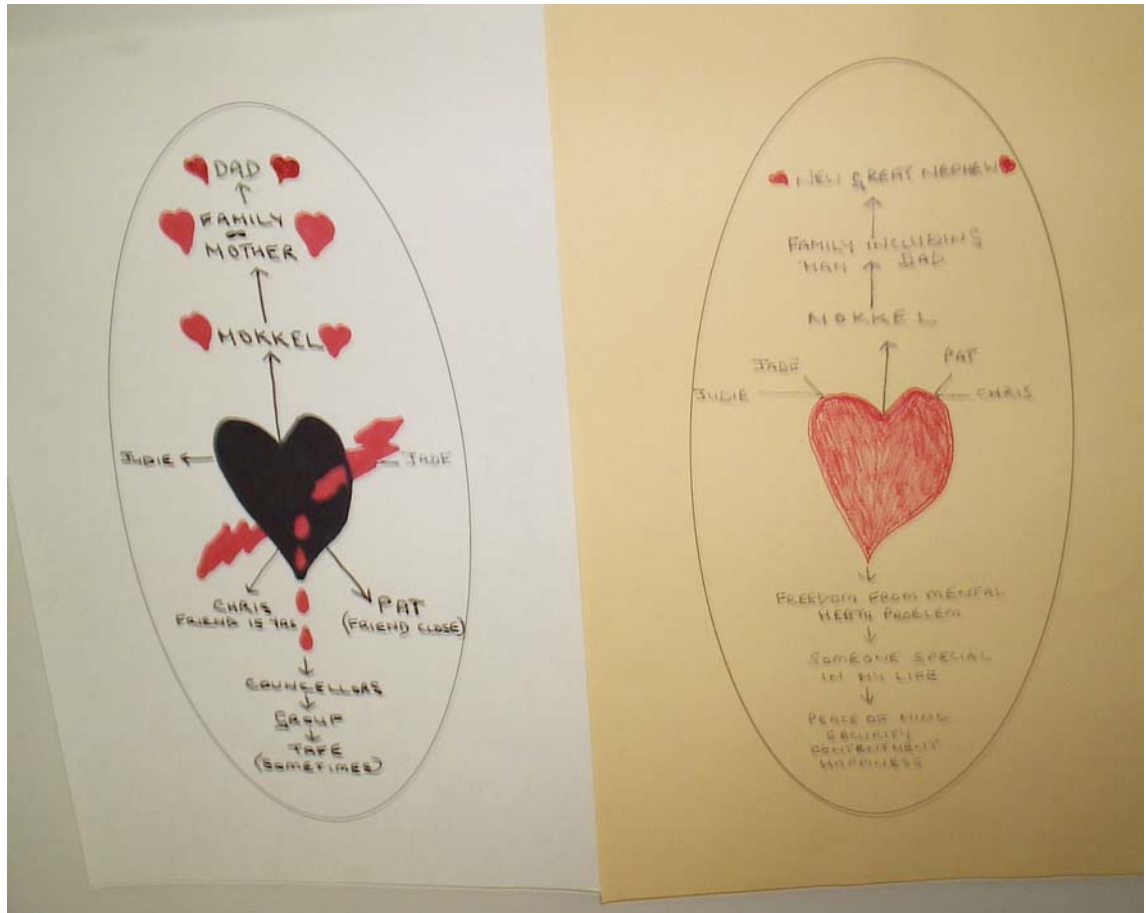


CHAPTER THREE

LOOKING FOR A PATHWAY



Theory, Values and Principles

As discussed, The Map was created from the many influences in Roslyn's life, a combination of experience and academic pursuits and I would add an innate creative ability. The search for the best approach for any theoretical grounding of The Map has taken me on yet another journey, and as a result I have gained a greater understanding of numerous theoretical positions. I have chosen to include more about my journey during this research and to briefly mention the theoretical models I was drawn to as part of the journey. It is my view from witnessing the range of issues that were dealt with, the commonalities illuminated, and the connections established, at the initial mentoring workshop, that The Map connects on many and varied levels and could be adapted to many theoretical and therapeutic approaches. This realization began the grounded theory journey looking to explore links to theory throughout this study.

