpt it. Please sculpt a figure that represents your experience of participating
in this exploration. (After about 20 minutes) Now please place this figure in the middle of
the circle in relationship to the other figures, place it where it feels right to you even if
you don’t have a clear reason for doing so. Thank you. Now beginning with whoever is
willing to go first, give this figure a name, speak the name of this figure into the circle and
tell us what this figure would say if it could speak. We will proceed counterclockwise
from there. Thank you. We will now take a break; please return at 2:20.” (Sculptures are
photographed from four directions in their formation during the break)

“Welcome back from your break. I have placed an empty chair in the middle of
the room. Imagine that in the chair is the person in your story. Please express to that
person what you were hoping would have happened in your interaction instead of what
did happen. You will have four minutes each and I will notify you when you have one
minute remaining. (When all have completed) Thank you.”

“Now we would like to hear how participating in this inquiry has affected you:
what are you taking home with you? What has stood out for you? You will have four
minutes each for this part and I will notify you when you have one minute remaining. I
would like a volunteer to begin and as before we will proceed counterclockwise from
there. (When everyone is complete) Is there more? Thank you.”

“Our investigation is now complete. I want to remind you to protect the identities
of those that have participated in this process. If you choose, relate to others how you
were affected by it and generally what we did together, nothing more. I will send a
summary of the learnings derived from this exploration to each of you once my dissertation committee has approved the summary. If you want to please take your sculptures home with you. Treat them carefully for the next few days until the clay has hardened enough to protect them. Also please treat yourselves gently over the next few days as well.”

“In closing I would like to offer you the following poem: (Read, Wild Geese). Thank you all for attending, I am grateful for your participation.”

Story Script

“Once upon a time in a land not so far away, there was a baby born in a house that was much like the other houses near by, to parents much like the other parents, who had jobs much like the jobs of the other parents, and who did much the same things as did those in the other houses when they weren’t working. The child grew up looking like the other children, acting like the other children, going to the same schools as the other children, and doing the same things the other children did. There was, however, a difference. For even though the child looked, acted, and thought the same things as did the other children, this child felt uncomfortable, uneasy, vaguely unsettled, and there didn’t seem to be a good reason for it.”

“The child began to look around the neighborhood and town trying to identify what might be contributing to these uneasy feelings, but was never able to locate anything that seemed to stand out as a clear explanation. Finally the child decided, ‘I must just be weird!’, and, even though it was uncomfortable and the child decided to never stop looking for explanations, the child decided to just live with it.”

“One day when the child, now older, was again looking for explanations, the child noticed another person walking around the town and neighborhoods, someone who seemed to be searching for something as well. ‘What are you looking for asked the child?’ ‘I don’t really know,’ came the reply. ‘I have been feeling uneasy and like I have been missing something all of my life, so even though I have given up hope of ever really finding an explanation for how I am feeling, I keep looking anyway.’ The child said, ‘We seem to be the same in some way; I don’t know why I am looking either. Maybe if we band together our search will be more successful.’ ‘Agreed,’ said the other, and they went back to their search. Gradually they found more who were searching and their band grew. However, no matter how hard they searched, they never ever found what it was that was making them uneasy.”

APPENDIX 10

SUMMARY OF THE DATA

Name: Ben from “A” Date of Exploration: 01/23/2010

Current state of the relationship: wife, remain married.

Art 1 Title: Desperate Scream for Love
Participant’s Story: “Oh boy! Well my story is about sex and intimacy in my marriage of over 30 years. It’s been a long, slow process. When I first met my wife our relationship was highly charged sexually which is really important for me because I was and still am a very passionate man and for me sex is a way to feel emotionally connected to the woman I love. It’s not just a physical release it’s a huge emotional deal for me. And, uhh, over the course of our marriage there has been a slow erosion of not just sex but the tenderness that is associated with it. I’m talking about the non-sexual moments of tenderness. My wife comes from a background of people who do not express their feelings so she did not get a lot of emotional support from her family so as a result we sort of got into a situation over time where she would be less communicative about what she was experiencing, and me, out of frustration would continue to put pressure on her to have sex because it became almost a trophy or a Pavlov’s dog kind of thing where the only time we had sex was when I instigated it. And that went on year after year and it sort of got to the point where she was really not happy and finally found her voice to be able to say it and it caught me by surprise because I did not know how unhappy she was. And, uhh, I never forced myself on her but I certainly put pressure on her to occasionally have sex because it was so important for me. And, uhh, we finally got to kind of a bad place and decided to seek some counseling so we spent a lot of time and it was very slow. We worked very hard both of us to understand where we were coming from, both of our feelings and I learned a lot about the things that she had not been expressing to me but the biggest thing was that she really needed to feel trust in me about a lot of things before she could feel comfortable even wanting to have sex with me. That basically she had lost that desire because she couldn’t trust me to be there for her. It flabbergasted me because I had this pre-conception of myself as being a gentle caring good man certainly committed to her, our marriage, our children. There was so much good in our relationship and our life that I just could not believe it; there was a huge disconnect. Well what the incident was, was that I just became so frustrated, it happened a lot for many years and for a while there when we were doing counseling it kind of calmed down but I became so frustrated with her lack of tenderness, her lack of desire to have sex, or even to work to find a way to explore why she didn’t have these feelings, at least to experiment with them, I just one day I was upstairs, it was Sunday morning, she was downstairs getting coffee or tea and, uhh, I just got up out of bed at a boiling point because we hadn’t had sex for a month or something. I just was telling myself that I really need to get laid, I was just so sick of this bullshit! She doesn’t even try. So I went downstairs in my bathrobe, I was over hoping that she was going to come back upstairs and I said, “Can’t you even consider the possibility of watching sexy movies or reading a sexy book. Of trying to find a way to stimulate yourself so maybe you could get aroused and want to have sex, to be proactive about it! The moment I said it I regretted it. It was so the opposite of everything that we had been talking about for the last year plus in counseling, trying to understand the meaning. I just ran over all of that with the frustration, I just said to her, “Just do something to get yourself horny so that you can fuck me”, basically. Then it was not an explosion of violence or anything but for me it was kind of a cry for release. And for her to be proactive about trying to solve the problem because she had been just so passive and she had all the power, I had no power in this thing. And, uhh, she just looked at me
and said, Well, if that’s the way you feel then this marriage is over.” She said, “Enough is enough.” She said, “If you can say that after the work we have done then I feel that there is no hope.” And, uhhh, it was like for me it was a huge panic. Having said it I regretted it because of the it was born of huge frustration and pent up energy. What it did was open up this whole, dark abyss of my marriage coming to an end at that moment and she actually threatened to move out the next day as a result of what I had said so that was the cataclysm that (he gestures toward his drawing) was serious because first of all I loved this woman, so much positive things had come out of her womb and our life together, out of our home and our friendship and I still didn’t feel ready to let it go but she was. And that hurt. And, uhh, That was the darkest moment in my life in the past twenty years. The realization that she was ready to make the decision to end our marriage as a result of the words I said. And ahh, its taken a lot to come back from that day. So it wasn’t a physical outburst it was more of a frustrational outburst. The irony was that it almost took that kind of event for us to find a way to make it move beyond it to start building the trust. (Sighs)”

**Participant’s Journaling after his story:** “I want love – I don’t want to hurt you – but I need you to love yourself and me and us. I am OK – to want tenderness. The abyss is frightful, this is very difficult to talk about.”

**Journaling after other participant’s stories:**

**Name:** Sal’s story: “I am patient. I really am not patient, I want to squeeze you until you cooperate. Rage, out of control. Shame, shame, shame. I am not like this. My children are perfect – they are scarred for life – I am afraid, sad, ashamed, surprised – I am not this person. Don’t tell anyone, my wife will not ever love me again. Shame, shame, shame. I do love you children, don’t let this ruin that bond.

**Name:** After Ted’s Story: “I am you – a good man who can be in a place of dark shame – not believing it is me, not believing it is happening, feeling so apart from my wife and children. I am a good man – but I have lost control of myself – don’t judge me kids; how did this happen?”

**Empathy dialog:** (About Seth’s story) Ben, “Are we allowed to offer comments or questions?” Fred, “No.” Ben nods, ‘OK’ in acceptance of my response. Fred, “At least not right in this moment.” Ben nods ‘yes.’ Ben, “So, ahhh, quick description was, ahh, a long history of deteriorating intimacy with my wife, doing some serious good work in couples counseling and then half way through it just blurt out a two-dimensional solution to a three-dimensional problem that set the whole thing back a year. It was about trust.” Fred, Were you wanting her to know how important that quality of connection is for you, to be sexual?” Ben, noks ‘yes.’ Fred, “Has it been frustrating to you because it seems that she hasn’t heard that?” Ben, “She doesn’t believe it because her experience is different. Sex to her is just sex. There is no emotional connection for her at all. She doesn’t believe that it could be that way because it doesn’t connect for her.” Fred, “Are you wanting her to respect you for who you are, how you operate, and what it true for you?” Ben, “Yeah, and that my passion is part of who I am as a person and a part of the joyful part of me that I want to share.” Fred, “Do you want to be seen and accepted for
that part?” Ben, “Yeah, and I do not want to have to smother it. That’s one of the big things, for years I have had to hold that in abeyance because it’s offensive to her.” Fred, “And you long to be fully in the relationship with all parts of you.” Ben, “uh huh” (nods yes). Fred, “And you want all those things to be OK in your relationship?” Ben, “Uh huh, I want to be myself and I want to be close to her. I don’t want to have to keep being in two worlds.” Fred, “You are wanting to find a way to hold both of those, holding her for everything she is and you to be able to show up as you and to find a way to relate. Was your frustration around not being able to create that place?” Ben, “uh huh” (nods yes). Fred, “Have you been feeling hopeless about ever being able to get there?” Ben, “At that moment, yes. And impatient. It was taking too long to get beyond the past and to start focusing on the future.” Fred, “Were you wanting to be seen for how much energy and time you were putting into it and that you were frustrated because of how much time it was taking?” Ben, Nods ‘yes’. Fred, “And it not happening in the way that you were hoping it would were you despairing of ever being seen and accepted for yourself?” Ben, “I was despairing because a lot of other things in her life were not being discussed that affected our relationship and as a result was destroying our relationship. And meanwhile I was despairing of my ability to be patient in that context because I was holding so much. I needed some hope for the future, occasionally reassurance.” Fred, “Were you starting to feel desperate, like the house of cards was crumbling?” Ben, “Well no. That happened after. That things were caving in to a level that was terrifying.” Steve, “On the one hand really wanting to express your self and on the other hand feeling like I shouldn’t do this.” Ben, “The act of expressing myself is pushing her away. And I am desperately wanting her to be closer and connected so I think that it’s a Catch 22 situation, and how to juxtapose those two without losing her, without ending the marriage.” Steve, “Right, yeah” Ben, “The positive and the negative; it was a no-win situation for me. Yet knowing that the only way it’s going to get off the ground is for me to deal with my own issues, not her, you can’t make other people change. Whether she changes or not I can change myself. And to know that a change I can make is to be bolder and more direct about my needs and my feelings. But knowing that that’s likely to cause huge rifts and possibly end the marriage that brings me to my deepest fear. So, and that is what happened (gestures toward his first drawing).” Fred, “A fear that anything that you put out is going to push her away.” Ben, “Yup.” Fred, “Wanting a way to invite her closer that will work for her.” Ben, “uh huh, and she wasn’t working as hard as hard to preserve it as I was. But not out of meanness or anything. The irony in all this was that she was saying that, ‘Well, I need to end this marriage so that you can go experience your sexuality in another relationship.’ And I didn’t want that, it wasn’t just about sex. And that’s the crux of it.” Fred, “You really wanted it to work for both of you?” Ben, “uh huh.” Fred, “And you really wanted your relationship to grow and deepen?” Ben, “Uh huh, and be authentic for both of us.” Fred, “And you want to be able to talk about the hard stuff.” Ben, “uh huh.” Fred, “And not have that conversation threaten your relationship.” Ben, “And not only with a couple’s councilor in the room.” Ben pauses. Fred, “Is there more?” Ben, “Only that what I have seen over and over again is when I do take a risk to say what I feel even though I am petrified that it will push her away, ultimately it seems to have the opposite affect, that
its my willingness to take that risk that led to the kind of changes that we are making today. And its great! I know it psychologically but it is the hardest thing in the world to do.” Fred, “Are you wanting more skill to be able to do it gracefully?” Ben, “Yeah! Its not just skill, it’s listening both ways. That’s what it kind of came down to in the end that she needs to be able to communicate better and I need to communicate better and that has made a huge difference in our lives.”

**Journaling after empathy:** “I am happy and sad. Happy because I see some hope and peace in some of these changes and sad because I see sadness in one – we don’t always make things work out – sometimes they break no matter what you do. I feel hope for myself and my own situation for the 1st time – in a long time. I see me opening up from a place of light shown on her darkness. Together we are taking small risks to connect more and it feels good and warm and makes me calm. These other men are good men who I am happy to encounter – most men are good, why are we so destructive?”

**Sounds for Art 2:** Yeahhhhhhhhhhh Pop, Pop, tick a pop tuu, wooosh, wooooooo, ooooOOOO, tick a ticka , hum ba deede dum dum, Clasps self in a hug. Sobs viewing peter’s Burrrrrrrrrr ahhgh Pops tongue

**Art 2 Title:** Tender Hope

**Expressing what has arisen up to this point in the exploration:** Ben asks the other participants if they would like to have lunch together.

**Sounds for Collage:** (Looking at his own drawings) “Uhh, its different seeing them put together.”

**Journaling after viewing the collage:** “Oh we humans are so different and so the same, simple but complex – full of color but also only white light. Unpredictable, unique and joyful, and afraid of all the same things. The more I see inside you the more I love you and see our similarities and the less afraid I am – and the more hopeful I become. Oh – we humans damn destructive yet sublimely capable of so much goodness and joy. And that apple – what could it be about? – The pivot point of all our emotional personal journeys and dramatics – Fruit? Knowledge? Balance? A joke? 3 dimensional axis? The shininess of the apple against the patterned dull carpet as the background for our colorful personal ruminations. Ah – Hoo!”

**Journaling after Fred’s Story:** “What came up for me in the story, recognition – of feelings of not being right – not being complete – leads to seeking always to find ways to be complete – people, experiences, drugs, eating – finding kindred spirits always makes me feel better – and realization that there are out they’re out there helps me relax and be more at peace. But most importantly, that I don’t have to leave all my current relationships to be whole.”

**Sculpture Name.** White Light
**What sculpture would say:** Moving his tongue in and out of his mouth: “Thaa ah, thaa, ah, thaa, ah, thaa, ah, thaa, ah. Cacophony of crazy, crazy disheartened sounds in voices and languages in detail that drones, uhhhhhhhhhhh. Its real subtle. And every once in while the cacophony pauses for breath in the hummmmmmmmm, and you realize that the sound is coming from all three of the apparently copasetic creature and you notice much more harmony than you realize. (Question from Fred: is there anything it would want us to know?) That we are all white light, or gray clay inside. The same shit, and the same goodness, that the most important thing is what we have in common, what we hold dear together, anything else is just a distraction. Let’s have a party we are all clay!”

**Sculpture placement:** Ben said: “I want them all close.” Ben said to Ted, “I am glad that you came today even though your back hurts. You’re coming has meant a lot to me because we all have more support.”

**Empty Chair dialog:** “(Wife’s name), (compressed sigh, haah!) Its hard for me to say this because I’m afraid that the act of telling you how I feel will drive you away. I love you so much. One of the ways that my love manifests itself is through desire to make love with you. And I know that over the last many years of our relationship that you have fallen out of love with me and have lost that physical attraction. So I am struggling with that, on one hand I want to find a way for you to feel about me the way I feel about you, and on the other hand I struggle with this great physical passion that I have wanting to be close to you physically because sex is part of the way that I connect emotionally, its not just about physical stuff. So I am just torn between the two, wanting to be close and not wanting to push you away. I just want to tell you that it is really difficult for me to not be able to be close to you physically, it means so much to me and I want to find a way that we can care about each other and be tender with each other without it consuming me or consuming our marriage. And I want you to try harder about you and me, to do whatever it takes. And I want you to understand that I have been going through hell not being with you, and I think that there is too much good stuff between us for us to be in a final place. (Steve nods his head). And I love you so much and yes, I want to fuck you all the time too as an expression of my love. I think that you are an absolutely beautiful woman. Can I give you a hug?” (Laughter from the group).

**Speaking how they have been affected by participating:** “I started the day with a lot of preconceptions about what this was about. Part of it was wanting to support you, Fred, and that manifested itself. I have found that I have been delightfully happy to be here. It confirmed something that I deeply believe in that I do not get to experience as much as I like which is if you pretty much get any group of people together and they open their hearts and start trusting each other it allows to be immediately intimate with people. You don’t have to depend on social layering. I was only half joking before; the lunch we had was pretty profound. It was the three of us being accepting of each other, opening up and asking each other very personal questions and being willing to put aside your personal concerns. I feel so much closer to them than I did four hours ago! It’s a gift! Its really pretty cool. I want to stay in touch with you guys, all of you, and I didn’t expect that to come up for me in such a short amount of time so that feels really good. I also enjoyed creating, drawing, sculpting. I didn’t realize how much I miss doing that, I don’t do
Name: Sal from “A” Date of Exploration: 01/23/2010

Current state of the relationship: Younger son, really very close and connected, divorced.

Participant’s Story: “So, ahh, this story is about my youngest boy. I, ahh, my oldest boy was a real crier, a colicky baby. I used to wrap him up in a blanket and it would calm him down. I would put him on my knee and it would soothe him. My youngest would never respond to that, it wouldn’t help him at all, to calm. There was one time when my oldest son was about five he was really angry, frenetic, I don’t remember exactly what it was. I remember that I just grabbed him, held him on the ground and let him scream for a minute and he cried and then I let him go and it just ran out of him and he was fine. With my younger boy in the basement he was acting a similar way, he was really pissed off and anxious. I don’t remember what it was all about but I remember I was mad at him and I was telling myself that it was time for me to stop letting him move around, it was time for me to lay down the law and hold him down until he shuts up. And so I began holding him down and he cried. He was deeply sad. He was very unhappy. I was out of my head. And then his mom comes down the stairs saying, “What the fuck are you doing?!?” And I was soooo ashamed. I was just so pissed at his reaction to the situation. At him, at me primarily, at his mom for coming into the situation in the way she did. I felt completely dissociated from everyone in the family including myself. So much shame and anger it just sent me for a loop, I couldn’t talk to anyone for a day or two. And that’s it.”

Participant’s Journaling: After his story: “Darkness, darkness. Thank you. I let it go. I didn’t have to hold it back any longer.”