Whilst initially looking for theory underlying The Map for the purposes of the research proposal, my journey began with theories of cognition and cognitive linguistics, and this led me into metaphor theory. Chosen because it assisted me in understanding the influences of The Map, metaphor theory fits well because The Map is essentially a metaphor for the life journey, but also contains within it many alternative metaphors, suitable for more specific or varied events and meaning making opportunities.

Following the results of Phase One, I was led to investigate hope theory, empowerment theory, and theoretical standpoints on the use of art and poetry in therapeutic settings. As the interview sessions for Phase Two proceeded, a little panic set in when I discovered the multitude of theoretical approaches the collaborators used in their work, and the ways they had adapted The Map to their own style. As I progressed from interview to interview and heard the views of the collaborators, I realised that because of the complexities within The Map and due to its holistic nature it would be inappropriate to anchor it within any one theory. This propelled me again into 'the swamp,' wondering just how I was going to be able to build a theory out of all this information I was given.

During this time I also read the texts *Revisioning Psychology* (Hillman, 1975), and *Integral Psychology* (Wilber, 2000). Wilber in particular was significant, because of the manner in which he draws together information and provides a vision, from the knowledge that we have accumulated over time, from many sources. That of course is about making connections, which is my passion and I believe an important role for Community Psychology. As there is so much outstanding information and activity in the world as presented by Holland (1998) that is working and providing great results, I believe as community psychologists we could be fulfilling that role, leading the way for other disciplines and agencies worldwide, to collaborate and share the collective intelligence. So that we may realise the unbounded possibilities that exist in creating a world that is more connected, whole, compassionate and balanced.

Following the 'conversation' with Roslyn, in July, I chose to add Chaos Theory to the list of must read and understand, again wondering if this journey through the world of theory would ever end. Chaos theory is also about connections and I was surprised that I had not come across it before. I was even more surprised when a PsycARTICLES search for Chaos Theory and Community Psychology failed to return any hits. Chaos Theory also has an ecological integrative vision for psychology, for

understanding the way we function as individuals, and groups, and interact with the world around us (Goerner, 1995).

Of course it is not within the scope of this thesis to address all of these theories. I am sure as more and more people come to know The Map, they will make their own links, from their particular theoretical stance, and the way they see the world. In the following section I have included a review of Metaphor Theory because it assisted my understanding of the influences within The Map. As the findings are read and interpreted by you (the reader), I am sure you will recognise other theoretical approaches that will integrate with The Map, and resonate with your own knowledge and understanding of how your world operates. By providing this brief overview of the theory I have read and investigated throughout this journey I hope that I have provided some links upon which future investigations can draw, including my own theory building process resulting from this research journey.

The significance of Metaphor

As stated by Hillman (1975), “metaphors are more than ways of speaking; they are ways of perceiving, feeling, and existing” (p.156). Metaphor is considered one of the most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally, namely our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices and spiritual awareness (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors form part of our narrative. The life we live is filled with metaphor. There are metaphors we use for everyday things, for example, I have used some reasonably powerful metaphors myself in expressing the frustrations, and challenges, I have been confronted with in completing this thesis, most of which cannot be printed here! I have also expressed throughout this report, times when I felt ‘swamped’ and times when rest and reflection was taken in the ‘forest of hope’. We use metaphors for qualifying or expressing issues we struggle with, for example, depression. There are many examples of metaphor use in everyday language, glancing through a recent edition of Partyline, the newsletter of the National Rural Health Alliance (2006), produced in conjunction with the national depression initiative Beyond Blue, one can find many metaphors people use to relate to or quantify and make sense of depression. For example, food for thought; a stone in the pond; when the cow pat hits the windmill; and even the names of some organisations developed to address this issue such as Beyond Blue, Mood Gym and Black Dog Institute.

These symbolic expressions go beyond the literal, expanding our language through comparison and interaction, and leaving the interpretation open to specifics or

the imagination (Bartel, 1983). Metaphors open us up, and they allow us through our imagination to see connections, to connect with our dreaming (Hillman, 1975). As stated by Bartel (1983) “a successful metaphor does more than merge seemingly incompatible terms; it demonstrates that the maker of the metaphor has developed both a keen sensitivity to language and a strong awareness of the unity of all things” (p.83).

It is through metaphor that we understand the world. The literature discusses metaphor as a template for the journey of life (Barker, 1996; Blenkiron, 2005; Gordon, 1978; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Seigelman, 1990; Shengold, 1981), which has the advantage of making the world predictable and therefore safe, allowing people to create their own context within safe boundaries. Metaphors transform meanings and are important in structuring how we understand our experience, statements such as ‘coming apart at the seams’ or ‘going to pieces’ for example, are often used as an expression of our frustrations with life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Kopp and Craw (1998) discuss the transformative power of metaphor and the link or bridge to changes in feelings, thoughts, behaviours and relationships. The connection between metaphor and affect, cognition and bodily experience determines our image of the world around us. The development of true insight about the world, and the individual, is a result of the connection and simultaneous experience of affect and cognition, feeling and thought (Eynon, 2001; Kopp & Craw, 1998; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Seiden, 2004; Seigelman, 1990; Vivona, 2003). Metaphor has played an important role in the invention and organisation of ideas and is a crucial aspect of our creative thinking providing a coherent structure to our investigations or ideas.

New metaphors have the power to create a new reality and not just on an individual basis. Metaphor is a part of our functioning within groups, systems and communities that allows us to create new perspectives, new solutions and new opportunities for connection (Abernethy, 2002; Barker, 1996; Blenkiron, 2005; Gentner & Grudin, 1985; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Rappaport, 1994; Reddy, 1993; Schon, 1993; Seigelman, 1990). Rappaport (1994) and Abernethy (2002) highlight the metaphoric and symbolic language that is part of social science language. Rappaport uses the example of images created by the language of empowerment, as opposed to the passive language of medicine and other helping professions. These include the use of such words as people, or consumers, rather than patients, and collaboration rather than treatment, for example. Such differences highlight the power of language in deciding the status of individuals who find themselves in need of assistance from the ‘helping’

professions (Rappaport, 1994). Metaphor has the potential to catalyse group process and promote understanding. As discussed by Abernethy (2002) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and thus the loss of old concepts can promote much cultural change. This I suspect is part of what I experienced at the mentor training, which was my introduction to The Map. The changes were noticeable at the individual level, and there were, I believe, significant observable changes to the group dynamic.

Values and principles

The reason I chose the field of community psychology is because it provides me with knowledge and skills that enable me to have a positive, ecological approach in my work practice. It was only after the undergraduate units related to systems approaches that this passion began to ignite and I developed a real connection to my studies. Movements such as healthy communities and the fields of positive psychology and peace psychology influenced my thinking and along with my work in the health sector and with Aboriginal communities were important in developing my focus.

Recognising the broader connections, the strengths, the positives and the possibilities that we so often fail to take advantage of, is an area that I am passionate about. Of course I then have to manage my feelings and navigate my way through ‘the swamp’ as I also become acutely aware of, and frustrated by, the shortcomings which are inherent in our mechanistic systems that attempt to provide services to people. In particular the failings of our education, health and welfare systems, which are often demotivating, dis-empowering and punitive become increasingly frustrating as people, heads of organisations, policy makers and our politicians continually fail to make connections between their actions and the resulting unfortunately negative outcomes. My personal beliefs and values resonate very strongly with the values and principles of community psychology, I have long held the belief that people know what they want and need and are very capable of managing their lives and meeting the challenges, if they are given the opportunity, support, skills, time and space to sort things for themselves.