After other participant’s stories:

Name: Ted: “Hesitation, loving father, how old is she? Squeeze, why am I smiling? I love him, them. This sounds so silly and unimportant to me. I am happy to forgive him. I know it hurts.”


Art 1 Title: Repression

Sounds for Art 1: “Wooh, wooh, yaghaaaaaa, ummmmm, whaaaaaaahh, Ummmgh, am I deah.”
Empathy dialog: Recap of story. “Sure, I’ll start. Briefly, holding down my son in the basement, my wife walking down the stairs and what she said. Fred, “So in that moment were you trying to find a way to help him calm down?” Sal, “In that moment that was certainly one of my motivations.” Fred, “Were you also trying to find some peace for yourself?” Sal, “Uh huh, uh huh (nods yes).” Fred, “Were you trying to find a different way that you two could relate in that moment?” Sal, “uh huh, uh huh.” Fred, “Was it a shock for you that when you used what had worked for your older son that your younger son did not respond to it in the same way? And that it turned into kind of a mess?” Sal, “uh huh, uh huh (nods yes).” Fred, “And when your wife came down the stairs and was screaming at you, ‘What are you doing?’ were you wanting her to understand that you were trying to contribute to your child?” Sal, nodding ‘yes.’ Fred, “Trying to get him to calm?” Sal, nodding ‘yes.’ Fred, “It must have been very frustrating not to be understood in that moment.” Sal, “Yes it was.” Fred, “Were you feeling angry at her because she was not getting what you were trying to do with your son?” Sal, nods ‘yes.’ Yes, I was very angry at her, and at myself, and my son, yeah.” Fred, “Was it frustrating to not be seen for your attempts?” Sal, “Yeah it was. She had this commanding, ‘Get off of him!’ I felt like I was a criminal and maybe I was but I just had this thought that she was treating me like I was a child or something, and there was nothing that I could say that would make her understand what was going on.” Fred, “Was it that you wanted her to know what had led up to that and why you had made the decision that you had made, and that you were trying to work it out and that you were not getting that kind of respect and consideration in that moment.” Sal, nods ‘yes.’ Steve, “Was it very confusing to know what to do and what to think? Was she right? Was I right? Should I try to explain what happened?” Sal, Nods ‘yes.’ Steve, “Was all of this normal and healthy?” Sal, nods ‘yes.’ Fred, “And all of this to support your son in coming to a calm place.” Sal, nods ‘yes.’ Fred, “And to put more peace into the relationship?” Sal, nods ‘yes.’ Fred, “Is there anything else about that incident?” Sal, “I don’t think so, uhm, I don’t think so. He’s a beautiful boy and we have a very deep relationship today. He is always wanting to stand next to me, hugging me even though he is almost twelve years old. We went on as if nothing happened and I have never done anything like that to him again. It touched me and I was worried how he might have been affected.” Fred, “Were you scared that your actions might have really alienated him and you are grateful now (that they didn’t)?” Sal, nods ‘yes.’ Fred, “And that you have a deep connection with him.” Sal, nods ‘yes.’ Fred, “Is there more about that?” Sal, “no (shakes head no).”

Sounds for Art 2 “Ohhhhhhhhh, sigh and oooooOOOO, sigh and hope! Pufft pufft pufft (push pull motion. OHM Sigh, sigh.”

Art 2 Title:  Cistern of Tears

Participant’s journaling after empathy: “We’re the same! Everyone’s story is my story. I feel at peace with what I see here today. Things will be OK. Our kids, our loved ones, our angels and guides, they know that we make choices. They know that we sometimes choose attack thoughts. We can give up attack thoughts. We can be released. There’s nothing about our bad choices that is keeping us back or inhibiting us. Why do I protect these choices from the light? I didn’t want to talk about this story. But now that I did – so much lighter. I made a wrong choice. I make them all the time. I see that it had
no effect, now that light is shining on it. Healing begins on its own. We have the ability as men to make worse mistakes and perhaps more of them. Power, anger, force, violence, are a deeper part of me as a man.”

**Expressing what has arisen up to this point in the exploration.** “I’m feeling a lot lighter, I didn’t expect to find release from this here.”

**Sounds for Collage:** Sal was silent.

**Expressing as journaling what has arisen in response to viewing the collage and hearing the story.**

**After viewing the collage:** “I like the second ones (after empathy) so much here. Much more whole, less pain. I love the electricity and connection in Ben’s second drawing. Ted’s drawing reminds me of wheels, connecting. One strand doesn’t connect to anything. I am contented, quiet. I am at peace with our situations and with each of the stories that were told.”

**After hearing the story:** “Everyone feels like they don’t belong, those people were just willing to admit it to themselves. Once they formed a clique they were no longer outsiders. I could imagine other people looking at their little group and saying to themselves, “I don’t belong anywhere, especially not with these weirdos.” This seems like most people’s story of high school. Defining yourself as a group of non-conformists (or outsiders) is an oxy-moron.”

**Sculpture Name:** *Lumberjack*

**What sculpture would say.** “Oh Shit!” Fred, “Is there anything it would like us to know?” Sal, “You can change your mind and choose peace.”

**Sculpture placement:** Sal said, “Which way did the tree fall?”

**Empty Chair dialog:** “Its hard for me to get that he is sitting in that chair, trying to remember that boy and see him sitting in that chair. Ummm, If you were, when I saw you driving yourself crazy, I feel sad and wish that I could help you feel calmed down and able to find some peace within yourself and get involved in creating peace in this house. I don’t know what is bothering me right now, I don’t know how to help you. Maybe the best thing I can do for you is let you alone and bring yourself out. I want to do whatever I can that is the best thing right now to help you grow and become a man. I want you to know that I will always love you and I want to lift you up, not hold you down and make you be something that you are not. I don’t want you to conform to some ideas about what you should be. I want you to be able to express all of your wild and crazy passion from the loving and giving heart that you have. I so wish that you could do so in a way that is not destructive to you and that you could find a balance of being yourself and being with everybody else around you.”
Speaking how they have been affected by participating: “I felt alive, I felt a lot of healing. It was great to hear everyone’s stories, and to express mine, (I have) a lot of empathy and affection for everything that I have heard today. It was healthy for me to examine that incident. I really appreciate the chance to do that, I didn’t expect it. It was good. Thank you.”

Co-researcher’s comments: Steve: “One of the things that we talked about was whether we had created enough togetherness, was there enough social interaction among the group. But then the fact that you guys went to lunch together kind of filled that in for us.”
Ted: “Well if it had been six or eight things might have been different.”
Ben, “And if you had just brought pizza in it might have been different, some of us might of felt kind of left out.”
The last thing the participants did was to give each other their contact information so that they could stay in connection outside of the exploration.

Name: Ted from “A” Date of Exploration: 01/23/2010

Current state of the relationship: youngest daughter, wife and oldest daughter. Family in a loving place at present.

Art 1 Title: Illusion of Power

Sounds for Art 1: “Huh!”

Participant’s Story: “Well, I’ll begin. First a little background to set the stage. I grew up in a loving household where my parents gave me a lot of wonderful opportunities but when they lost it they would occasionally beat me with a wooden floor brush on my bare bottom, to enforce discipline. And, uhh, I got slapped some, so my wife and I decided that we are not going to slap or spank our children and that we would find other ways to influence them. My eldest daughter is nine and is generally the kind of child that most of us hope for, easy going, loving, and compassionate, about as easy as you could hope a child would be to raise. My second daughter is much more a handful, blessedly so. She is a lot more like me I think, uhh, uhh, quick to lose her temper, stubborn, all of those things. And, so, this incident happened nine or ten months ago and it was in the middle of the night and she had woken up several times in the night. I am often able to be a very patient, loving father, able to hold her, to walk with her but for whatever reason, for whatever combination of circumstances I was loosing my patience that night and her waking up screaming in the middle of the night was just the last straw for me. My wife and I had been taking turns going in to deal with the situation and then she wakes up screaming again and maybe this is I don’t know, maybe two in the morning? Maybe the fourth time I have gotten out of bed. The details aren’t really that important. But, umm, I, ahhh, I fly out of bed. I grab a spray bottle that we use for spritzing down their hair, yank back the covers, sit her up in bed, and I squirt her in the face with cold water in full view of my (other) daughter and then my wife who is coming in after me who is trying to stop
me, she could tell that I had lost it. I was saying, “What the fuck is wrong with you! What the fuck is wrong with you!” And squirting her in the face with cold water. After a few seconds of that I go back to the bathroom and slam the door as hard as I can maybe five or six times. Split now where the jamb and the casing has come apart and the paint is flying everywhere. Ahh, ahhh, that was the incident.”

**Participant’s Journaling:** After his story: “All of (us) on path back (unclear) van of the abyss. If you haven’t seen the abyss, you’re not following your path. Must face the point of letting everything go. The power of making a choice. Sex – different expressions for men and women. Fears and frustrations (unclear), close to the surface.”

**After other participant’s stories:**

**Name: Ben.** “Hope for resilience forgiveness, healing. Is this buried in her, in me, or have we rehearsed this? Illusions of power – acts of fire are powerful – yes, but destructive. What other power? Love, (unknown), one-ness, amity, healing, creating. Destruction is an immature expression of power – knocking down the blocks – (unknown) than building the town.”

**Name: Sal:** “SHAME – arose from being caught by his ex-wife, witness to the act. Some things don’t work for different children. Sal was already angry, acted out of anger. Unable to help his son in this state. First get himself in alignment, then (unknown) act to help his son. Feeling anger is OK, but acting in anger leads to destruction.”

**Empathy dialog:** “So, my brief recap is: I was struggling with boundaries and family, losing my patience in the middle of the night, and resorting to expressions of violence and power which, uhh, are not things that I want to use.” Fred, “Are you worried that your actions might have put a rift in your family in some way?” Ted, “Well sure, and to some degree I worry if that is still happening, that she or I or my other girl or my wife still hold on to as an image of me and, alternately, to what degree we might have moved past it and dealt with it. Not that we have actually, well my wife has talked about it a little bit but the only thing that we have really done is that I have apologized for my behavior and may have promised not to do it again. But I do not have a clear recollection of it as I usually do about these things. And, yeah, the same way that I remember how it was for me as a kid when my parents would lose their temper with me that this will become a permanent image in her of what growing up with me was like.” Fred, “Is there some fear remembering how you are with your parents now that you might have that same quality in your relationship with your daughter?” Ted, nods ‘yes.’ Fred, “Was it really shocking to find yourself in that place?” Ted, “Yeah, it was almost a total loss of will power. And, of course, there is almost something like an agreement at some level to let it run its course and there is something exhilarating in having that expression of power.” Fred, “Were you frustrated because there were so many times that you got up and tried to support her in calming and being restful and nothing that you did . . . Ted, “And I had to do it again the next hour?” Fred, “yeah!” Ted, “Absolutely.” Fred, “Was it hard to know how to best respond to her and nothing seemed to help make it happen and it seemed frustrating?” Ted, “Sure.” Fred, “Were you stressed, tired, and overwhelmed?” Ted, “I don’t think it was in response to other stress in my life. I think this was fairly isolated
around that relationship, the difficulties of that parenting, feeling my limitations as a parent, my own inability to cope with the everyday struggles, the mundane struggles of raising children in a way that felt balanced and healthy. Not liking feeling helpless in the face of the frustration and not accepting it by projecting it onto my daughter by saying, ‘Well I’m a perfectly fine parent its you, you have the problem.’ You know?” Fred, “Were you feeling desperation and needing some relief? And is that kind of story what you were telling yourself about her?” Ted, nods ‘yes.’ Fred, “Was it frustrating not to be able to communicate with her in a way that you could find out what she needed?” Ted, “Yes because with children her age there are many times that you cannot talk something through, they are just not there yet. They have to feel something through rather than talking it through. And so my inability to connect with her in a way that would help her was very frustrating because it did not relieve the symptoms.” Steve, “Almost like (oh what’s the word), there was illegitimacy to your authority is some way.” Ted, “Uh huh, uh huh (nods yes).” Fred, “And were you wanting her to get enough sleep?” Ted, “Yeah, and me and daughter and my wife, and everybody else.” Fred, “Is there anything else about that?” Ted, “I wrote that, ‘Destruction is an immature expression of power.’ It reminded me of playing blocks with a toddler, you stack it up and they knock it down. And they will knock it down before they even know how to build up a tower because its easier to have that feeling of power by breaking something down than by developing the skills to build it up. So that’s where they start by knocking down the tower then two months later maybe they’re starting by building it up some. And so me acting out of anger is a feeling of power, power is coursing through me in that moment because I feel powerless to change the situation so, ‘Here is something that I can do.’ It’s ultimately destructive because I have not yet learned how to build a tower in that situation with her. But at least I did something. Right? (The previous was presented as inner dialog justifying what he did.)” Fred, “It sounds like you were really wanting to be effective in that moment and that one didn’t work in the way you were hoping.” Ted, “Yeah, I don’t want to be a passive sufferer of these circumstances, to believe that things are beyond my control.” Fred, “And you would like a different level of skill to meet it with when it comes up?” Ted, “Yes, and to know and to be aware that when I am in a place of anger if I act that it will almost certainly be a destructive act rather than the constructive act that I am wanting. So, it’s OK to be in a place of anger, but I need not to act from that place. I need to remove myself, get out of the place of anger, and then decide to act. And that’s what I want, self-connection, self-control and self-awareness.” Fred, “So you are wanting deeper awareness in those moments.” Ted, “Right.” Fred, “Are you wanting assurance that you are having a close relationship with your family.” Ted, “Yeah and we do have a close and loving relationship its not just this Sunday morning, we have a lot of intimate physical moments and expressions of love as a family so that’s reassuring and I, I have lots of hope for our relationship going along but I am mindful of not wanting this event to be part of a series, I don’t want these things to develop in an escalating way.” Fred, “Do you want to trust that you will get yourself into a place where you won’t react like that, that you won’t respond like that?” Ted, “Yeah,” nods yes. Fred, “So that it can go in the direction you want it to go?” Ted, “Right.” Steve, “How long ago was this?” Ted, “Nine or ten months, I’m not exactly sure.” Fred, “Is there more?” Ted, “I don’t think so. I mean yes but it’s a larger thing. With this specific instance I’ve done right now.”

**Sounds for Art 2:** Motions with hands from chest out as in Yah Fatah!

Expressing what has arisen up to this point in the exploration: “It reminds me that I have very few places in my life where I am confident that I am accepted for who I am. I have a good relationship with my father in law, but with few others. We all are pretty connected right now and that feels good to me.”

Sounds for Collage  (There was silence)

Expressing as journaling what has arisen in response to viewing the collage and hearing the story: “The intimacy that we shared over lunch was natural yet would not have happened without the deep sharing and vulnerability which arose from the story and exercise. However, returning now, the structured exercise seems forced, artificial in comparison.” Response to story: “Exercise continues to feel somewhat contrived after the rational, open, conversational sharing at lunch. Honestly, I am feeling tired and would love to have a quick nap. My aching back is making it difficult to remain present and focused. I did not have a strong reaction (positive or negative) to my (unclear) of the story. Comfort in community. Normalizing or our (unclear) primate worries or fears. We are alone together.”

Sculpture Name. Wholeness

What sculpture would say: “Twisting in the shape, striving for stability, wholeness, perfection”

Sculpture placement: Ted said, “I want to create a gathering place.”

Empty Chair dialog: “I want to reach (out to the screaming daughter) and hold her right here.” Ted pantomimed picking up his daughter and holding her on his chest as he lay back down on the floor. He pantomimed stroking her back. “While she cried I just held her. I don’t think I have anything to say.” (He tears up and wipes his eyes).

Speaking how he has been affected by participating, “Ben neglected to mention that we did talk about sports on our break today! (Laughter) Ben said, “No, you two (Ted and Sal) talked about it (more laughter).” Ted said, “One of the things that came up at lunch was that we talked about men’s groups and the place where if they are working well you can let down all of the masks that life teaches you to wear. Posturing and projections of
self and then you can be vulnerable. So we felt that what we have all done that this morning and come to a very human place. It’s a relief actually to be away from the less authentic self that we present in public or the feeling of being too well known for our flaws in our intimate relationships, it’s a relief to be vulnerable and to be accepted and real.”

Name: Jay from “B” Date of Exploration: 02-27-2010

Current state of the relationship: “My current partner and I are a little bit rocky and are trying hard to work on it.” Relationship ended one month later; they divorced.

Participant’s Story: “My story. This must have happened a month and a half or two months ago. I have been very stressed out about events in my world. I’m not blaming it on the stress and I know that when I am stressed it is easier for me to lose my temper. So I was in bed one morning, and my seven year old had been exposed to scabies and he and I my partner, I was not experiencing any symptoms and hoped that I wouldn’t, my partner and he had been treating themselves with this cream stuff, and I had just woken up and was entering my day. My partner had been treating our baby, she was just rubbing the cream on him, different spots, wherever he had it. I don’t know what the reason for it was, a spirit of playfulness or whatever, whatever reason, she decided to wipe the finger that she had been rubbing on what was a very clear spot (of infection) on my face. Not thinking anything about it at all I think, and I’m a little freaked out about it. Creepy crawly things like that. It’s a kind of phobia of mine. And I just got pissed. She had just done it, I don’t think she thought about it. I wanted to push her away and just grabbed her arm and got it away from me. It was very forceful. The energy behind it was really disgusting to me. I’ve never done any trip like that in that way with anyone else to my knowledge. And I was not trying to hurt her or anything like that but I grabbed her pretty hard; I was pretty pissed. She’s pretty thin, not too big. It left a bruise on her arm. That was the first time in my life that I can recall ever being physical with anybody in that way. It was really scary, and I don’t even know why I was so mad about it. I was really annoying and not cool. She didn’t really think about it like, “Oh I’m going to rub scabies on his face!” It just happened so fast, it was so scary because when I was young my mother had a lot of temper and anger problems and I’ve done a fair amount of work as a result at removing things from my life that cause stress. Anyway I over the last couple of months I noticed that I snap easier. I have been fairly stressed out and I am not at all trying to justify it, I am just acknowledging that it definitely was contributing in my opinion. Yeah, it was so scary. I wasn’t even that mad. I don’t know what it was. It just happened so fast. And I regret it a lot, and I wish I could take it back. I am hopeful to continue to do whatever work I need to never let something like that happen again. That was so gross to me and against whatever I could ever imagine believing in. So, that’s it. She and I had a discussion about this when I was struggling to think of what examples to give. She reminded me of that and we thought it would be a good one to give.”

Art 1 Title: Angerly Awake

Sounds for Art 1 “I feel like I don’t have any sounds to bring in, mostly the feelings I
have are sadness and regret. I was not sure about how to control or be very conscious of my actions. Not very common is my life as well as I can remember.”

**Participant’s journaling after his story:** “I am experiencing the same feelings as felt in Sid’s story. The fear and acknowledgment of the power of the anger. Also feelings of regret, remorse, sadness are coming up. Hope that discussing it will contribute to forgiving myself. And through this experience realizing the need to work on my anger/temper issues. I had kind of dismissed this feeling or experience without fully dealing with it and am grateful to put some closure on it, but also reminding myself of the need for better expressing and dealing with anger or frustration.”

**Participant’s journaling after other participant’s story:** After Sid’s story: “This story reminds me of how quickly anger and frustration can basically take over a being. It reminds me of times in life where my anger has overtaken my being and I was basically unconscious of anything else. It makes me wonder how I might handle the same situation and gives me hope that I may be able to know when to walk away from a situation. I(t) also gives me hope to deal with my anger and get some air instead of fight fire with fire. It evokes some fear in me of how scary and powerful anger can be.

**Empathy dialog:** Jay, “OK, my partner rubbed something on my face and body that I didn’t enjoy and I reacted very hastily and angrily, and violent, physically violent. Uhh, so its scary. So far from anything that I ever could imagine. I can’t imagine living my life that way. I’m trying to live my life, things I believe in. Fred, “It sounds like you were confused that you responded that way.” Jay, “Definitely!” Fred, “It kind of blindsided you that you had this big a response to it?” Jay, “Clearly!” Fred, “Did you also want her to know how much being touched in that way was scary for you? Scabies may not be your favorite thing to have happen?” Jay, “Absolutely! She seemed to just decide how I was going to be about it. I think that I probably could have used better words to communicate about it.” Fred, “So your response came out of the blue?” Jay, “Out of the red more so I guess. Yeah! That’s the color I’m associating with it.” Fred, “So, are you worried that there is a place in you that you don’t know much about that supports you in behaving this way and that you might behave like this again?” Jay, “Uh yeah. I may not use those words again but I have some concern that I have something that I have to deal with. I would not like for this to happen ever again. I don’t want to be worried that I may be manifesting it in some weird way. But aware that it is something that something exists that needs some work.” Fred, “I remember you saying that in your past there were times that you were really angry, and that you have done some work around that. I imagine that you were hoping that the work you did would have helped you to address it, and this event came right out of the red as it were, it was such a surprise.” Jay, “Yeah, you know. When I say that I have done some work, I didn’t do anything formally or work with somebody who may have had more experience in avenues to take to deal with these kind of feelings or episodes. I was aware of it and maybe I didn’t do any work at all. Maybe I just tucked it away, kept just a good traveling fun of no responsibility. Its hard to get angry when you do not have any responsibility, I think.” Fred, “You mentioned that there has been a lot of stress in your life.” Jay, “Indeed!” Fred, “Are you hoping that even under the highest stress that you can still hold on to yourself, that you can work with yourself when things like that come up?” Jay, “Uh huh. Totally! I would be curious about
any opinions or possible avenues that you guys might have that would help me do deal with that. You know Anger Management is hard for me to think about because I do not see myself as an angry person. Most people get angry. My partner sees some of the uglier stuff about me, probably like most partners do. It’s hard for me to believe, why anger management? I am one of the most passive and gentle people that I know. And so, …….”

Fred, “Are you worried that people don’t see you clearly?” Jay, “I don’t know if I’m worried about it so much. I, uh, I just think that it’s a side of me that’s not, that’s not; you know I know some other people that are like pretty angry all the time. I don’t feel that way. So in the past, or any time in my mind, I tell myself, “Well, I don’t have a problem, I never get mad.” Its not like I am an alcoholic or something saying, ‘I’m not an alcoholic! I only drink once a week and drink until I pass out in some strange place and don’t know what happens. But I’m not an alcoholic!’ But in the same way retelling the story and reliving it a little bit has made me more aware that it is a serious issue. It also feels kind of good to get it out. I feel a bit lighter.”

Steve, “So you are taking a risk in bringing it out. I mean there is a lot of shame here.” Jay, “Yeah!” Steve, “And you have to kind of meet some of that in order to be able to retell it?” Jay, “Yeah! Totally! In some of my journaling that is what I was writing. Its like I dismiss it or apologize for it or whatever, make a promise, ‘Well were not going to do that again!’ But I didn’t really deal with it or feel it fully. And it helps to feel it again and maybe give it a little more attention, not dismiss it.”

Fred, “Are you concerned that it affected your relationship with your partner?” Jay, “Uh, sure. Its not something that she has really seen before (in me). She has had some partners in the past that were definitely abusive and expressed severe amounts of anger. And I am sure………, I don’t think that it was any kind of a bond by any means, for sure. There has been a lot happening in our reality. We have both been very stressed out. Some times I know that I say things that I did not articulate very well, or with great intention. Sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously I think. We are definitely trying to be more clear and looking into more options. We both want to be together and raise our family. We are trying to acknowledge that if we cannot figure some things out that it is not good for any of us to continue to be together.”

Fred, “It sounds like its hard for you right now and when you are under so much stress that you do not have skills to deal with that in the way that you are hoping to.” Jay, “Absolutely!” Fred, “Do you want to be able to come out on the other side of this in a good way?” Jay, “Yes! And I don’t even need to be able to cruise through it. I mean everything is not always in balance all of the time. I fully acknowledge that. I just want some tools to handle it differently so that even if I don’t cruise through it I can bump through it over the rocky road in a healthier way for everybody involved.”

Steve, “So that you can talk to each other ten minutes later?” Jay, “Right! Or right after, or tomorrow, or whatever. So that’s my story. And in my drawing I was trying to think of the feelings and trying to express the feelings and I was trying to think about it too much and all I could think of was to draw a picture of me in bed being pissed off. Acting angry.”

Fred, “I’m sure that you would have liked to let her know how much that (here touching you on the face) bothered you without getting mad.” Jay, (laughs) “Right! And later we talked about it and I was able to do that.” Fred, “But in that moment.” Jay, “I just felt bad. And that’s the thing about anger, I have been thinking about it. And from Sid’s story as well, (snaps fingers) you can just snap, and be gone, and that’s really scary. I don’t want to think about that happening, to acknowledge the possibility of that happening again that I lost it, I don’t want to go that route.” Fred, “Yeah! A lot of power in that kind of expression. If you are
going to have that much power I imagine that you would like to use it well.” Jay, “Right! I am all about power. I just want to use it well.” Fred, “You want some skill and understanding about how come it is sometimes expressed in a way you don’t like?” Jay, “Yeah.” Fred, “Is there anything else about this that you would want us to hear?” Jay, “That’s what I’ve got for now.”

**Participant journaling after empathy:** “I am feeling grateful for being here now and lighter and more open. Being excited to find and develop some tools and skills for dealing with all situations be it joy, strife, conflict, stress, anger, etc. Still a bit frightened of anger and the power of the emotion, but confident in possibility of redirecting that power into positive. Still certainly feeling sad and remorseful for all times of reacting from a space of anger but also feeling forgiveness for myself and any others who’ve I’ve experienced this with. Feeling hopeful to remember and stay clear and focused on my goals of learning new techniques and skills to better myself and all others around me. Feeling thankful and grateful and hopeful.”

**Sounds for Art 2** “Breath Makes me think of a snake shedding its skin.” Sid asked him, “What’s this part of it?” He replied, “Rocks and a feather, losing some weight. Heart and mind a little more open. My angles turn into a circle there. A much more open angle. Also much more sadness than rage about it, outlined in blue. I too am happy. I am looking forward to filling my toolbox with good tools.” Fred, “It sounds like you have decided to take this on as a life work, is that true?” Jay, “Yeah. I’m very happy about it. There are some moments of panic and its rocky right now in my world. I am feeling confident that I want to be a little more active at pursuing what is good for me, to learn different avenues to learn how to control myself in every situation, not just anger, in all communication, not just conflict. Even joy, to have a way to express and the discipline not to react. It feels good right now.”

**Art 2 Title:**  *Open Light*

**Expressing what has arisen up to this point in the exploration:** “I think that it has been very comfortable and helpful in dealing with that certain situation and also helpful in dealing with any kind of reaction that might come up in life, not just anger, drama or confusion, anything. It made me think about stuff. I wondered how it was going to be. I didn’t really know what was going to occur. I was trying support you when you asked and so I came. I feel lighter and definitely wanting to know how to expand; its been good.” Steve, “Were there moments during which you felt a shift?” Jay, “Talking about it, telling others about it. Going over the story again, re-delivering it. Listening to Sid’s story telling myself that I know how that is. That happens very often to very many people. Some people might walk away and some people might start punching the person back. Its very common and scary and I don’t know if I felt any particular moments. It’s just made me aware of how important it is to react in healthy ways. It’s been scary, happy, sad. That’s been it. I’ve felt comfortable, not all the time, that I could express myself well. Speak in a reinforced way and healthy way. It’s been good.”

**Sounds for Collage** “Exhaling. And I’m seeing the same kind of thing (as Sid). There’s not a lot that is new here.”
Expressing as journaling what has arisen in response to viewing the collage and hearing the story. “In alignment with the reading I did over the lunch break, this story reminds me of the separation we have somehow adopted and perpetrated here. Also makes me wonder what might be so hard to accept about being different. I was reminded of my childhood and how I felt nothing like this. I was blessed to have many friends and acquaintances as a child. I feel that I almost feel more like this now in life than earlier. I find that I just don’t really understand what people are up to. I feel very disconnected from many humans and wonder both how and why. This seems to be off track from the possible intention of the story, but it’s where I went.”

Sculpture Name: Opening and Light

What sculpture would say: “I feel more open to all, I am beginning to open up to things and am beginning to open more.” Steve, “What would the guy with the rock on his back say?” Jay, “Grrr, I’ve been tired! He wouldn’t say a lot, UHH, workin’ hard, you know? Workin’ hard carrying a burden. This is all around that. Without the boulder still workin’ but able to shake it off and work on it. He would say, ‘Man, I feel great! Stretched out and loose, light.’ You know. Kind of the whole balance thing too, it’s kind of been a lot on my mind in general in life. How to be on top of things and not succumb under this load, balance, connection, disconnection, just trying to work it all out. My vision was first to build a fence that maybe fell down or something creating holes in the wall, in how I feel, closed open kind of. Kind of empathy here for me. A title, I don’t know. I try not to put labels on things on purpose.” Steve, “What about the round parts?” Jay, “Its just kind of the same idea, just kind of closed, and this is just being a lot more open. I was trying to represent building a door having it open somehow. I was also trying to do that with the drawing, but drawing is not something that I have superabundant confidence in or practice a lot. I mean, how do some people do that? Draw an opening door? Being open, jotting things down and realizing you know that there is a lot of paths that we can take, and that holding on to past experiences, that we can keep them around for many years remembering. Not like beating yourself up over them but letting them be inspiration. Remembering. That’s my sculpturing, sculpting.”

Sculpture placement: “Yeah, so maybe (In response to Sid’s statement; ‘That’s easy, he would break the tape.’) For me kind of there is no tape. Or maybe basically putting them together. Can we take pieces off?” Sid, “Yeah, absolutely.” (Jay rearranges the pieces so that two of his figures are on Sid’s board. Sid asks, “Is he the heavy guy?” The heavy guy gets to the tape too?” Jay, “And that’s kind of what you said too. You can set your tapes so that whether you succeed or fail, you set your expectation and tried so you still broke the tape. (In response to Sid’s statement of laying down the ‘I don’t fit in’ burden) There’s a lot of people like that, there’s a ton of people like that (that think they don’t fit in). In my experience growing up I did not have a lot of pressure, if anything I had too little. And I’ve seen myself, I think my mom either let too much and I seen me especially in my partnerships, ‘I don’t want to have to be your mom. You should be doing it and I shouldn’t have to remind you.’ And then it gets gray and a lot of people are like that, they are just going constantly and nothing seems good enough. The work to the max and
aren’t satisfied. And for me it’s quite the opposite. I didn’t’ have a lot of expectations and now I find that I am a little lazy about stuff a little bit lazy about getting my goals in order. Not to say that one is any different than the other ultimately. I think there are a lot of people that feel inadequate, and I’ve been there, plenty of times too for whatever reason. I kind of realized that I needed not to be so hard on myself and now I tell myself, ‘Hey, now you have children and you kind of got to keep it together.’ But I try not to be too hard on myself. Reminding myself to remain open and how easy it is to close up.”

Empty Chair dialog: “I feel very fortunate because I have the opportunity to still say things straight to the person, not that Sid can’t do the same. I am very sorry that I reacted in such anger and wished that I could have calmly communicated my dislike for the acts that happened and addressed why they were happening clearly and don’t know why they were such a big deal. I understand that there was no ill intention on your part about passing on possible scabies to me. I am sorry and what I did was very scary to me and I am hopeful that I can continue working on it so that I never see it again, you never see it again, and our children never see that type of reaction again. I’m sorry, it was weak.”

Steve, “I wonder if she wants to know how disgusted you were?” Jay, “I am and was extremely disgusted by it and I have talked with you about it some already about what happened and I will talk with you again and I will just, I don’t think words can express how scared, disgusted, frightened and turned off by it I was and how much I have more control over it and I hope that you will forgive it. I want you to know that I am going through everything that I can to make sure that it doesn’t happen again. I found the whole thing extremely distressing.” Steve, “I was referring to your response to her putting her finger on your face.” Jay, “Oh, Oh yeah. Right, right. And I would hope in the future if anything occurs that I am extremely grossed out by that I can use my words in a strong, firm, and hopefully non-violent way. That was super nasty and I didn’t like it at all and I am sure that you didn’t even think about it, AND I WANT YOU TO THINK ABOUT IT! That last part was kind of a joke but, yeah.”

Speaking how they have been affected by participating: “I think for me looking at some of the stuff that went on as a child and some of the anger stuff that was happening when I was 12 years old or 14, something like that. That stuff has been present and has been very quiet and then it comes back up but I haven’t really looked to see where it comes from exactly. It could be handy because it just it would help me not only to acknowledge that its something that exists, but looking to where its coming from and hopefully getting some resolution to that. I think it would be really interesting to see how it went if there had been four or five different people that could of, you know, been sharing each other’s stories, to take it to some other, OH, OH, that’s how I felt. I just love reflection and bouncing it off others. For me it could have been even more beneficial and helpful and more would come if the group had been bigger. And I am super grateful and I am not saying that what we did was not helpful but four or five more experiences and stories I think would just expand it all, just make it that much more.” Sid, “I agree.”

Name: Sid  Date of Exploration: 02-27-2010
Current state of relationship: “Currently we will occasionally exchange email, she’s remarried, happily it sounds like. She lives on the other side of the country and when I get back there to visit we are very cordial. We are divorced and I talk to her once in a while.”

Art 1 Title: Rage

Sounds for Art 1: “Huh! What I remember is the sounds of her freaking, and I was pretty scared. (Do you want to bring some of those sounds into the room) Oh God no! (Laughs) It was loud and she was swinging at me. I’ve been punched or cold-cocked before but I have never had anyone come fully at me attacking me, and (uh) it was a total surprise.”

Participant’s Story: “It was the first marriage for both of us, I was 22 years old, both married for the wrong reasons. And it started to show up in about a year, the frustration started to show up particularly in her. She wanted to be successful, she as a teacher, I was managing a drug store. But she wanted all of the benefits of an accomplished life already. So she spent way too much and we ended up thousands and thousands of dollars in debt when she wanted something. It was a huge frustration for her. I don’t actually recall what spawned her anger, but I had never seen anything like that before. It came to a peak and she was screaming and she was really frustrated because she was doing it poorly, she was pounding with closed fists, swinging at me, really trying to hit me, do damage. What I should have done (pause) was left, you know, gone out the door, let it all cool down and come back. But what I did instead was pretty defensively, I took her arms and pinned her, held her until she calmed down, and I held her hard too. She finally said, “You hurt me.” Which I thought was kind of ironic. She calmed down and left and I just remember that I felt scared, threatened by this woman who I out weighed by easily 50 lbs, and it was (uhm) such a surprise. So, uh, I was not sure there was anything going to come of that incident, that handling that differently that would have changed anything. Ultimately I mean. I guess I am unprepared for that kind of thing happening and then doing a very poor job of dealing with it. That’s it.”

Journaling after the story telling: After his story: “Poor self-defense, Ill equipped to deal with present anger, no experience with that kind of anger, no ‘take away’, no learning, frustration with Peg and myself, both very young and insecure.”

After Jay’s story: “Anger – over the edge (maybe) happens quickly. Scary to think that physical expression can hurt. What is stress doing to me now? Am I past such outbursts? Control is a conscious effort for Todd. What came after is an important part of the story. Should I be angrier? Surprise of it.”