The values of community psychology are important in defining the approach irrespective of the roles or settings in which they are practiced. As community psychologists I believe we aspire to honour the values of justice, collaborative leadership and community. The essence of community psychology is, I believe, making connections across all levels systems, community, family and individual, aiming to

create new pictures, new perspectives; acknowledging and respecting our diversity individually and collectively, but unifying in our sameness; understanding cultural differences and cultural similarities; acknowledging mistakes and pain whilst recognising and building on strengths; establishing the common ground and building solid foundations; and working at all levels of existence matter, body, mind, soul and spirit.

A commitment to social justice ensures we work with the guiding principle of empowerment, to enhance the possibility that people are enabled to actively control their own lives. Social justice underpins a number of human rights and includes a right to equality and fair treatment, a right to live in peace and freedom, the right to self-determination, and a right to a more equitable distribution of resources. Utilising an ecological approach, we can recognise and share the importance of the historical, environmental and situational context of people's lives and the interconnection of all things. This context may be linked to the roles that other people play, the actual physical environment, the legislation, and policies framing a particular issue or the discourses and representations of people or problems in society at large (Prilleltensky, 1997; Rappaport, 1987; 1994).

The value of collaborative leadership highlights a number of duties and responsibilities, such as the duty to look after our world and the people in it; enabling people to make a contribution and gain a sense of belonging, efficiently maximising both human and material resources to ensure their effective use, implementing sustainable practices and doing no harm so that we leave the world in better shape for our children and future generations. It is important that we work collaboratively, involve those we are working with, in organisations and communities, emphasising the strengths and potential with a focus on the context of their lives, to share our skills and knowledge and also to learn from those we work with, both on an individual and community level (Biglan & Smolkowski, 2002; Duffy & Wong, 2000; Prilleltensky, 1997; Rappaport, 1987, 1994).

Having community as a value reflects the different hopes and desires that people have. This brings a commitment to understanding problems in different ways and to work with others for shared understandings, better use of resources and collaboration to find effective solutions at a local level. Understanding the broader context allows for strategies that extend beyond working with individual people and provides an opportunity to make connections and changes that lead to more sustainable outcomes.

This is particularly important at an institutional level where the effects of policy and change on the people in those systems is not always obvious and not always seen by those responsible for system management. It is important to provide lasting benefit and real change to the communities in which we work, a part of this involves reflective practices and continual evaluation of the work we do. Working positively to encourage diversity and enabling people to become empowered through inclusive individual, group and collective action, we try to ensure that our work includes people irrespective of class, race, ethnicity, culture, age and disability. This means a commitment to strengthening people's sense of belonging, sense of community and commitment to each other (Biglan & Smolkowski, 2002; Duffy & Wong, 2000; Prilleltensky, 1997; Rappaport, 1987, 1994).

The above values and principles are not just the domain of the community psychologist; they are shared by many individuals, groups and organisations with a commitment to integral practice. Wilber's (2000) approach to integral psychology integrates many disciplines, such as psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience, philosophy, spiritual traditions, anthropology, complexity and chaos theories and consciousness studies. Wilber's stance in accepting the value in what has been discovered, learned and written about in the past, and not making a judgement about right, wrong, good or bad is a powerful modelling of integral practice. It is about encouraging connection, about acceptance, about making life real, about bringing together, linking and embracing our humanity. It is about the intelligent leadership discussed by Mant (1997). It is about breaking away from the mindless competition, that keeps us separate, that limits our growth and the depth of our relationships. There is no need to keep reinventing the wheel we just need to make the connections. Somewhere in the world it has been done before, somewhere in the world the issues have been addressed (Holland, 1998).

This is what my idea of community psychology is about: acceptance, inclusiveness, respect, real connection, a real connection with ourself, a real connection to each other, a real connection with the way we live our lives and behave, a real connection with our community and a real connection with our environment, local, global and beyond. We need to build on what has gone before and understand the connections between what we do and say and the consequences of our decision-making and actions, not just for us and our immediate family or community, but recognising and appreciating the connections and consequences beyond that for our humanity.