Empathy dialog: Sid, “It was interesting listening to the sequence (of Jay’s sharing) just about what I journaled, it was interesting especially when you asked us to put down the emotions at the time that it happened. It really brought back a very vivid image of what happened. But as I started journaling about it and after I had written several lines what struck me was my feelings of inadequacy. I was not able to properly deal with that situation and it was kind of indicative of the whole relationship, being married. I wasn’t
ready for that, I wasn’t ready for the kind of interactions that was really required to make that happen. So the word ‘inadequate’ was what popped out of that whole thing. And, uh, yeah! That’s what it was, the whole episode about the anger, that I was not equipped to deal with it.” Fred, “Were you hoping that both of you could work together even with your lack of skill and co-create something?” Sid, “I don’t think so. I think that I was just relieved that I was able to stop the thing. I felt really bad that I hurt her during it. But I can still remember the panic of just holding her until she stopped trying to hurt me. Uh, so I can’t say that I thought there was a lesson to be learned here, that would have been really good, but I was not even remotely close to that at the time.” Fred, “Were you wanting some other way to do that so that it did not come to that kind of place?” Sid, “Yeah, but, looking back on it I do, yeah! it would have been really good to have a little bit more skill and who knows what would have happened then. I think that the relationship was wrong, for the most part, but the feeling of inadequacy really stands out.” Fred, “So it felt kind of good to take some action? Yeah! And it felt kind of unnatural too. I was thinking that, ‘This can’t be right.’ So, I stopped her hitting me, but that was, no, I cannot say that it did feel good. It felt very awkward essentially.” Fred, “Even the whole situation was confusing and unbelievable?” Sid, “Good, good words. Uh huh. And, ‘Is this going to happen again?’ Where did that come from?” This was like a person that I didn’t know. Yeah, that’s a good description. Confusing.” Fred, “Is it hard for you to imagine staying safe in that relationship?” Sid, “That’s an interesting question. Physically safe at that point was probably OK. We both probably have been through that and have stepped back from what would happen. But, it was the emotional safety that I was not feeling. It was back to the inadequacy, ‘I’m not good enough, I’m never going to have enough money, I will never be a good husband, or whatever.’ So, there was a lot of that.” Fred, “So was it frustrating for her not to see you and to be living with these ideas of how things were supposed to be? And were you angry because they weren’t?” Sid, “Umm! Totally, yeah. And again, a lot of that is in hindsight that I realized what it was. But, yeah. So there was this feeling of constantly catching up both from the monetary point of view and the emotional point of view.” Fred, “Did you want her to love you for you rather than the guy she imagined you should be?” Sid, “Yeah! It seemed like it started out that way, and then things changed. Part of it changed.” Fred, “So you started going down a road that you liked, being seen? Sid, “Yeah!” Fred, “. . . and appreciated for who you are. And then there was a sudden right turn there?” Sid, “Yeah, yeah, I felt that.” Fred, “Was it confusing to know where that switch was, what the heck happened?” Sid, “Yeah, and it was so subtle too. I did not see it happening. I didn’t think about it in terms of taking a turn somewhere. It just drifted off course and before you know it you are headed in a totally different direction.” Fred, “So did that worry you about future relationships?” Sid, “So it did enough so that I did some counseling work after that to figure out what was in me that was feeling like I wasn’t good enough. Of course it was all over the place and back to when I was a kid. Although that was good stuff, yeah it did worry me. And I worked extra nights and I did pay someone to try to help straighten me out.” Fred, “So are you more grounded in yourself now?” Sid, “Yeah. Uh, I am more assertive about myself now, and I’m much more honest about myself.” Fred, “And you know that’s OK?” Sid, “Yeah! I’m still working. I don’t want to brag about what I’ve done, but I consider myself a long step from (what I did with her) that.” Fred, “So you feel good about who you are now without having to go there.” Sid, “Yeah! I still remember the feeling false. It was like I had a different person that I showed everyone I
met. I would give one person a card out of one deck; ‘Here Fred here is one from this desk; Here Jay, here is one from this desk.’ But I could never let those two people come in contact because they might compare notes. There was a constant trying to be who that person wanted me to be. I was so envious of people in their early 20s that seemed to be able to say, ‘If you don’t like me, screw you!’ I couldn’t do that. So, I’ve arrive there, without the ‘Screw you’ part.” Steve, “I am wondering what it was like right after the incident?” Sid, “I went blank. Honestly, it was, ‘What happened, what the hell happened’, feeling. Uh, I remember leaving the room. Letting go and stepping AWAY quickly, and then leaving the room quickly.” Steve, “Stepping away like you needed some space, like she might still get angry with you?” Sid, “Yeah! So, and when I realized that the episode was done, then it was the residual, all the turmoil, the confusion, it was just getting away from it. I did not leave. I think it might have been better if I had just completely removed myself totally and used these words, ‘I’m going to leave. I need to cool down. I’m going to take a walk around the block or something.’ I don’t know. It is tender still.” Fred, “And you are happier now with the sense of yourself that you have.” Sid, “Yeah!, for the most part, as far as this (event) goes. Yeah!” Fred, “So now in picking partners are you more selective and choose those that appreciate you for who you are?” Sid, “Yeah! Its, uh, its interesting how much head bashing I had to do, lots of marks on my forehead, before I finally got it.” Fred, “And you also seem to have a willingness to keep ‘bashing’, to keep looking?” Sid, “Oh yeah!, to keep trying!, to keep actively at it. Yeah!” Fred, “It seems like you really value relationship.” Sid, “Yeah! I do. And I learn constantly and keep at it. (nods)” Fred, “Is there anything else?” Sid, “Nah, I’m good.”

Art 2 Title: Tommy (as in the rock opera)

Sounds for Art 2: “Hope. Release. Fred asked, ‘Do you have anything to say about the name on your drawing?’” Sid, “Yeah! The rock opera. See me, feel me, touch me, heal me. I can re-ah, re-ah, I can start over. I saw her (his ex-wife) and her partner in Baltimore a couple of times after we had broken up and all that stuff and she made one of my favorite dishes from when we were married and we talked and talked. She was happy. It was going back to the people we were when we were courting and figuring each other out. It was a happy thing but we were different people now without the pressure of having to go forward in any way, it was good. I think part of the healing process for us was to have that time together in order to go forward, it was pleasant.” Fred, “So being together (at that time) really worked for you to develop a different relationship to go forward with?” Sid, “Yeah. I think we grew a little bit because of it. It was kind of reassuring that she still saw me. It was good. It was funny too. Thinking about the whole thing of feeling inadequate, and stressing because of that. About ten years ago I started martial arts with my daughter and I really liked the part where the Sensi said, “There is no first strike.” I’ve taken this in and it’s a very different mindset. It’s very relaxed, confident, not inadequate feeling. And, um, I think that it really helps with the inadequacy. It’s not just a physical presence it’s an integrated sense of assurance. I haven’t really thought about that; I just put that together right now. This has really helped me get clear about what the new qualities I possess are. Now I am confident that I know that kind of thing happens I can turn that way and leave and not have any of those personal judgments come up and tell me I am doing it wrong. It’s a coping thing, a breather. I can think about it in terms of anyone. I now know that it (physical control) is
not something that I am going to initiate. It makes it calmer.” Fred, “It sounds like a strong value you have now, is that true?” Sid, “Yeah. And I didn’t really know until just now about that value that I have developed. It’s very balancing for me, especially when I think back to what happened and know what I am feeling now.” Fred, “And are you happy and feel calmer that you have learned ways to express that value?” Sid, “Yeah! Good point. I am very pleased that I have learned to do things differently.”

**Journaling after empathy:** “Growth since incident with my ex-wife, counseling was/is a key to figuring it out. Surprise and martial arts plays a role in feelings of peace and adequacy, no need to prove myself now (in ways past) Skill set far better, still working through, ‘Being Seen’ is a central theme now and key in relationships (w/male friends too), Others issues take place of old motivations, etc., no need to impress now, but more – no longer need to figure out who to be w/when.

**Expressing what has come up so far resulting from the exploration.** “I think my moment came when I was trying to figure out what that drawing was going to be. I was thinking through it and I guess there are two things really. One is about how far I have come and then again the bruises from it all. Also reminding myself in this process that I am not finished, I hope that I am never finished. This (The drawing) showed me that there is stuff working, stuff I need to think about that I haven’t addressed yet. I might think I don’t need to or that its still subconscious kind of stuff. I know that keeping working is important. It feels good to be reminded of that.” Fred, “Is there something that stood out for you that supported you in choosing ‘Tommy’.” Sid, “Yeah! It was what you were saying about seeing me. That’s right out of the Avatar movie. But that’s something that has been very important in relationship for me to be seen for who I am. No matter whether its male friends or female friends, just knowing that I am being seen. It is actually a very important thing. And I guess that part of that is that I am not trying to pretend anymore that I am something that I am supposed to be. And it is a whole lot easier now. Its like if you tell the truth you don’t have to worry about the story you told coming back to you. I just wish I would have figured it out when I was that age (age of the story) instead of now.” Fred, “So when in the movie they say, ‘I see you’, there is a quality in that that really speaks to you.” Sid, “Uh huh. Yeah. It’s a phrase that I’ve used before the movie (Avatar), but that (the movie) really did lock it in. And in three dimensions too. (Laughter) At the Rosewood, third row.” Jay, “Its easier to be seen and be real?” Sid, “Exactly, and in my case it takes some confidence and thinking that that would be OK and, I guess it is.” Fred, “Anything else that stood out for you?” Sid, “No, just the soul process when you start thinking about these things. And of course you (Fred) has an approach to it. So I am thinking about these things in a way that I would not normally think about them. It brings other things out such as associating martial arts training with anger. That’s what I would never have considered or thought of that at all, but there it was. It’s good, its very good. It has been surprisingly comfortable, I was worried about that. I am not feeling my best today. I was not sure what I was going to be able to offer. And it’s been good.”

**Journaling after viewing the collage and hearing the story:** Nothing wrong, but something doesn’t feel right. No hate in my family – no love either. Expectation always larger than I. Failed even though some huge successes. Continued into professional life –
even though college was on my terms. Am not feeling the companionship from this kind of (unable to translate). I can set goals. I am responsible for feeling ‘right’. I still see resolution and kind of hope. I notice that you have put them into an order. It would make more sense if there were more participants; even one more would have helped. Uh, is the apple significant?’

After the story: “Nothing wrong, but something doesn’t feel right. No hate in my family – no love either. Expectation always larger than I. Failed even though some huge successes. Continued into professional life – even though college was on my terms. Am not feeling the companionship from this kind of (unable to translate). I can set goals. I am responsible for feeling ‘right’.”

Sculpture Name: And The Winner Is

What sculpture would say: “I will turn it around so it is facing you, can you guess what it is? You’re going to wait until I tell you aren’t you. I call it, ‘And the winner is.’ I was having trouble thinking of things for the first part. But the little story especially the first part of it resonated quite a lot. I never heard hate in my house of any kind, uh, uh, any kind of discriminatory or any other kind. In fact it was very pleasant in that regard, but I never heard love either. It was a Irish Catholic scene, Irish Catholic way of being. But my I did have a lot of pressure, a lot of expectations. I kind of appreciated that at times. I didn’t realize how much but I realized I was never satisfied. My dad would set up the tape to break and I would work to do whatever it was be it around sports or music or whatever you have and I would break the tape and then my dad would say, ‘Actually its that next thing.’ So we never took time to celebrate, we never took time to acknowledge what had happened but it wasn’t actually a few years ago when somebody broke the record, I set a state record in high school, there was no to do about it at all. In fact I was so focused on how I could become a better pitcher that I just kept thinking that I wasn’t good enough. So it was always toward that next tape. Its taken me this long to know that I can set the tapes for myself. That if I want to put a goal out there its going to be mine, and there’s frustration and back to that word again, the constant feeling of inadequacy, it’s the theme for the day, uhms, its very different now, its looking at my failures as limits. Its ok that I don’t have the skill or understanding at the moment, but that doesn’t me bad or wrong or anything else, and to try that much and that was fine, and let that take me someplace else or not. You know at first I thought these might be people but these are not people. F, what did you say the name was? ‘And the winner is’ It says that I win all the time now even though some of the things don’t come out like I want them to. And some of them are out right failures, uh, It doesn’t mean that there is not time to celebrate, to take time to be happy with it, with some accomplishment. There’s not a lot going on in my life right now that I am unhappy with. I don’t have a lot of issues going on. I don’t feel bad. I think that its taken me most of my life to get over my father maybe. It (my sculpture) would say, ‘You win.’

Sculpture placement: “Oh, that’s easy. He’d get to break the tape.’ In reference to Jay placing one of his figures in front of each of Sid’s “tapes” ‘Is he the heavy guy?’ Sid says in response to Jay’s comment about breaking the tapes. “I heard you say earlier before we
actually started about your interest in acupuncture and Chinese medicines and, that’s a goal. And you can break the tape over a long period of time too like with other things. And I identify with what you did although I would have switched them and have put the heavy guy in front and saying, ‘Not only did I break the tape, I got rid of that heavy load, so that I can now go on a little faster. Jay said, “So switch them.” Sid does so. Sid, “I left that load back there and here’s somebody else and that’s what I was hearing in that story. And even though I have not found a community of people with the same background and a lot of expectations set up, and trying to not set up the feeling of meeting those expectations that I’m just not good enough. So, that load goes off right there.

**Empty chair dialog:** “I would have loved to have had the presence to back away from you and start talking to you. And it’s been my sorrow that I was at a loss for words and I hope that talking would have been more than enough to address the situation. Fred, “What about the quality of relationship between you?” Sid, “I would have hoped that had we been successful that it would have showed us that we could have worked through some very harsh territory. The fact that we couldn’t is part of the problem. I realize that. Not the only part of the problem but it was the foundation of what caused us to separate.” Fred, “Is there any thing else you wanted her to know?” Sid, “No, we talked about my feelings of inadequacy and I talked about her behavior and I could say that I loved her but didn’t like what she was doing. ‘I love you but I don’t like you very much.’”

**Speaking how they have been affected by participating:** “It has been how that everything that has happened here today has gone back to my childhood in some way, the early influences, early development. My dad of course had different reactions for my sisters, and looking back as the years have gone by, I’ve never thought about looking back, why should I look back at that? And it actually took a little bit to bring it forward. So tying it all together I am seeing what the relationships were and even though I know that I am not seeing it all it’s a very interesting scene that I am seeing and I can claim a little more of my life.”

**Name:** Bob from “C”                      **Date of Exploration:** 04-18-2010

**Current state of the relationship:** Wife’s daughter, does not have a good relationship with her currently. He and the girl’s mother are now divorced and she (the daughter) is quite angry about it, and is not communicating with Bob at this time.

**Art 1 Title:** *S in M.P.*  Bob stated that he cannot draw, that he cannot just let go and put things down on the page. He states that he literally cannot connect with himself in the way that I am asking and that he would have not chosen to participate if he had known that he would be asked to draw. After assurances that whatever he produced, including nothing, was fine he agreed to continue. He stated, “If I had an image I could render something, but this kind of process is foreign to me. I don’t get what people mean when they say they express themselves through visual art, I’m like tone deaf that way, and I don’t want to just make up something that is just nothing, and to pass it off as being a genuine expression.”
Sounds for Art 1: Throughout this part Bob stayed away from the art as others commented on his piece even though they were prompted to stay with their own experience. Sam was especially hard to keep on the track of his own internal experience, he mostly focused on explaining others expressions.

Participant’s Story: “This is the first time I have said a word about this to anyone. My wife who was my girlfriend at the time I think was aware of it. We were in our thirties, we both had children from previous marriages, she had just gotten out of her marriage and her daughter was about 18 months old at the time. Her daughter is a kind of histrionic being, has always been, it’s never been an extreme problem it’s just a characteristic of her, and actually she can be quite pleasant and helpful. Now she is 26 years old and she is trying to address it (her histrionic nature) and trying to address it because it has been difficult for her. But at this point she was under the stress of having separated from her father and I was still not aware of how extreme my own childhood abuse was. I was very clear on how I am emotionally incompetent to take care of children and how to be emotionally empathetic and patient with children. And I have lots of experience, my daughter was several years older, I have lots of experience of not being patient with a child. And I was slowly incensed by the way she would expect to be taken care of, wanting to be indulged. We would spend way too much time every night trying to get her to sleep, she basically had to fall asleep from fatigue before she, she wouldn’t voluntarily fall asleep by herself. And I expect that if I had ever acted out that deeply they would have hit me so I shut myself down. I have no memory of ever having taken an action; none of my systems defenses have a behavior (attached to them). When people do things I make decisions about them but I don’t act, I don’t actually take an action. So this was, there were tons of other episodes, but this one specific episode was she was just old enough to start having her own motor skills and I wanted her to help putting on her own shoes, put on her socks, put her shoe on, and then I would tie them. We were in her room by ourselves and I just keep insisting that she do this, and her reaction like always was just whine and cry, and feel like she was being oppressed and put upon and would not make any effort. This went on for probably 20 minutes, with her not paying attention, with her whining and crying, and she never did make any effort, and she would not cooperate. And all I just dominate her by insisting that she keep trying, by pushing, pushing, pushing, and it just made it worse and worse. And she just didn’t like being around me, she never had. She even owned in therapy during her adolescence that she would refuse to do things just because she knew that I wanted her to. I was always trying, ‘I know that I cannot do anything emotionally for you but at least I can train you to do things like tie your own shoes, clean up your room, help with the dinner dishes,’ and she never once cooperated at all. ‘If that’s what you want, I’m not doing it!’ And that’s the dynamic of our relationship.”

Participant’s Journaling about telling his story: “Strong feelings in my belly that I was just as much a victim as (my step-daughter) because I was aware, during the episode, that I did not want to behave that way, and that I had no capacity to alter it. I could not act on another motive than that of the ‘authoritarian father,’ and could not stop.”

After other participant’s stories:
Name, Sam: “Reflexively judgmental about his being humiliated over a ‘trivial’ moment. I see I am being defensive against empathizing about another person being humiliated in front of other people, especially when he is emotionally vulnerable. 1. I know this is a core issue for me. 2. I am emotionally open but muted, feels like sinking into a depression.”

Name, Tom: “I noticed that was so absorbed in making a mental representation of HIS experience (that) I had no awareness of my own reaction. Typical for me. Also after noticing the above: very curious to know more about context. His speaking did not have enough context to explain the extreme reaction of girlfriend.”

Name, Hal: “IT nightmare, because I have been involved in similar stories I had a sense of knowing what it was like to be in his position. I felt assured about my own history of refusing to be caught in that kind of bind. This is in conflict with judgments I have had about myself for not being ambitious enough to get paid for dealing with this situation: compensating for other people’s mistakes.”

Empathy dialog: Fred, “Were you wanting to be seen for your efforts with that little girl, to connect with her?” Bob, “I don’t know that now or even at the time I was not aware of anything that I had going except to accomplish something of hers.” Fred, “So, It was important to you to show up in the way that you imagined your job was in that relationship and contribute?” Bob, “It was mostly to have something to contribute. It was a problem from the beginning. Neither of us was focused on wanting to have children, we were trying to maintain focus. She was trying to go to grad school, that was what she wanted to do with her life, she knew that she didn’t want to be a parent, that it wasn’t her life, never has been actually. So I had this function and I was really at a loss, I wanted something that I could do to contribute, and I have this internal injunction that I cannot do anything emotional so I have to do something functional, training, like that, discipline, etc.” Fred, “You had willingness to do it, were you wanting to trust that you were doing the best you could in the moment given the response you were getting?” Bob, “Mainly this was a frustration because this was not a new situation because my own child was six years old at the time so the phenomenon that I experienced was like a Dr. Jekyll and Mister Hyde where I am pretty much Dr. Jekyll with my wife and around other people with adult relationships but when I am treated like that by children I become Mr. Hyde, monstrous Mr. Hyde. Specifically, I took on the persona of my father which was the worst possible thing that could happen to me. The one thing that I did not want to happen to me was to be like my parents. The only kind of motivation I had as a kid was to get away from them and so it is shocking to me when I am with a child to be doing a perfect impersonation of my father, I feel trapped in that role. And while I realize it now, I admit that then I had no awareness that I had alternatives, choices that I could make, my behavior was on this reflexive track and I couldn’t derail it.” Fred, “It must have been horrible to you to want to contribute and the only way you knew how was something that horrified you?” Bob, nods, “Yes.” Fred, garbled. Bob, “That was also a case where I was not able to stop myself because I had a lot of physical abuse so my thing was to never hit, to not swing, so no physical contact. So the only outlet I had was to stop myself, to not raise my voice, to not use force in any way, so I felt good in knowing that at least I was not going that far. But this was a case where I couldn’t stop myself, I wasn’t trying to hit
her, I wasn’t screaming at her, I was just being too authoritarian, ‘You’re going to do this, and I will wait you out.’ I was going to wait her out.” Fred, “So even though you weren’t hitting her you were still using force?” Bob, “And there was a conscious thing in the back of my mind that was saying, ‘You are doing it now!’ And I just could not stop it. The energy was the same, and it was just a full-on expression of my father even though there was no hitting or screaming. I couldn’t stop and I couldn’t let it go. In fact I did eventually tie her shoes for her but I prolonged it for so long and I couldn’t not let go of it. No sense of what I was trying to do.” Fred, “How horrible for you to not want to do that and to still be doing it. Did that quality affect your relationship throughout?” Bob, “It was not the last time, that was the quality of our relationship pretty much as she was growing up.” Fred, “Have you been struggling to find a way to address that when it comes up?” Bob, “I have two (too) long stories to tell about it, I went through an extreme shock when in therapy and I found a spiritual teaching that has been very supportive with this thing, and I have literally put all of my resources into that. So, I have actually fixed that.” Fred, “And you would like to be seen for that effort?” Bob, “Yeah (He nods at Tom), the problem is that I do not have credibility, and she does not see that.” Fred, “And you would like acknowledged?” Bob, “She does not seem to want some kind of reconciliation, she doesn’t seem to want that. She has been around me face to face and even though I have been encouraging her to she doesn’t seem to want to revisit the area. She is not willing to read my, I sent her an apology letter. But she justifies it by saying that she has suspicions that I am just trying to do damage control.” Fred, “You would like to be seen for the efforts that you have made? (pause), Are you feeling hopeless of being acknowledged?” Bob, “It’s not so much that I want to be seen for my efforts because I appreciate myself for the efforts that I have made, but she and my wife are my community and I want appreciation from my community. So the only appreciation that I get are from people that have seen me go through the changes within a formal kind of client setting. And I am getting support from my (current) wife because she sees that I am literally not being given the opportunity to show them, so I have to have the appreciation for that for myself. And when I remember my step daughter I would really like to have a relationship with her now. Especially because she is an adult now, the hard parts over, and that is when I can actually be OK. I like interacting with people on the adult level like that.” Fred, “Are you hopeful that you can eventually have a relationship with her?” Bob, “Hopeful, yeah. The impasse is that I have a sense that it’s not going to work if I try to take too much initiative, because it will look like I am just on her again and she will just push back, I know that. And so I just have to wait for a situation where she sees that I am not just trying to pull them off or trying to manage the situation.” Fred, “It must be frustrating waiting for her to come forward when you are willing and able now to meet her.” Bob, Nods, ‘Yes’, “Right.” Fred, “Are you hoping that you can develop trust so that you can go forward and work together, she is your family?” Bob, “Right.” Fred, “Is there more about that?” Bob, “I’m not actually in the same family as her, and the dynamic she was aware of this too it is a typical reaction of the child to what is called a ‘Blended’ family, they just cannot trust the other parent. My daughter did not experience me having any kind of loving relationship with her mother and I can still see how she has spent a very long time trying to make sense of the three of us together in the family. It was kind of hopeless so her acting out, even though she was having a much more positive relationship with my wife, she still couldn’t hold a conversation with her step-father. Plus he’s co-dependent because his father is an alcoholic so she has kind of a co-dependent,
and she carries a long time dynamic of, ‘I’m not going to participate in this notion of us being a family.’ And in fact, I was kind of acting out the same way too. And I was watching my wife recapitulate her relationship with her father and her step-father. And it was confusing to me and I was trying not to repeat that, but it turned out that it seemed impossible for her.” Fred, “It sounds like you longed for a different relationship in your family?” Bob, “It was something that I was trying to get on top of, like I said, I was trying to understand the notion of having a normal family.” Fred, “Given the example you had, if it was going to be like that then, ‘no.” Bob, “Well yeah! It was incomprehensible and bizarre to hear people talk about their families and to hear them say things that were nothing like what I had. There was a certain sense that I wanted family relationship, the problem was . . . MY FAMILY. I haven’t spoken to my father in the last ten years and my mother is deteriorating with Alzheimer’s, and I have a sister who is crazy. So the worst thing in the world is to have too much of a relationship with her. My wife’s family is completely different. She had a lot of problems with them but they are not as toxic. And they have a capacity for inclusiveness that’s an ideal I wish I had when I was trying to raise these children of what its like to be human. It was something that I had given up on and repressed for so long and now it is something that is slowly coming up again.” Fred, “Are you trying to change your relationship with your definition of the word, ‘Family?’” Bob, “Yeah, and there is the reality that the actual biographical history of our relationship has this horrible black mark in it. So it can’t be like the good old times. And right now its very frustrating because connecting from her past seems like the only thing that she can do and I really want to find a way to move forward and I have a desire for it.” Fred, “Are you hoping for reconciliation and to find a way to make retribution and work through things rather than in your family in which that wasn’t possible?” Bob, “Right.” Fred, “In your old definition of family there is no hope for reconnection, and to have one the includes forgiveness, growth, and understanding seems like something you truly long for.” Bob, nods, “yes.” Steve, “I’m really struck by your will to create this sense of family given what you had growing up. And the frustration of not having the tools to do so, but yet the will is still there, and the two seem to be at odds in some way.” Bob, “The bind is, I’ve done a lot of work on this because I have a psychology background and people perceive this kind of thing at the same level that you got your ethnic persona, and when that is missing it becomes irreplaceable, even therapists don’t know how to replace that kind of sense of things and I feel like I missed that and the only thing I have available is compensation because I cannot replace that. So that is the bind part, there is just no way to create that kind of behavior.” Fred, “Are you craving this kind of experience?” Bob, “Well, to recover it seems to require an enormous amount of effort, what I think of as a spiritual capacity that doesn’t come easy. Whereas for other people its automatic I have to do it very, very intentionally in order to accomplish it, what for others is a reflex, its not easy.” Fred, “Given what you came from, is it hard to imagine what loving family relationships look like?” Bob, “I’ve been kind of imagining it from observing other people.” Fred, “But how it would feel and how you would occupy it is more elusive?” Bob, “Yeah, I can make up a story but I don’t know how it would feel for myself.” Fred, “Is there more?” Bob, shakes his head, “no.”

Sounds for Art 2 D to M, it looks like there is a relationship here now, there are two in the picture instead of just one. Bob, “Uh, huh.” Tom, “Still too much pain.” Sam, “About Bob’s piece, “Its interesting to me that there is now two people in your drawing and while
there is still pain in the drawing and your first one was only about your pain, now there are two people and it seems that now you can see her pain as well.”

Art 2 Title:  M and S Now

Expressing what has arisen up to this point in the exploration. I was hoping that there would not be comments made about what I have produced, its hard for me to notice any emotional response and when others are “explaining” what my work is about I am taken away from even the minimal amount of attention that I am able to pay to what is going on with me. I did not want this to happen.

Sounds for Collage:  Bob said, “I have the usual reaction of non-involvement regarding trying to detect a meaningful response to the art work.”

Expressing as journaling what has arisen in response to viewing the collage and hearing the story. “I have associations in my mind about my experience having it told to me that feelings of the uniqueness of suffering and trauma are inaccurate: that most other people have the same or similar experience. I understand this; my feeling response is that it is no longer comforting to know this because it is not enough or even part of the process of healing MY trauma. . .”

Sculpture Name. Agitation Unexpressed

What sculpture would say. Silence

Sculpture placement: All sculptures were placed in a square in the middle of the room.

Empty Chair dialog: “(Step-daughter’s name), I know that I cannot connect with you in the same way that others can, that I have limitations in my ability to express emotions and engage in relationship. And I want you to know that I am trying even though I don’t have role models that I can trust. I want to be comforting and compassionate but do not know how to access comfort and compassion inside myself, so all I know how to do right now is to try to help you learn how to tie your shoes. I am hoping that you will understand that, and you are a child and are probably very disturbed when you are with me because I am different and its difficult for you to trust me. At some point I hope you know how much I want it to be different between us and at this point I cannot imagine how to make it up to you.”

Speaking how they have been affected by participating. “I have had what is a very familiar experience for me, that it is impossible for me to feel anything when I am asked to record my feelings; I just don’t get it and I find it very frustrating that I cannot respond to the art or make sounds or any of the things that other people normally do. I did like being able to tell this story, to try to get a sense of what was going on with her and with myself at the time, but I am still stuck with wanting to be able know what my feelings are and having an experience of not having any.”
Name: Hal from “C”       Date of Exploration: 04-18-2010

Current state of the relationship: Incident with boss at work, he has retired and no longer sees his boss who since moved to another country. He states that they would be able to sit down and have a talk whenever they were to connect again.

Art 1 Title:  *Broken Deal*

Sounds for Art 1: Hal to Bob, “This from the guy that says he has no art skills, I am amazed.” From Tom to Hal, “Is that a mushroom cloud?” Hal, “Yeah, I went nuclear.”

Participant’s Story: “Just a little bit of background because this is going to be a professional relationship story. I worked for forty years in the same field, all called information technology, for three different firms. The least amount of time that I worked for someone was ten years and this was the eighth year, eight or nine years at this place. I am personally hardwired to be helpful, some times to the point of taking on more than I should ever take on to try to make up for stuff and then I get into trouble and overwhelmed and then get angry for taking on too much. I was working on this project for a very large company, a multi-billion dollar firm, I was the project manager for a multi-million dollar project. I had a team that was unfortunately weaker than it needed to be in terms of the demands of the project, they didn’t have all the talents necessary to be successful in this project we were working on. As a consequence, I was the most experienced and had the broadest content knowledge about what was going on and I was continually picking up the pieces, a little here, a couple of hours there, and I would do it. Which turned into long days, long nights, long weeks, absences at home that became another problem about, “You’re not at home! You’re not doing the things you used to!” So it was a tough time. And I had a big mile-stone meeting coming up with the board and I never go into a meeting like that without having individual, one-on-one meetings with all of the participants so there would be no surprises. “These are the issues that I want to talk about and this is the way it is and the last person that I networked with was my boss. He said, “I have talked to all the guys on the board. They’re not happy with the progress on the schedule. I’m not surprised, I’m not happy either, and we need to be careful about what we promise in terms of what we can deliver in the future, and how much we can catch up on everything, fine, and I’ll back you up.” So we are sitting in the meeting room, it went pretty much as I expected because I had had all these little one-on-one sessions and then the chairman expressed frustration with the progress of the project and my boss said, “Well we’ll fix that, you know we’re going to catch up.” (At this point Hal stops speaking and acts out looking at the space next to him with what looks like frustration and outrage on his face.) And then he went into some more promising and then the meeting ended, and I was just stunned at what he had just done because he had just signed me up for more of what I had been doing and I didn’t know how I was going to be able to do it. I let him get to his office, I walked in, closed the door, called him all kinds of bad names, and quit, and walked out. About twenty minutes later I asked myself, “Am I unemployed?” (Laughter) “What have I just done?” I mean I was just so angry I was shaking with it. I told myself, “Well, that probably didn’t go very well!” So I went home, spent time with my wife, got up the next day and went to work, walked into his office and said, “So is this the office I should be in or should I be in the personnel office looking for
something else? He said, “Go to work.” We got through it but I felt betrayed, victimized, and it took a while for us to get back on an even keel. It also didn’t turn out to be as bad an experience professionally as I thought it was going to be.”

**Participant’s Journaling:** “Story: Broken promise: Do these guys see the importance of the professional situation? Can they relate? I have no ability to answer the above one way or the other. Is this a ‘good enough’ story? There are always those parts of a story that you wish you had included.”

**After other participant’s stories:**

**Name, Sam:** “Story – ‘Lost Voice’ – has never happened to me – must have been gut wrenching – awful – unusual story that stunned me somewhat – kind of “wow – I can’t imagine what that would be like.” – wonder how it resolved itself, he sings now.”

**Name, Tom:** “Story - ‘Karaoke.” Great drawing! Took guts to tell that story. Wonder what her motivation was to start the incident? Wonder why he would ever have any further contact with her – I wouldn’t if you paid me. Her forgiveness isn’t real, she doesn’t forgive at all.”

**Name, Bob:** “Story – ‘Stubborn Daughter Pushes Dad’s Buttons.’ I was really scared by where this story seemed to be going – glad to not hear of any physical violence. Brave guy to tell this in a room full of strangers, (I) wonder why he picked that one? He seems pretty ‘controlled.’ Is that his face in the picture? I feel he has a good handle/knows himself – better than I know myself – at least I am not in that much control. Story went from ‘About him’ to ‘About her’ and he is not (un-readable).”

**Empathy dialog:** Fred, “It must have been totally shocking after having a conversation with your boss to sit in the room and hear him say, ‘Hal’s going to fix it for us!’” Hal, “Yeah. When you, I volunteered to participate in today’s session, I went back and looked at different events in my life and I’ve had problem with over commitment, always a trying to help kind of thing so its not unusual for me to get over committed into something. The problem for me is when I over commit and then get negative feedback about my performance, ‘This isn’t going well, you didn’t do this well,’ kind of thing. All the while I am giving them way too much, ruining my family, all this kind of stuff, and I am getting nothing but that kind of crap back. So I saw, I keep a journal, I saw a number of incidents that were like that and I said, ‘Well I have this one or that one, and I’ll just pick one.’ But this one was different because it was the one where I felt betrayed. I had a really good working relationship with this guy in a lot of respects, I had been successful in the company, and I had been successful in his opinion with the company, and I thought that I had managed a bad situation as well as it was going to be, the project was going to end, it was going to be OK, I thought that my management was going to work out all right, but then my manager sold me out, I thought that he had sent me down the river. I’m not slow to react. I can make myself take deep breaths and think about something before I would do something, then I usually wouldn’t lose control. Sometimes with a practiced behavior you can keep going and you need to work on it to keep it going, but that day it didn’t work. I really had had it, I just walked in and blew up and I really quit. I just
thought, ‘You bastard, I’m never coming back here again.’ Of course I didn’t stay there, it was the last thing in the world I really wanted to happen because I loved the place, it was one of the best places I’d have ever been, a bunch of decent people like him that I really cared about.” Steve, “And you had put so much work into it and you wanted some recognition, and maybe not even recognition, maybe some acknowledgement that you had put so much into it, that you had made a lot of sacrifices already, and now you were going to have to put in more?” Hal, “Yeah, that was again I thought we had a deal that we had talked about together, we take lumps, we take lumps together but to have him say, ‘I’m sure that Tim can take care of this.” Fred, “Was it frustrating to be the scapegoat when you thought you had an agreement?” Hal, “Yeah, yeah. I thought we were in partnership and he knew as well as I did why these things were going as they were going, poor expectation setting in the beginning and work resource issues along the way.” Fred, “I heard you say that the people you were provided with didn’t have the skills necessary to the job.” Hal, “Yeah, they were having to learn on the go and I was having to keep them on the go, and the only way you can get out of it yourself is to make sure that someone else can pick up the pieces. It was a tough deal. I said at the beginning that, well he is in Germany now, but if we sat down and had a dinner, we could ask, ‘How’s your family,’ without bitterness. And it didn’t, well the next day, talk about a guy who has to be admired, I mean he could just have easily said, ‘Hey, that little outburst was my salvation because now I can say, ‘You’re gone,’ call time out on everything and find a new project manager. But he didn’t do that, instead he said, ‘Go to your office and go back to work.” Fred, “Grateful for that, that he acknowledged that you were blowing steam?” Hal, “Yeah, it could have been really ugly.” Fred, “It sounds like you enjoy working there otherwise?” Hal, “Yeah, it was a good place, a successful place, it was making money, I was making money as well.” Fred, “And was the work interesting? It sounded like you enjoyed it?” Hal, “It was place full of people that you really enjoy being around. In a lot of companies they are full of people who in their offices they are hands off, don’t want to see you. Maybe I was that guy, I don’t know, but I didn’t have any of those kinds of relationships there, it was a totally classy place to work in terms of the people.” Fred, “The people were the satisfying part?” Hal, “Uh huh.” Fred, “The connections you had there?” Hal, “Uh Huh.” Fred, “Was it a challenge to believe that about the place and then your boss did that?” Hal, “Well, I don’t know if I felt that, I just really felt sold down the river. I didn’t think, ‘Well this really is a crappy company after all,’ I just thought, ‘You bastard! How could you do that to me!?‘ Things from that standpoint. And I can tell you the next day was kind of tenuous so that was lonely. That was one of the times in my life that has promoted me to spend a lot of time learning how to manage and look at those things where I am feeling judged and to determine whether I am being judged, and by who, and which one counts, and that kind of stuff. So I have had a lot of professional counseling around those kinds of things.” Fred, “Was it hard for you to trust that guy again?” Hal, “Umm, no, because he let me back in. That relationship was like a bad dream that moment. Later on there came acquisition of another business and he gave me a bigger job so . . . I had a big violent eruption, and then it was over.” Steve, “Did it kind of sensitize him to where you were coming from?” Hal, “He’s a smart guy. We had all gone through lots of, this is a multi-cultural environment and the company actually had me trained to work with people from different cultures in that environment and to understand what were their motivations and how they wanted to look and that kind of stuff. And If I had fallen back on that training so that I could have understood why he
did what he did I don’t know if I would have felt any better, but at least I might have understood it. But I didn’t take time to do that. And I know that I am the one that got through that situation OK. I mean no one likes to have someone blow up in their face or anything like that, so. He took me back and kept me there.” Fred, “Do you long to have better control over that part of yourself so that the next time it happens you can make a better choice?” Hal, “Well, that was a couple of years before I retired, and you have to go back over the time difficult times you have experienced. I behaved well in some of them and there were times that I wish I had done something else. Again, that is a practice. I think you are wired in a way, your personality, and it’s hard to change personalities so, now I have some techniques. But even so, even now as a retired person I mean there will always be events that don’t go well, that they ignore you or something like that. I don’t think I’m scary or anything like that. Not like that, that was pretty noisy, the noisiest one.” Fred, “Is there more about that.” Hal, “I don’t know how often you get a chance to feel forgiven.” Fred, “So in that moment you felt that?” Hal, “Yeah, the next day I felt forgiven, so, it was kind of a blessing, so.” Fred, “It must have been a tremendous relief?” Hal, “Yeah! I mean it took a little while for things to kind of calm down inside me, and I was glad to be employed, especially in that place where I so much enjoyed the people. It could have worked out different; it could have worked out much worse. I was able to retire when I was not quite 62. I could see that they wanted to do some re-arranging, they were moving people around, and I had told my boss, which was an entirely different boss by then that I was going to pull the trigger when I was 62 so, what do you want to do for the next six months. So I retired early and they gave me a nice package to do that. And that all might not have happened, that’s forgiveness.” Fred, “Is there more?” Hal, “I don’t think so.”

**Art 2 Title:**  *Project Timeline*  (Hal reports that the figure in this drawing is an icon of himself that he has been drawing for as long as he can remember.)

**Sounds for Art 2:** When asked what the object in drawing is Hal replied, “Its my standard doodle that I do over and over again. And when it is really big I call it a dandelion, it’s supposed to look like a weed with a cat’s head on top of it. Sam, “I like the line that depicts the passage of time.” Hal, “Uh huh. I keep wondering what the apple in the middle is about.” Fred, “We just make them, we don’t explain them.” Tom, “Sometimes an apple is just an apple (laughter).” Hal, “I keep looking for a worm hole. I am generally

**Expressing what has arisen up to this point in the exploration:** “That event is pretty far in my past so it doesn’t affect me as much, and I’m retired now and don’t worry at all about taking care of my family. I do feel lighter after telling my story, I think I feel more understood for how embarrassed I was that he would do that. I still have a hard time understanding if it was something about me that he thought made it OK to do that, or if, because he was from another culture, he thought that it was OK, or even expected that he would do something like that. At least I am more clear about that.”

**Sounds for Collage:** Sam to Hal, “This one looks interesting because of the change in perspective that comes from time. Hal, “Uh huh. I keep wondering what the apple in the middle is about.” Fred, “We just make them, we don’t explain them.” Tom, “Sometimes an apple is just an apple (laughter).” Hal, “I keep looking for a worm hole. I am generally
impressed with these three stories (not his) and the bravery that it took to express them. For me that is really memorable because I have no risk in telling my story, and you three do. To Sam, “This story is a very powerful story to me, look at that little red guy with the lightning bolt going to him, ZZZZP, that hurts. That hurts, that’s just screaming pain. I learned someplace that relationships are all about power.”

Expressing as journaling what has arisen in response to viewing the collage and hearing the story. “Story – ‘Who Fits?’ I think the other three stories are more powerful and more risky in the telling than mine – they experienced pain – I experienced dismay. But we are all different and alike at the same time – generally. The specific differences are what makes things interesting. But I still don’t get the apple. Fred’s story never ends – there is no conclusion – just like life.”

Sculpture Name: Bridges

What sculpture would say: “It is possible to be forgiven.”

Sculpture placement: Sculpture placed in the middle of the floor as one of four in a perfect square.

Empty Chair dialog: “Hey boss! I am confused and angry about what you did in there! I think that you sold me out! I regret yelling at you and quitting after the meeting, and I will do whatever I need to, (to) make it right between us, and I just don’t know how to trust you because of what you did in the meeting. I want to know what is going on us that you would treat me like that in front of management.”

Speaking how they have been affected by participating: “My story turned out well, I got my job back and retired on time, all because he forgave me and let me come back to work. And I didn’t tell my wife until years later. I am surprised that I had anything left over from that experience because it did come out well. I’ve enjoyed getting to know these guys, and I feel a little relieved that I got through it all so well, both that event in my life and the time I spent with you telling about it. I’m glad I came.”

Name: Sam from “C” Date of Exploration: 04-18-2010

Current state of the relationship: The relationship is currently active and he is on good terms with the person. He has a good time with this person and they enjoy each other’s company.

Art 1 Title: Silent Singer

Sounds for Art 1: Sam to Bob, “This shows an incredible amount of pain.”

Participant’s Story: “The situation that I was in, I had developed a relationship with a group of guys. The initial attraction to this group of guys was the music. We were doing pub singing, which is/was fun for me. I had not expressed myself musically singing for a
long, long, long time, and it was also being involved with the Revels. One night there was a group of us singing and they lit up with pub songs, the harmonies were fabulous and I fell in love with doing it. This group does dancing, it’s called Morris Dancing, and I decided ‘What the hell’, I’ll get involved with the group and do some Morris Dancing. So, what they do is they get together on a Wednesday night and do the dancing and then go to a pub and do pub singing. You drink a beer or two and the whole idea is that you are singing sea chanteys, drinking songs and what have you, and having a great time carousing. And it really isn’t carousing, its people enjoying singing together and enjoying spontaneous singing and making harmonies, and that’s a form of singing that I had not done for years, and years, and years. I’d been a folk singer and played guitar but it’s a different thing to start learning songs, part of that tradition is that you learn a song and bring it to the group and teach it to them and then they sing it and make up their own harmonies to it. The guy that is the head of the dance group is also kind of the head of this group as well. He’s a little bombastic, a little full of himself; he tends to throw his weight around. After being in this group for about six months I had learned one of the traditional songs that people sing and I had sung it a couple of times at the pub sings. One night he ended up commenting after I had sung the song, off the cuff about how he wanted to see that song retired because people had been singing it for too long, it was too much of an old standby, and he made a couple of other comments about the song and intimated some things about my singing. I have a good voice, I take a certain amount of pride in my singing ability and my ability to sing harmony. And what that did that night was, it shut off my voice. I couldn’t sing the rest of the night and I couldn’t sing... I attended the pub sings for several weeks afterwards but did not end up singing any songs. It was hard even to participate in singing any of the harmonies. What happened for me was that it shut off my voice, it closed my voice. There was a core part of me that had suddenly found a way to bloom and blossom and it had just gotten shut down. So that is the situation.”

**Participant’s journaling after his story:** “Comments from leader of pub sing shut down my voice. I couldn’t sing, didn’t have a voice anymore. Made me angry over time – I get angry later when I’ve had time to think. In the moment though I was mute. Elements of ‘Authority’, the leader of our group dictating his preferences. Core feelings care of self-expression is closed off. Long standing desire to sing in a group was harmed.”

**Journaling after other participant’s stories:**

**Name, Tom:** “Fisticuffs story. Interesting that it is involved with alcohol as was my story, the attack comes out of the blue. This really was an attack, physical. Different from mine in that with mine, I got some buttons pushed and with him he got pushed. No explanation about why she did this, no history or background to explain where she was coming from. Me, I want some more info. Anger can be so strong and visceral – same with me – out of control. Also the social norms of ‘Don’t hit women.’ Instead with the other guy beating him up.”

**Name, Hal:** “Good set up of expectations prior to the board meeting. He knew what he was doing, good manager. Hard to deal with the moment of betrayal on the spot, wow! I feel like his reaction was justified. He’d set things up, maybe too strong a reaction to quit
(if he had quit), but something needed to be said; trust was broken. All so far is about trust being broken.”

**Name, Bob:** “Bob’s story difficult. I get the same way with my son sometimes. Situations with children can be really tough, that’s why you need two parents so if one gets too head(sp) or frustrated, the other can take over. Sounds like the girl has her own issues that really aggravated the situation. She found the controlling attitude and maintained that throughout the relationship. I want to ask if there were any positive experiences in the relationship? He’s taken a lot of pain from it and is having difficulty moving on. I guess once a father, always a father. Most children will want to reach for some independence, pitch in. surprising she didn’t want that. Of course there is more here, much more.”

**Empathy dialog:** Fred, “I remember that when you were singing a song that the person that was holding the space for it, the head of the organization said that he wanted to retire that song, that it was over sung and he then made some comments about your voice. I am guessing that you were feeling confused and outraged by his response because you were doing your best to do what you understood people in the group were supposed to do and that you brought that forward and then were not seen for your efforts?” Sam, “I suppose that is true. There is a fairly easy attitude in this group about bringing songs forward and we know that the chorus will pitch in kind of thing. For me, when something like that happens I tend to, anger is delayed, sometimes by a day or two, I didn’t get pissed off until two maybe three days later. When I processing with my wife what happened, as I was talking to her about what happened then that was when the anger finally came up. The place where I felt bad was that I didn’t end up saying anything to this guy, to say, ‘You’re out of line.’ Fortunately this is a situation that kept coming up and coming up many different times and probably six months later I got another opportunity and that time it was really clear what was going on and I let him have it in an email. For me I have always had problems expressing anger in a timely fashion. And this one was a good situation for me because I was able to express myself in a timely fashion and there was a certain sense of, I don’t know, we are in a group of guys that have this sense of full time competition about who’s the leader and, at least with this one guy you have a sense that you do not have credibility with this guy until you stand up to him, that kind of thing. And the relationship changed after I did that. I expressed myself and said that he was being an asshole and so on and at this point I don’t have any problems with him that way.” Fred, “At the time were you sad because you wanted your voice to be heard? To have a place to put that where it was accepted?” Sam, “Yeah.” Fred, “And it was kind of shut off.” Sam, “It was shut off! I internalized that an awful lot though. The next few weeks I didn’t want to sing and it was confusing to some of the people who were part of the this group because I wasn’t singing and I had been singing a lot up until that time.” Fred, “It sounds like that is a very precious thing for you to be able to express yourself like that.” Sam, “Yeah, yeah. Music has always been a large part of my life. Its not something that I have done a lot of necessarily but part of it is for me learning the words to a song and singing it, and being the one responsible for the song has been a problem. I’ve always wanted to be a folk singer, and my problem is that I would get up in front of a group of people and have stage fright, forget the words and so on. In this group you can forget the words, people will help you out with the words, that kind of thing. So it was a
supportive atmosphere, which is one of the reasons why this fellow saying what he said was so totally out of the blue.” Fred, “Yeah.” Sam, “It didn’t make any sense and it really hurt.” Fred, “And you wanted a place that you could express yourself without having to go through all that stage fright stuff and feel ok about putting it out there, however you did it.” Sam, “Right, right.” Fred, “And you thought that was the expectation of the group that you could put it out there.” Sam, “Yeah, exactly.” Fred, “It must have been kind of a shock to have him say that, it was a shock to have this guy say what he said. Sam, “It was a shock! I was finally able to talk to one of the other guys and say, ‘What’s going on here, this is what happened to me, what’s going on?’” And he said, ‘That’s the way this guy is, but you just have to let it wash off and keep going.’ And eventually I did. Yeah, it was a strong reaction on my part and the only difference between the way I reacted this time and the way I reacted to previous situations is that I didn’t end up walking away in this instance. I guess the emotional investment of being in the pub singing was strong enough and I so enjoyed listening to everybody singing harmonies to the songs that I kept coming back. And it didn’t keep me from participating in dancing either. So there was a way that I was still invested and I stayed there, I hung in.” Fred, “There were other parts of that that were feeding you?” Sam, (nods affirmative), “Yeah, it was hard to continue to participate in the dance practice because he is the head of the dance practice as well.” Fred, “Were you worried thinking that he might do something similar in the dance practice?” Sam, “Well, yes and no, there’s a clearer sense of authority, he is the one that knows the dances, teaches the dances, essentially he is the teacher and we give him that power to carry on so there is permission for him to say, ‘You need to figure out how to do this dance step properly,’ kind of thing. By the same token he is not all that good a teacher. Having been an elementary school teacher myself I know good teaching technique.” Fred, “So with the singing you thought that was a level playing field and everyone was equal?” Sam, “Yeah.” Fred, “And that everyone could contribute?” Sam, “Yeah.” Fred, “That is what you were hoping for?” Sam, “Yeah, and one of the things that pulled me back in was that other people in the group had been enjoying some of the songs that I sang and after a couple of weeks they noticed that I wasn’t singing; I would sing harmonies but I wouldn’t be leading any of the songs. And they started asking, ‘Hey, why don’t you sing this song?’” Fred, “And then you finally got back into it?” Sam, “Yeah, but that was the rest of the group which made it, actually it helped that it was a group situation rather than just one on one with me and him. So that probably helped because if it had been just me and him I probably would have just walked away. And I don’t know if I would have said anything to him or not. Just walked away,” Fred, “And would you have been sad about giving up expressing yourself in that way? That seems like something you really enjoy.” Sam, “Yeah, that would have been hard for me to deal with. I don’t know, as I’ve gotten older I’ve gotten better at expressing myself and letting people know what is going on but it is not an easy thing. It takes me longer to communicate with someone about, ‘This hurt me, this upset me, whatever.’ Then two days later you figure out what was the right thing to say at the time. But then its two days later, and it doesn’t work, it doesn’t work that way so that’s one of the reasons why its hard for me to respond to somebody in an appropriate manner and in an appropriate period of time.” Fred, “And you want to be able to do that immediately and appropriately?” Sam, “Right!” Fred, “Rather than just shut it off and not say anything?” Sam, “Yeah, yeah.” Fred, “Deal with it right there.” Sam, “Yeah. My tendency over the years is to internalize the anger, internalize the situation, and one of the things I am
working on is not doing that.” Fred, “Are you more comfortable now with your ability to stay present?” Sam, “Yeah. I still don’t react fast when I am in a situation like that; and I am faster getting back to the person say, the next day, you know, help.” Fred, “When things are still fresh enough to be able to address them?” Sam, “Yeah.” Steve, “The identification process of what happened and how you are affected by it takes a while?” Sam, “Yeah, it does. I know that a lot of my reaction, my ability to react comes out of my childhood and my lack of, my parents always tried to . . . protect us I guess? From situations that they found I guess distasteful. So we never got to see them fight, we never got to see them disagree with each other really. And there is a very real sense, I know from raising my own children now, that there is a very real sense that you model for your children what is appropriate behavior. How do you deal with conflict? That kind of thing. And as an elementary school teacher I was required to broker deals and figure things out with kindergarteners and 1st graders that generally concerned, ‘Somebody punched me and I’m going to punch them right back.’ And you say, ‘Ok, now wait a minute!’ But I did not have that example for me when I was growing up as a kid so I when people would get mad at me I wouldn’t know how to deal with it. And I’m not sure, and I’ve never really thought about it in this way, I’m not sure what happened to me getting mad at my mom for doing something like kids do. Like wanting to go out and play and mom saying, ‘No, you have to clean up your room.’ And then getting mad for doing something like that. I don’t remember having those particular kinds of interactions. And it’s been a very long road to learn how to express myself when I am having very strong emotions. Usually in the past what would happen is that I would end up tearing up and choking up and end up crying because I am trying to express something that is personally, I’m trying to express strong emotion. And I’m getting, now that I’m 51, I finally getting to that ability and to be able to say, ‘No, this is the situation, this is where I’m coming from.’ And I can approach it in a strong and for me stable way.” Fred, “To not have to hide your experience?” Sam, “Yeah, let people know what is going on for me and what I need.” Fred, “You want them to hear that?” Sam, “Yeah, and there is a sense that I am positive about myself and that I am putting out there what is true about myself without being . . . , without being necessarily, it is combative, I’m not sure what word I’m looking for, without being abusive I suppose.” Fred, “You want to be true to yourself and real?” Sam, “Yeah, true to myself in letting them know that that person was out of line. And it’s made me a stronger person. And my wife noticed that, because she and I end up talking about the situation with this one fellow in the mean time and she has ended up supporting me and she noticed that once I had stood up to him in this particular situation, when I fired off an angry email, that nothing happened on his side but that it changed who I was and how I reacted to people, I feel stronger as a person. My wife noticed that.” Fred, “You feel more confident that you can engage people when the heat is high in the kitchen?” Sam, “Yeah, yeah.” F, “In a way that works?” Sam, “Yeah, yeah. It’s good.”

Art 2 Title: Harmony

Sounds for Art 2: “Part of the drawing is the sticks, basically part of the singing and dancing is that you wack these sticks together rather than beating each other over the head with the stick, we are able to dance together and have a good time.”
Expressing what has arisen up to this point in the exploration: “I feel relieved after telling that story, and a little embarrassed. These other stories were about other doing something to other people, and I shut down. I am glad to tell my story because I am acknowledging that I have accomplished something because of it.”

Sounds for Collage: Sam to Hal, “It seems that you do have a risk in telling your story because it is about your ongoing struggle around flashing, going off. There is a very real sense among the men in the dance group of who has power and who doesn’t. It not a real obvious thing and not something that you are beat over the head with but there are times that it comes up and you come back and re-evaluate your participation in the group based upon what you are getting out of it versus some of the personalities involved.”

Expressing as journaling what has arisen in response to viewing the collage and hearing the story: “Sympathy for Bob and his situation with the step-daughter. He did make changes in the way he raised her. He was not his father or mother, didn’t raise his voice, didn’t beat the step-daughter. He’s struggling with forgiveness – forgiving himself and trying to find the daughter’s forgiveness. His images were the most powerful for me. Very intense, strong, painful, lonely. He has come so far, changed so many things in the way he has approached his relationships.

I am hopeful for Tom. The physical altercation is getting further and further away. Interesting to note that the former girlfriend was an the outsider of the social group for the past few years – girlfriend trying to get back into the group that he never left – at least that’s the implication. It seems that in spite of the accusation from former girlfriend he stayed with it, hung on to those relationships and is far better for it.”

Sculpture Name. Story Tellers

What sculpture would say. “I can find a way in if I work hard enough.”

Sculpture placement: All sculptures placed touching in a square in the middle of the room.

Empty Chair dialog: “(Group leader’s name), I’m confused and angry that you would say that about the song I offered. I understand that you lead this group, and I want to know that I am welcome and will be treated just like everyone else here. Now I would like to sing Say Will We Yet now and want your support rather than your criticism, will you offer that?”

Speaking how they have been affected by participating: This has been good for me. I didn’t know what would happen and seeing that all of us have done things that didn’t turn out very well, I am relieved that I am not alone. Especially because I know that, (sings) ‘There but for fortune, go you or I.’ I can see how effective it is to address what happens, especially as soon as it happens; and I am grateful that I had my wife to talk to about what happened to me. I think that I am surprised that I still had some residual and perhaps un-dealt with charge around what happened especially because I have been able to address it with him and can now stand up for myself better than before. I do envy those who can speak up immediately, that is changing slowly for me, and I am curious about
why my response is to shut down when others can so clearly defend themselves.”

Name: Tom from “C”                   Date of Exploration: 04-18-2010

Current state of the relationship: Ex-girlfriend (two years, incident four years ago), they are in touch, they speak on the phone but when he hears that they might meet at events sponsored by friends they have in common he is uncomfortable. Over time their encounters have progressively improved since he started using Nonviolent Communication.

Art 1 Title:  Karaoke Shutdown

Sounds for Art 1: Tom to Bob, “This is incredible, it’s amazing.”

Participant’s Story: “So there was a woman that I had been exclusively dating for a couple of years. We were going to move out here and it had been difficult (between us) for a couple of years. We were having a going-away gathering at a Karaoke place and it was taking a long time to get to our songs, hours since we been there. None of our friends had been called up and it looked like it was going to be some time before we got our chance. So I very drunkenly said, “Lets just get out of here! Lets just leave, forget it.” She said, “No, no, no, no.” And then some friends were actually going to leave, they had had it by this point. So a couple of friends were going to the bathroom, and my buddy was going to the bathroom first so I said, “Hey I’m going to go with you.” I wasn’t intending to leave, I was just going to go to the bathroom and say goodbye. So I’m coming out of the bathroom and my girlfriend is waiting for me, standing right there. She reared back and laid two punches straight across my face. I’m devastated! I couldn’t believe it! One I couldn’t believe and then the second one! We were both very drunk and I wasn’t going to let it go down like that so I swung back at her but I was too drunk to be effective. But even before I got going a guy about 6’6”, 300lbs, looks like an NFL linebacker, he sees this and he lays into me and beats the hell out of me. I’m a bloody pulp by this guy who is five times my size and just destroys me. So my glasses have gone off and I am completely helpless. So, I couldn’t even run. And then security came and I found my glasses and ran out of there because I didn’t want to get the authorities involved. And we’re out in the parking lot and I have adrenaline just coursing through me and in anger and rage I wanted some kind of revenge so she comes out there and she’s saying, “Oh I’m so sorry!, And I’m like, “Right” And I hit her in the parking lot. And my friend was standing there saying (to her), “That’s what you deserve!” But then she got her revenge over the next few years as she made sure that everyone she knew she told that I was an abuser. I am not physical. This is the one time in my life that anything like this has ever happened. I pay the price to this day even though we seem to kind of have let this go, for the most part, she no longer seems to be actively spreading the story that I am a violent perpetrator, I am still afraid that she will attempt to paint me with such a picture. So there are a lot of fears around that to this day. We had a conversation, the last one was a few months ago, she was telling me about a conversation she had with a healer and was kind of a healing experience, The healer told her that she had to forgive her abuser and I thought, “Oh Great!” Even though you are going through a healing process I’m still the
abuser. And to this day as long as she is seeing me as the abuser I am not sure that I trust her.”

**Participant’s Journaling:** “Telling that story, I minimized the details . . . it is scary for me to tell the story because each time I do, I run the risk of it being retold by others (spread around), and that is exactly what I am scared of her doing. I still fear that “justice” has not been served in a sense. By that I mean that my story has not been told, my reputation has been repeatedly damaged, yet she gets off without any consequences. But each time I try to defend myself I dig a deeper hole for myself.”

**After other participant’s stories:**

Name: **Sam,** “I empathize with the shame, embarrassment, pain, and loneliness he might have felt. To have discovered such a fulfilling mode of expression, then to have it openly ridiculed by an “alpha” of the group . . . I imagine that could be quite an anger-filled scenario. To recover the blow to one’s masculinity could be quite the challenge, especially to do so without resorting to physical or non-physical violence.”

**Name: Hal,** “To have been completely fed-up, have given so much in terms of time, expertise, effort, and commitment, to have taken every precaution to ensure the meeting would go as planned, then to have your boss turn around (probably under significant pressure himself) and take an unexpected position that led to significantly more work for you . . . major breach of trust. Major disappointment I imagine. Then to realize how the wife might take it. ‘Couldn’t the boss have told the chairman he’d talk to me and see what we could do?’ I might ask myself. Then to walk in the next day, regretting my decision and ask for my job back . . . how embarrassing. What about future projects, the rumors, your reputation?”

**Name: Bob,** “I imagine the pain, distance, frustration, and disappointment he must feel in not having been able to connect with his own daughter. For her to have clearly taken a reactive stance against you, and for both her and you to know that yet it still carries on . . . this, I imagine, would be a huge gaping hole in his life. The impotency one must feel when as a dominant male figure in her life she continuously demonstrates your own ineffectiveness to you, and holds that against you at the same time. He says that he lacks emotional skills, but ,’ . . . the least I can help you to do is to learn to do things like tie your own shoes.’ He really cares for her well-being, and for her to not even recognize this must be deeply despairing.”

**Empathy dialog:** Fred, “At the time when it happened I am wondering if you were frustrated because you were expecting to sing and because it wasn’t happening you wanted to get out of there?” Tom, nods “Yes.” Fred, “Was it frustrating because you weren’t being heard for what you wanted?” Tom, “Yeah, I was pretty frustrated that she seemed pretty intent on wanting to sing and I thought that the whole things was saying goodbye to our friends and not necessarily sing. So there was an element of frustration with that.” Fred, “So there you were as a couple but you weren’t being heard for your part?” Tom, “Yeah, it was almost a small expression of a larger theme in our
relationship.” Fred, “That theme ran through your relationship, it wasn’t as mutual as you were hoping for?” Tom, “Yeah, and probably for her too.” Fred, “So then you go to the bathroom and come out and get decked! That must have been a shock, right? ‘Hi, bam?’” Tom, “I was completely shocked.” Fred, “Totally out of the blue?” Tom, “Yeah!” Fred, “In that moment it must have been hard to know what to do, especially with alcohol on board?” Tom, “Yeah, it was, there was way too much alcohol involved and it was confusing, reaction took over.” Fred, “Were you shocked that she would treat you like that?” Tom, “I never expected it. She never, well, she’s poured beer on me before, that was the most violent action prior to that, but there has never been indications that she would give me an actual slug or two.” Fred, “So there were no indications that she might violate your territory?” Tom, “Yeah, in the beer episode she kept expressing the scenario that I deserved it, and there was this whole thing where I believed her but still couldn’t quite grasp how the whole deserve thing calculated. I couldn’t put together how that was the justified action and how that resulted from her process.” Fred, “It was confusing how she could calculate that?” Tom, “Yeah, and then for her to play the victim after that.” Steve, “She wanted to be the parent on the one side but then she wanted to be the victim/child on the other side, with you kind of stuck in the middle there? Tom, “Yeah.” Steve, “She was assuming the authority role, ‘You deserve this.’ Then she switched in the next situation?” Tom, “Yeah, it’s a convenient position.” Fred, “Then when that big guy came and got you, that must have been completely scary, especially because he was soo big.” Tom, “Not only was the physical threat scary, but it was almost like having societies approval for her behavior. He didn’t really know the situation at all, he just saw what he saw and then went for it, yeah. And, then to get such a physical punishment.” Fred, “Without any consideration for what happened before that, the fact that you were assaulted, any of that.” Tom, “Yeah. And she watched, to know that she stood there and watched and to know that she had that pleasure and that validation by this person. A total and complete stranger, came out of nowhere, did his deed and left. You know that was incredibly frustrating.” Fred, “So she didn’t try to intervene, didn’t try to help you at all.” Tom, “She didn’t help me find my glasses, and for that part of the story to get left out in her subsequent tellings to so many people, the whole she hit me part, that this guy came and beat the hell out of me part, that was admitted, but the “I beat her” part was the story. So then I want to go tell the story, I want to tell the story (to my community) to defend myself, but then every time I tell the story it makes me look worse. It doesn’t do any of us any good for me to tell the story but I still want, I have a drive to defend myself and it just makes it worse.” Fred, “And you want to be heard for what was true for you in that moment?” Tom, “Right. So then I tried to reach out to her, to try to get on the same page with her because I don’t want to be going around telling everybody about it. But then she doesn’t want to hear it. ‘No, you did it.’ She doesn’t even want to hear, ‘You hit me first.’ Which was my whole justification for my actions. She just kept up, ‘You hit me, you hit me, you hit me, you hit me.’ And that was the end of the story. And there was that frustration with her, not ever being able to get it grounded with her, this lack of understanding for years.” Fred, “It sounds like you are feeling hopeless at having a conversation with her where you get on the same page with her?” Tom, “We’ve gotten a lot closer (since then) but . . . (laughter and shakes his head no).” Fred, “Still no shared reality?” Tom, “Yeah. We haven’t visited this actual scenario, I haven’t gone deep into it with her again, because there is so much fear at just pouring salt on the wounds. We’ve come a long way, but we’re all kinds of . . . yeah.” Fred, “Are you feeling hopeful that
you can actually talk about it at some point, so that your part can be on that plate as well?” Tom, “Yeah, I was hoping to get all of this sorted out before she started coming back into the social circle because with her girlfriends who are actually my friends too she would say, ‘Oh yeah, me and Tom had this talk about this situation four years ago and blah, blah, blah, and its really healing.’ And then someone asks what happened and the story gets told again. ‘Oh what was it about?’ Then they know, then they have their whole ideas about what might have happened.” Fred, “Are you worried about how they might see you?” Tom, “Yeah. It probably was one of my lowest points of life, and I hope it stays gone. There was a lot of growth that came out of it for sure, but the price has been more than I’d like to pay.” Fred, “And if people are going to look at you, you want them to look at everything that went on about you, not just the content of one story?” Tom, “Yeah, yeah, but I don’t want to tell the story.” Steve, “Yeah, you want to leave it behind, you don’t want it to be broadcast on the radio.” Tom, “Yeah, yeah.” Steve, “You want to move on and there is some fear of having that stigma attached to you even more than it has been attached.” Tom, “Yeah, its kind of a catch 22. I want to find other ways to deal with this story again.” Fred, “So it is like a catch 22 because if she tells the story, she tells her version which leaves out that part about you being hit. So there is no way to defend yourself at all. Kind of Damned if you do, and damned if you don’t?” Tom, “Yeah, and I don’t want to victimize myself at the same time. The temptation is to say that she was just a bad girlfriend.” Fred, “And that’s why it seems like there are no good choices, victimhood or not there doesn’t seem to be a good choice in this about how to relate to others about it.” Tom, “Yeah, I did what I did. I reacted physically, and I’ve got to live with that. It’s good motivation not to ever do it again.” Fred, “It’s been a mess, huh?” Tom, “Yeah.” Fred, “You would have liked that one to come out differently, huh?” Tom, “Uh huh. I can imagine the power if she would have hit me and I would have just walked out of there, the power I would have had in not reacting would have been immense. And I wouldn’t have to tell the story to anyone, she would have been begging for my forgiveness, and I could have just moved on with confidence. And that’s the thing about these intervening years that it’s blown my confidence. When we moved out here she was my only friend and I was hers so we got back together and stayed together for another year or a year and a half. But it was a slow breakup after that, that whole time we weren’t really together, it was a mess. A lot of verbal abuse happened after that, you know, emotional abuse and so the past couple of years I have spent getting over the emotional abuse and learning to trust women again.” Fred, “It sounds like you would like a relationship that has an entirely different quality than that one?” Tom, “Oh yeah, the opposite!” Fred, “Do you want to be able to trust that you can find that for yourself?” Tom, “Yeah (nods yes at length). And whenever there is that slightest bit of interest there is always this distrust in the back of my mind, ‘Do I really want to go in and open this potential can of worms?’ I mean I trust that I will never go physical with a woman again in any kind of conflict but there are the emotional conflicts and the prices that could have to be paid, in rumors and gossip and emotional dealings. Even having that potential there, I guess I don’t trust myself in being able to deal with it, and I want to build that trust in my ability to handle these things.” Fred, “Do you want to be able to come to a (new) relationship without that thing sitting on your shoulder that kind of colors it?” Tom, “Yes!” Fred, “And that you can find somebody that you don’t have that quality of relationship with, to know that they are out there, people that will hear you and will consider you?” Tom, “Yeah, I never had issues before her, and I don’t need to have them
after.” Fred, “You don’t want you whole life colored by this kind of event?” Tom, “No, I
don’t want to give her that much, give her the rest of my life.”

**Journaling after empathy:** “It is still hard to tell what happened because I don’t ever
know how it will turn out. I get that my story is different than the others; I broke a taboo.
And I get that Fred understands me and doesn’t judge me and I feel lighter because of it. I
wish I felt that to the same depth with the rest of these guys.”

**Art 2 Title** *No Parachute*

**Sounds for Art 2:** Hal, “Is it upside down?” Tom, “No, that’s an open box. That’s the
bottom of the box, the box is open.” Hal to Tom, “This looks like a pretty happy picture.”
Tom, “Yeah the box has been blown open, the label is going to hit the ground and
something is going to happen to it but I’m not in there, it doesn’t matter. It seems that all
of our stories are about being put in a box of some kind, and this is about getting free of
the box, not having to live that any more.”

**Expressing what has arisen up to this point in the exploration:** “It’s been good, I feel
lighter, and I have a sense that I no one is judging me right now even though I told that
story.”

**Sounds for Collage:** Sam to Tom, “The two drawings move from more stressful to
peace.” Hal to Tom, “Looks like some risk-taking coming up.” Hal to Tom, “Is it risky
visiting that relationship now and then?” Tom, “Yeah, and I need to at times in order to be
thinking out of the box. I heard a common theme throughout all of our stories of natural
power, and how our natural power was challenged by a situation or a relationship with
someone else.”

**Expressing as journaling what has arisen in response to viewing the collage and
hearing the story:** “I sometimes wonder how the rest of the world seems to do such a
great job pretending that we all don’t share the same fundamental themes in our lives.
How do others seem so perfect, seem to have themselves so ‘together.’ Apparently, many
of us tend to ask similar questions. Yet in taking on the exploration of myself individually
and finding more about our similarities than differences, I suppose I experience far less
depression and isolation now. I’m able to enjoy solitude and meet my own needs, for the
most part. It all started with recognizing that I wasn’t alone. I wonder about my brother,
and how alone he might feel.”

**Sculpture Name.** *Pillar*

**What sculpture would say.** “Put a bird on it!” Laughs

**Sculpture placement:** All four sculptures were placed in a square with the support
boards touching each other.

**Empty Chair dialog:** “I want you to know that I wanted almost anything else to happen
than what did happen, and if I could change it I would. And I want to be treated well. I
don’t know how to tell you how many times you just forced me to do what you want and you don’t seem to care or even get that you are doing it! I don’t know what to do to make this right and I don’t trust that you will accept anything that I offer. And I don’t want to have to take responsibility for your actions and mine too! I would go a long way to be able to work it out with you, and I don’t trust that you are willing to be acknowledge what you do.”

**Speaking how they have been affected by participating:** “I didn’t know how this would turn out, and I was worried about whether I could tell that story in this or any group and still be safe. I am surprised because I feel lighter about the whole thing, and I expected to feel shitty like I usually do when I tell it. I wish I could figure out how to put this whole thing behind me with the rest of my community. As old as it is it still bothers me and I feel embarrassed when I think I might run into someone that knows about it. It feels good to be able to say that in this group, I think that I am accepted here. Now if I could just work it out with her!”

**APPENDIX 11**

**SUMMARY OF THE LEARNINGS**

To: Participant in the explorations

Address

Date:

From: Fred Sly

4230 SE King Rd. #235

Milwaukie, OR, 97222

RE: Summary of the Learnings from my doctoral exploration.

Dear Participant,

I am grateful for your participation in my doctoral explorations and I want you to know some of what emerged from our work together.

There were four major learnings, the first was that your actions were shocking and a surprise, followed by being very confusing. In every case it seemed that hidden behind your actions was a perception of being excluded in some way from a relationship that was important to you, and that you were responding to this perception when you did what you later regretted.

Second was that being in a group of people who intended to work together to
explore what could be difficult territory seemed to promote your willingness to engage what might have not been addressed before.

Third was that empathy as expressed in our dialog promoted in each of you a sense of belonging and of being heard and seen for the basic human needs you were trying to meet at the time of your action. As a result, you were also able to understand the efforts you were making, and were able to accept that you were not as skilled in that moment as you wanted to be.

Finally, that as a result of accepting your lack of skill, and your basic humanity, you were spontaneously willing to make amends for the harm you caused, even though in some instances you had no hope of making amends.

I have incorporated these learnings into a curriculum I use to teach communication skills and empathy in Oregon prisons, and I believe our program is more effective because of it. Again, I am grateful for your support.

Warmly, Fred Sly

APPENDIX

ILLUSTRATION 1 – PARTICIPANT’S PAIRED DRAWINGS

Ben from “A,” second drawing, Tender Hope

Ben from “A,” first drawing, Desperate Scream for Love

Sal from “A,” second drawing, Cistern of Tears

Sal from “A,” first drawing, Repression

Ted from “A,” second drawing, Circles of Intimacy

Ted from “A,” first drawing, Illusions of Power

Jay from “B,” second drawing, Open Light

Jay from, “B,” first drawing, Angerly Awoke

Sid from “B,” second drawing, Tommy
Sid from “B,” first drawing, Rage

Bob from “C,” second drawing, “M+S now”

Bob from “C,” first drawing, “S in M.P.”

Hal from “C,” second drawing, Project Timeline

Hal from “C,” first drawing, Broken Deal

Sam from “C,” second drawing, Harmony

Sam from “C,” first drawing, Silent Singer

Tom from “C,” second drawing, No Parachute

Tom from “C,” first drawing, Karaoke Showdown

APPENDIX 13

ILLUSTRATION 2 – EXPLORATION COLLAGES
Collage from exploration “A.”

Collage from exploration “B.”

Collage from exploration “C.”

APPENDIX 14

ILLUSTRATION 3 – SCULPTURE ASSEMBLAGES
Sculpture assemblage from “A.”

Sculpture assemblage from “A.”

Sculpture assemble of “B,” after integration.

Sculpture assemble of “B,” before integration.

Sculpture assemblage from “C,” top view.
Sculpture assemblage from “C,” side view.

NOTES

Chapter 1


3. Ibid., 308.


5. Ibid., 310; 312-377.

6. Ibid., 414-430.


8. Ibid., 142.

9. Ibid., 135.


14. Ibid., 20; 57-58


16. Ibid., 202, 208-209.


20. Ibid.


32. From 2002-2006 I offered a Batterer’s Intervention Program as part of Mendocino County, California’s response to domestic violence. Additionally, I served on the county Domestic Violence council. Beginning in 2002 I taught classes in California’s San Quentin State Prison, initially to those who had violated parole, then to those serving life sentences for violent crime. Until 2008 when I moved to Oregon, I was offering NVC to around 50 incarcerated and probationary men weekly. Currently, the program I have organized in Oregon employs 32 volunteer instructors to provide weekly classes to around 150 inmates in four Oregon prisons and two post-release programs.


35. _____, *Key Definitions*, 1.

36. Ibid., 1.

37. Ibid., 2.

38. Ibid., 2.


Chapter 2


4. Ibid., 64.


10. Ibid., 382.


12. Ibid., 139.

13. Ibid., 142.


17. _____, *Totem and Taboo* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1913), 87.


19. Ibid., 143. Author states that, “Discouragement, shyness, shame, and guilt are identical as affects, though not so experienced because of differential co-assembly of perceived causes and consequences. Shyness is about strangeness of the other; guilt is about moral transgression; shame is about inferiority; discouragement is about temporary defeat; but the core affect in all four is identical, although the coassembled perceptions, cognitions, and intentions may be vastly different.”


24. Ibid., 246.

25. Ibid., 251.
26. Snopes.com. Burping is considered a compliment to the chef in certain parts of Turkey, and in Yemen you will continue to be given food until you signal that you have finished eating by burping. 2008.


28. Ibid., 110.


30. Ibid., 135.


34. Ibid., 29.


38. Ibid., 72.

39. Ibid., 73-74.


41. Ibid., 114.

42. Nathanson, Shame and Pride, 145.

43. Ibid., 145.


47. Ibid., 51-107, 127-131.

48. Ibid., 67-77.

49. Ibid., 70-71.


51. Ibid., 233.


53. Ibid., 165; 171.


57. Ibid., 132.

58. Ibid., 111-113, 147.


60. Ibid., 13-173.

61. Ibid., 172.

62. Ibid., 186.

63. Ibid., 47-49.


65. Ibid., 30.

66. Ibid., 35.

68. Ibid., 58-59.

69. Ibid., 60-63

70. Ibid., 65.


72. Ibid., 106-108.

73. Ibid., 174-175.

74. Ibid., 176.

75. Felicity de Zulueta, From Pain to Violence (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 2006), 2.

76. Ibid., 5-7.

77. Ibid., 7-8, 99-100, 109.

78. Ibid., 264-292.


80. Omer, Description of Imaginal Psychology on the Meridian University website (Petaluma, 2007).

81. Omer, Key Definitions, 1.

82. Ibid., 2.


85 Ibid., 200-204.

86. Ibid., 207.

87. Ibid., 209; 216.

88. Ibid., 209.

89. Ibid., 209, 301-332.

90. Nathanson, Book Review: “The Mask of Shame”, by Leon Wurmser. American Journal of Psychiatry 141 (1984): 598-599. Nathanson states, “Wherever I have opened the study of shame among my colleagues it has produced striking outpourings of highly charged affective material. (It is not unusual to hear contempt and scorn in professional meetings—we laugh at anyone who tries to make a colleague feel guilty, but we do not comment about attempts to create embarrassment.)” See also Stuart Simon, and Pamela Geib, “When Therapists Cause Shame: Rupture and Repair at the Contact Boundary,” in The Voice of

91. Nathanson, Shame and Pride, 251.

92. Ibid., 307.

93. Ibid., 308.

94. Ibid., 309.


96. Nathanson, Shame and Pride, 312.

97. Ibid., 313.

98. Ibid., 313-314. Nathanson states, “Someone must be made lower than I, says the denizen of the attack other pole. Every incident of domestic violence, of graffiti, of public vandalism, of schoolyard fighting, of put-down, ridicule, contempt, and intentional public humiliation, can be traced to activity around this locus of reaction to shame affect.”


102. Ibid., 18.

103. Ibid., 118.
104. Ibid., 119.
104. Ibid., 236.
106. Ibid., 236.
107. Ibid., 236.
108. Sylvia Perera, *The Scapegoat Complex* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1986). 8. Author states that the scapegoat was offered to heal the sins of the community. See also Franz De Waal, *Our Inner Ape* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2005), 161. De Waal in his observations of several species of primates including chimps and Bonobos states that scapegoating exists among these species, focused on a designated individual that receives hierarchically derived abuse. De Waal explains that the concept of the scapegoat is from the old testament of the bible and refers to one of two goats that were used in Day of Atonement rituals; one being sacrificed and the other banished into the wilderness, the “escape goat”, carrying the sins of the population.
110. Ibid., 13.
113. Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families* (New York: Picador, 1998). Genocide attributed to falsely generated shame between artificially identified groups. Thomas Scheff and Suzanne Retzinger, *Emotions and Violence: Shame and Rage in Destructive Conflicts* (Nebraska: iUniverse, Inc., 1991). The authors state, “The main theme of the work is an explanation relevant to all forms of destructive aggression. Shame leads to anger which leads to aggression. At the same time, there are forms of shame that prevent violence. Shame is both the major cause of violence and the emotion most implicated in preventing violence.” x in the forward. And further, “The overall threat of violence is pervasive in our era, having reached what might be its highest level in human history.” xvii in the introduction.
115. Ibid., 243.
116. Ibid., 244.
117. Ibid., 247.
118. Ibid., 251.


122. Ibid., 202.


124. Ibid., 209.


127. Ibid., 203.


130. Ibid., 408.

131. Ibid., 410.


133. Ibid., 214.

134. Ibid., 215.


137. Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), Picture page 5, middle right, between pages 128 and 129. Turnbull chronicles a culture in which individuals have lost empathy for each other in the face of the shame of being “less than the animals”.


140. _____, *For Your Own Good*, 240-241.


142. Ibid., 19-22.


146. Ibid., Preface vii.

147. Ibid., Preface, viii.

148. Ibid., 5.


151. Ibid., 128.

152. Ibid., 129.


154. Ibid., 8.

155. Ibid., 10.

156. Ibid., 12.

157. Ibid., 13

158. Ibid., 17.


161. Ibid., 2-8, 90, 96.

162. Ibid., 273-279.

163. Ibid., 279-280.


165. Ibid. 18.

166. Ibid., 19.

167. Ibid., 21.

168. Ibid., 23.

169. Ibid., 33-50.


171. Ibid., 132.

172. Ibid., 137.

173. Ibid., 147.

174. Ibid., 321-323.


176. Ibid., 35.

177. Ibid., 49.


179. Ibid., 71.

181. Ibid., 18-19.

182. Ibid., 19-20.


184. Ibid., 173-174.

185. Ibid., 181-182.


187. Ibid., 95.


190. Ibid., 269-270.

191. Ibid., 273-276.


194. Ibid., 21.

195. Ibid., 24.


197. Ibid., 161.


199. Rogers, A Way of Being (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1980), 137-163. Rogers reports both his increasing interest in empathy as a concept and experience, and the research efforts he has made in an effort to understand the qualities and extent of the empathic state of being.

200. ____. “The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change,” Journal of
Consulting Psychology, 21, no. 2 (1957): 95-103.


203. _____, “The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change,” 100.

204. _____, “Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being,” 156.

205. _____, “A Theory of Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships, as Developed in a Client-Centered Framework,” 1959.


210. Ibid., 464; 482.

211. Ibid., 463.


214. Ibid., 130.


218. Ibid., 35.


220. Ibid., 124.

221. Nathanson, Shame and Pride, 111.


223. Ibid., 230-232.

224. Ibid., 238.


226. Ibid., 171-172.


228. Ibid., 13-15.


232. Ibid., 585. Author claims that with sympathy self and other are not distinct whereas, with empathy they are. Author evokes two senses for the word sympathy; sympathy as the capacity to sense and become
as others, and the other the emotion, the feeling bad for another, feeling compassion for another, the condition of having become the other. Author concludes that, “Both empathy and sympathy depend upon sympathy.” 586.


234. Ana Sofia Nava, “Empathy and Group Analysis: An Integrated Approach,” in *Group Analysis* 40, no. 1 (2007): 13-28. “I will speculate on what takes place in neurobiological terms during a session of analysis when empathy is in action, which in some way is equivalent to what happens when a mother takes care of her baby, using her capacity for reverie, her alpha function.” 20. Mirror neurons mediate the sympathetic response of the therapist to the client’s affect. 20. Controlling ‘emotional contagion’ requires the analyst’s training as a person and a professional. 21.

235. Colwyn Trevarthen and Kenneth Aitken, “Infant Intersubjectivity: Research, Theory, and Clinical Applications,” *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 42, no. 1 (2001): 3-48. Authors posit that, while object awareness has been the primary focus of child-development theory, that whole person awareness seems to be more the actual capability of the newborn infant. They state that newborns have a developed psychosocial state and capacity at birth. 3. They claim that the infants inherent social mechanisms depend on responsive others and are not built from assemblages of “object” information. 4. Parents and infants as early as two months share intensive sympathetic responses to each other and influence each others’ behaviors. 4. Authors claim that two-month old infants have rudimentary individual consciousness and intention and can communicate these to others. Authors challenge the object relations assumption that infants have no sense of themselves at birth, that they are essentially one with their mothers by noting the evidence of responsiveness of infants in focused and intentional way. 6. Infants are born with a “protoconversational readiness” that convey both affect and meaning, essentially sympathetic and empathic capability. 7. Not only is attachment important, but companionship is equally essential. 7. Authors state that, “Human intersubjectivity is conceived as a process that makes it possible for subjects to detect and change each other’s minds and behavior, by purposeful, narrative expressions of emotion, intention, and interest.” 18.

236. Ibid. 4.


238. Titchener, Ibid., 293.

239. Wispe, “The Distinction Between Sympathy and Empathy, 316.


that, “A major source of shame during the toddler period is the negative reaction of a parent who looks on
the infant anxiously when the child is engaged in genital exploration or play.” 78. Virginia Demos, “A
Perspective From Infant Research on Affect and Self-Esteem,” in The Development and Sustaining of Self-
45-78. Demos states, “The child’s capacity to experience positive self-esteem rests on the degree to which
she feels competent, reliable, and related to others.” 56. Her conclusions paraphrased are that the
developing quality of reflection and empathy between mother and child determine the child’s subsequent
expression of shame and the self-concepts that support it. Alice Miller, For Your Own Good: Hidden
Miller contends that empathy is necessary for healthy growth in children. Bernice Andrews, “Shame and
Childhood Abuse,” in Shame: Interpersonal behavior, Psychopathology, and Culture, ed. Paul Gilbert and
Perspectives on Attachment Relations: Security, Communication, and Internal Working Models.” in
Broucek, “Shame and Its Relationship to Early Narcissistic Developments,” International Journal of


243. Mary Ayres, Mother-Infant Attachment and Psychoanalysis: The Eyes of Shame (New York: Brunner-
Routledge, 2003).

244. Kohut., Introspection, Empathy, and Psychoanalysis.

mirror development by actively engaging the identical processes that shape the self. It must be rooted in
precise and accurate knowledge of how the self develops, functions, and changes. A conception of
psychotherapy emerges directly from such an evolving vision of the self. If affect, imagery, and language
are the central processes shaping the self, then these identical processes must equally be engaged in order
to effect therapeutic change.” 156. And further, “Psychotherapy must provide a reparative, security-giving
relationship, one that heals shame through new experiences of identification. 157.

Reconsidered: New Directions in Psychotherapy, ed. Arthur Bohart and Leslie Greenberg (Washington DC:
American Psychological Association, 1997), 3-31. They argue that empathy includes: “deep and sustained
psychological contact”, “a deep and sustained immersion in another’s experience.” and “a resonant
grasping of the “edges” or implicit aspects of a client’s experience to help create new meaning.” 5. They
conclude that empathy is more than a background quality and is, instead, a central effector of psychic health
and change. Further they state, “...we see empathy as an essential ingredient of therapeutic practice and a
key concept in attempts to understand how therapy works.” 5. Dan Buie, “Discussion,” in Empathy, ed.
Author challenges the idea that an empathic relationship provides a corrective emotional experience.
Eugene Kelly, “Relationship-Centered Counseling: A Humanist Model of Integration,” Journal of
Counseling and Development 75 (1997): 337-343. Kelly describes therapeutic treatment as having two
qualities: a relational component, and a technical component, both contributing to the eventual outcome.
Rosemarie McCabe and Stefan Priebe, “The Therapeutic Relationship in the Treatment of Severe Mental


253. Ibid., 35.

254. Ibid., 37, 93.


257. De Zulueta, *From Pain to Violence*, 5-7, 197.

259. Ibid., 192-193.

260. Ibid., 195.


262. Ibid., 208-210, 264-292.

263. Sandra Bloom, Creating Sanctuary (New York: Routledge, 1997), 75.

264. Ibid., 85-86.

265. Ibid., 87.


267. Ibid., 124.

268. Hall, Anger, Rage, and Relationship (New York: Routledge, 2009), 201.


270. David Levine, Teaching Empathy (Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree, 2005), 20.

271. Ibid., 20-43.

272. Ibid., 43, 62.


274. Ibid., 234, 256-250.


276. Ibid., 225.


278. Ibid., 226-227.


280. Ibid., 90.


282. Ibid., 205.

283. Ibid., 207.
284. Ibid., 210-212.


286. Ibid., 19.


288. Ibid., 75.


290. Ibid., 353.


296. Ibid., 145.


300. Omer, Meridian University website description of Imaginal Psychology, 2007.


304. Ibid., 3:24.


306. Linda Sussman, The Speech of the Grail (New York: Lindisfarne Books, 1995). The story of Parzival describes the development of the capacity for empathy. Parzival develops from an individual with no understanding or will of his own to an intuitive person willing to act with integrity about his higher knowing. His willingness to endure shame and humiliation in order to gain self-awareness can be
considered an act of self-empathy.

307. Ibid., 123.

308. Ibid., 67; 79.

309. Ibid., 124-128.

310. Ibid., 71.

311. Ibid., 240.

312. Ibid., 184; 231.

313. Omer, Key Definitions (Petaluma: Institute of Imaginal Studies, 2005), 1.

314. Ibid., 2.


317. Ibid., 127.

318. Ibid., 127.

319. Ibid., 128.

320. Ibid., 132.

321. Ibid., 131.

322. Ibid., 130.

323. Ibid., 130-131.

324. Ibid., 131.


326. Ibid., 202.

327. Ibid., 203.

328. Ibid., 231.


332. Ibid., 231.

333. Ibid., 354.

334. Ibid., 337.

335. Ibid., 334.


337. Ibid., 438.

338. Ibid., 441.

339. Ibid., 454.

340. Ibid., 439.

341. Ibid., 439.

342. Ibid., 439.

343. Ibid., 439.

344. Ibid., 440, 442.


347. Ibid., 466.

348. Ibid., 471.

349. Ibid., 471.

350. Ibid., 470, 474, 478.

351. Ibid., 473-474.

352. Ibid., 474.
353. Ibid., 480-482.


355. Ibid., 314.


357. Ibid., 922, 926, 933.


359. Ibid., 501.


Chapter 3

1. Omer, reported by: Dawn Matheny, Research Methods I, course notes (Petaluma: Institute of Imaginal Studies, Fall 2004).


4. Lucy Leu, Personal Communication to Fred Sly, Freedom Project (Seattle, 2001). I participated in a three-month intensive for those who wanting to offer Nonviolent Communication trainings in prisons. This exercise was offered as part of that training and I have used it for the last eleven years in all of my workshops to provide a practice and experience of empathy.

5. Mary Oliver, New and Selected Poems (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 110.

6. The CA Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation website, www.cdcr.ca.gov/ (2008) documents that women comprised only 4.8 percent of those incarcerated in CA state prisons.


9. Ibid., 361.

10. Ibid., 251.


12. Ibid., 202.

13. Ibid., 201.


22. Rebecca Evert, Exercise provided in *Psychology and Community Making II* (Petaluma: Meridian University, Summer 2007).


Chapter 4


4. Ibid.


10. Ibid., 103-104.


12. Ibid.


16. Ibid., 94.


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

**Chapter 5**

1. John Irwin, Harvey Jackins, and Charlie Kreiner, *The Liberation of Males* (Seattle: Rational Island Press, 1992). When boys cry and pay attention to being hurt they are often labeled as ‘sissies’. The culture refuses to acknowledge that males feel as deeply as females so our feelings are seen as a sign of weakness and of not being fully ‘male’. Since the pain is not ‘real’, it is considered shameful for us to seek attention.”

6. “Men and adolescent boys are view as insatiably preoccupied with sex. This compulsiveness about sex is seen as an inherent characteristic of all males. Both other males and females are trained to expect us to be aggressive sexually. If a male doesn’t behave like this he is ‘suspected’ of being Gay, i.e., not ‘male’. If he does behave like this, however, he is also regarded with disdain, as a slave to asexual desire or sometimes with fear, as a ‘wild beast’. 8. “We are treated as objects to be used. We are used as tools and machines to produce wealth (and wealth for others, not for ourselves). We are used as weapons in war. We are seen as important for what we can do, not for who we are. When unable to do the task set out for us we are discarded. 12. Women and children go first into the lifeboats; men go ‘down with the ship’. Men go to war to kill or be killed or face disgrace and condemnation if they refuse.” 13. “As adult males we are criticized as insensitive, unfeeling, violent, unreachable, sex-driven, potential rapists and child molesters. Knowing you are seen this way is very painful. We all do show some of these effects of oppression in some degree. What is wrong is the blame. These attributes are the effects of our oppression as boys and men. Anyone hurt the way we were hurt would show these difficulties.” 14. “Men are considered better workers, soldiers, politicians, and business people. Women are considered more ‘human’, that is, better friends, better parents, and better care givers.” 17. “Men are left ‘knowing’ that they are not the kind of man they are supposed to be.” 17.


7. Ibid., 438.


11. Ibid., 240


16. Ibid., 5.

17. Ibid., 8.


21. Ibid., 167-176.


24. Ibid., 223-227.

25. Ibid., 233-234.

26. Ibid., 239-240.

27. Ibid., 66.

29. Ibid., 23-29.

30. Ibid., 44-45.


32. Ibid., 4. Gehart Piers and Milton Singer, Shame and Guilt: A Psychoanalytic and a Cultural Study (New York: Norton, 1953), 24, 28. Piers and Singer state that underlying shame is, “... the fear of contempt which, on an even deeper level of the unconscious, spells fear of abandonment, the death by emotional starvation.”


41. Nathanson, Shame and Pride, Attack Self, 326-335; Attack Other, 360-377.


52. Omer, *Concepts from Imaginal Transformation Praxis*.

53. Gilligan and Lee, “The Resolve to Stop the Violence Project: Reducing Violence in the Community Through a Jail-Based Initiative,” *Journal of Public Health*, 27 no. 2 (2005): 143-148. This study documents that with four months of intensive treatment recidivism of offenders incarcerated for violent crime was reduced 82.6%. In 2011 Oregon state proposition 57 was passed that lengthened the sentences for substance abuse and property crimes, and mandated treatment for these crimes especially substance abuse. Simultaneously the Oregon Department of Corrections instituted massive funding reductions for rehabilitation programs throughout the Oregon Prison System.


55. Ibid., 13.

56. Omer, *Concepts from Imaginal Transformation Praxis*.


58. Ibid., 17.


60. Omer, *Concepts from Imaginal Transformation Praxis*.


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_____.”Some Closing Thoughts on Affect, Scripts, and Psychotherapy.” In *Knowing Feeling: Affect, Script, and Psychotherapy*, edited by Donald


_____.“The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change.” *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 21, no. 2 (1957): 95-103.


_____. “Affect as Amplification: Some Modifications of Theory.” In Emotion:


