CO-COUNSELLING: AN EXPERIENTIAL INQUIRY

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In collaboration with members of the
First Co-Counselling Cooperative Research Group:

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July 1981

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an account of an experiential and collaborative research
project which took place in the Autumn of 1980, and which aimed to begin
a systematic exploration of co-counselling (Jackins, 1965; Heron, 1977,
1979).  This paper is written by the initiators of the project (JH and PR),
and therefore reflects their perspective on it; and indeed some parts of
this account are necessarily interpretative (especially those which refer
to the process of the research group).  In writing we have in parts built
upon and elaborated the findings of the collaborative research group.
A draft of this report was circulated to the other members of the project.
Nine members replied assenting in general to the draft, and most of their
comments and amendments have been incorporated.

There were three sources of inspiration which led us (JH and PR) to
initiate this project.  First, we had been meeting together in a variety
of contexts for nearly two years, sometimes to work together on particular
projects and tasks, sometimes simply as a personal encounter.  We found
our relationship fruitful and stimulating, and were excited about doing
new things together.  Second, we are both founder members of the New
Paradigm Research Group, and have been working for many years on the
development of new approaches to research which are more fully based in
human experience than traditional approaches, and are also collaborative
and non-alienating.  At the time we conceived this project, we felt that
enough time had been spent thinking about new approaches to research,
we know what we wanted to do, and the time had come to get on with it:
much of the research we had done could be seen as prolegomena only to
full-blown systematic collaborative research.  So, having both the energy
and the method, we only needed a focus for our project, and we quickly
chose to explore the co-counselling experience, partly because we are

both active co-counsellors and we felt a need systematically to explore the process; and partly because we believed that trained and skilled co-counsellors would be suitable co-researchers, as they already have many of the skills of paying attention to their own experience and of working with others in groups which seem to be pre-requisites for effective cooperative research.

## New Paradigm Research

This report is not the place to review in detail the philosophy and practice of new paradigm research — we have both been involved in the preparation of Human Inquiry, which is a sourcebook of new paradigm research (Reason and Rowan, 1981, in press). The discussions of research method which follow are very brief, and the interested reader may supplement them by reference to Human Inquiry.

We see much traditional research as a unilateral process in which one person (the researcher) extracts data about the behaviour and experience of other persons (the "subjects") and then manipulates and conceptualises these data for their own purpose. We object to this process as epistemologically unsound, because the so-called data collected is often very distant from the action and experience of the "subjects"; because the interpretations and meanings placed on the data by the researcher may well be totally different from that placed on it by the "subjects"; and because the unilateral, and often autocratic and deceptive relation-ship between researcher and "subjects" is alienating, and not at all conducive to an authentic inquiry into human action and experience.

In diagram form, (Heron 1981) traditional research can be portrayed as follows:
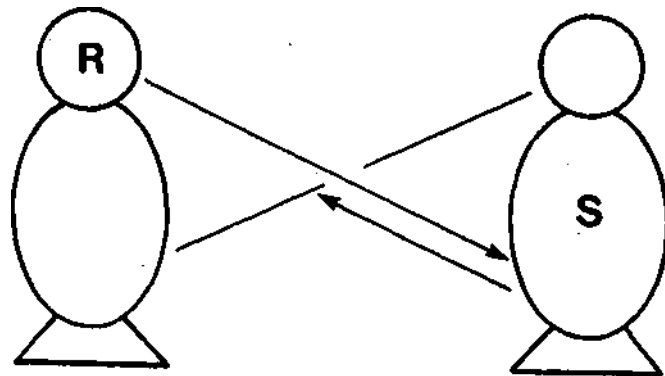


R = researcher

S = subject

In contrast, experiential and collaborative research is an approach to research on persons in which the human capacity for self direction is fully honoured, And thus the mutually exclusive roles of researcher and subject are done away with, and the people involved in the endeavour work together as co-researchers. This means that all parties contribute to the creative thinking that goes into the research — the initial ideas, the methods, the conclusions, and so on; and also participate in the activity which is being researched. In diagram form this can be portrayed as follows:
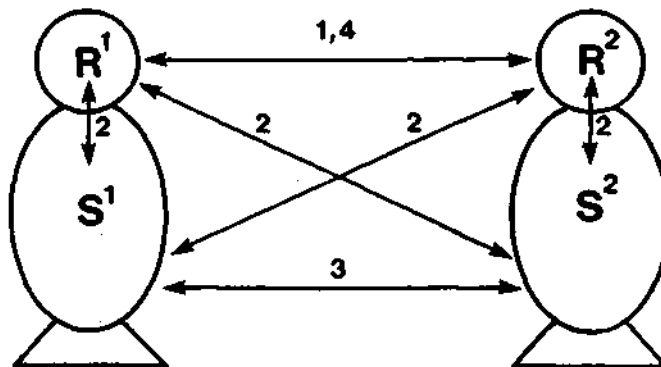
In this approach to research, the co-researchers first of all develop a set of propositions, proposals, or hypotheses which are to be the basis of the research (arrow 1 in the diagram); and they also work out some ways of checking these propositions against their own experience and action.  They then engage in the activity which is being researched, systematically observing themselves and the other co-researchers using whatever means of doing this which have been previously agreed (arrows 2 in the diagram).  And naturally, as they do this, they may well get fully absorbed in the activity.  This provides the experiential bedrock of the inquiry; at times they may even lose sight temporarily of the inquiry element of their project (arrow 3 in the diagram).  Finally, having engaged in the activity as agreed, and recorded their action and experience, the co-researchers return to the propositions they started out with, and systematically review them in the light of their experience (arrow 4).

The fundamental claim to validity of this process is that it rests firmly in the experience of those involved in the research.  And the validity of the inquiry can be enhanced: if the co-researchers have developed skills which enable them to balance inquiry and action, to maintain <u>both</u> a discriminating critical awareness <u>and</u> committed active participation (and we want to be clear that the discipline and rigour involved in doing this kind of research effectively is formidable); if the research cycle described above is systematically repeated; if steps are taken to counteract the danger of consensus collusion, when the co-researchers covertly agree not to inquire into certain aspects of their experience; and so on.

It is worth noting at this stage that although the formal division of roles between researcher and subject are done away with, there may still be specialist contributions within the group of co-researchers, and the contributions of some may well at times be stronger than those of others.  This is an inevitable part of human relationships.  Our minimal requirement for collaborative research is that all the co-researchers give their informed and authentic consent at all stages of the research process: they consent to be members, they consent to the research propositions and design, they freely engage in the activities researched, and they consent to the conclusions reached.  And if they dissent, negotiation continues until agreement is reached.  On the other hand, a full blown co-research project could involve strong and equal contributions from all members at all times.

Many collaborative research ventures will require a degree of facilitation: one or more members is likely to take a lead in initiating the project, in providing direction and method, and in helping the group develop collaborative approaches to its task.  Our own role as facilitators of this project is explored at various points in this report.  It is important to note that the role of facilitator is not the same as the role of primary researcher.

Research design

Our proposal, which we made by letter to members of the independent co-counselling communites in Bath, Guildford, and Hertfordshire (unfortunately we were not able to contact members of the London

community), was for a direct and systematic application of this
research model to co-counselling, as follows:

<div align="center">

CO-COUNSELLING CO-RESEARCH PROJECT

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From:  John Heron and Peter Reason

We (Peter Reason and John Heron) are co-counsellors who are also founder
members of the New Paradigm Research Croup.  We are inviting experienced
co-counsellors to join us in a new research venture.

The proposed area of inquiry is twofold: (1) to map out the various
mental spaces, intra-psychic and interpersonal, which we journey through,
both as clients in co-counselling and also - with the sort of awareness
we derive from co-counselling - in everyday life; (2) to identify and
clarify the range of strategies we can use in moving from one space to
another - again both as clients in co-counselling and in everyday life.
All co-counsellors, of course, by virtue of participating in the common
culture of co-counselling share certain informal maps and strategies.
The purpose of the research is to clarify, refine and elaborate our grasp
of these, and to correct and amend them where appropriate.

All the co-counsellors involved in it (we are looking for not more than
20, including ourselves) will also be both co-researchers and co-subjects.
The research model is that of co-operative inquiry in which everyone
involved in the inquiry contributes both to the thinking that leads into,
manages and draws conclusions from the research, and also to the action/
experience that is to be researched.

Our invitation is open to co-counsellors who (a) are competent in the usual range of both counsellor and client skills; (b) are able to maintain that subtle state of consciousness which enables a person <u>both</u> to experience and act <u>and</u> to notice the experience and action, i.e. to hold the balance between involvement and inquiry; (c) are reliable, accountable, committed to follow through and thoroughly complete what they initiate.

Our provisional design for the whole Project is as follows.  It is, of course, open to modification and revision by those who join the co-research enterprise.

1.   <u>Initial 3-hour briefing session</u>: for any interested co-counsellor to attend to find out more about the Project: and for self and peer selection for Project membership.

2.   <u>First 2-day workshop</u>:
   (a)  We, John Heron and Peter Reason, share the research approach and initiate everyone as co-researchers.
   (b)  We all agree the areas of inquiry and negotiate the methods of inquiry.
   (c)  We all co-counsel for 2 or 3 sessions, each individual gathering data from her or his own sessions in the form of an idiosyncratic map and set of strategies.
   (d)  These data are pooled to see whether a consensus map and set of strategies emerge.
   (e)  We all agree methods for gathering data from everyday life and from co-eounselling at home.

3.  <u>A minimum 3-week interlude</u>:

    (a)  We co-counsel at home at least once a week and go about

        our everyday lives.

    (b)  Each individual gathers further data from this.

    (c)  Anyone may further refine the consensus map from 2(d).


4.  <u>Second 2-day workshop</u>:

    (a)  We pool the data from 3 and further refine the consensus

        map and set of strategies.

    (b)  We co-counsel for 2 or 3 sessions, each person gathering

        further data from her or his sessions.

    (d)  We pool these data and continue to refine and elaborate

        the consensus map and set of strategies.

    (e)  If appropriate, we do more work on methods of data gathering.


5.  <u>A minimum 3-week interlude</u>; repeat as in 3 above.


6.  <u>Third and final 2-day workshop</u>; proceed as in 4(a) to (d),
emerging with a final consensus map and strategy set.


7.  The <u>findings</u> will be written up on a basis of full consultation
with all concerned.


The 2-day workshops will be held in London and will be non-residential.


There will be no fee payable for any of the workshops.  Participants in
the Project will be asked to contribute equally to the cost of room hire
for the workshops.

We hope to commence the Project in October 1980, and complete it
by December 1980.  Provisional workshop dates (week-ends) are
25-26 October, 22-23 November, 6-7 December, 1980.

The initial briefing session, including self and peer selection for
Project membership, will be on Saturday, 20 September 1980, 2.00 -
5.00 p.m. at 16 Heathcroft, Hampstead Way, London NW11.


Criteria of validity for the project


Experiential research is potentially an approach to a fully authentic
and valid process of human inquiry; it has many advantages over orthodox
approaches, which we have referred to above.  But valid inquiry is not
automatically guaranteed: the process of human inquiry is inherently
problematic, not only because of the apparent inscrutability of phenomena,
but also because our eagerness to know and our desire for new discovery
is balanced by a fear of knowing, that clings to the safety of what we
already know.  Excellent practice means for us being clear about the
standards we want to attain in a piece of work, and reviewing cur
performance against these standards (that is to say, validity is itself
an experiential research project whatever the content of the inquiry).

At the time we initiated the project, we set out for ourselves the
following criteria of validity.


(1)  There is increasing rigour through a cyclic process, with a series
of corrective feedback loops leading to progressive clarification and

elaboration. (As we have both argued elsewhere (In Reason and Rowan, 1981), valid inquiry involves a series of small steps, a progressive checking and rechecking, feeding back earlier tentative findings into new action and experience, and in this way knitting a more valid understanding.)

(2) We manage our own counter-transference. Following George Devereaux (1967) we argue that when we engage in research on persons the very process of inquiry stirs up our own personal distress patterns. We defend ourselves against discovery by projecting these patterns in a way which distorts both the method and the findings. This is what is meant by counter-transference in research. If the very process of inquiry stirs up distress, in a valid project we need to take it into account. We will come back to this later.

(.3) We invent ways of counteracting consensus collusion - by this we mean covertly agreeing to ignore those aspects of the experience and action being researched which are not consonant with the theory being explored. One way to do this is to appoint one co-researcher to act as devil's advocate to represent sceptical viewpoints and draw attention to evidence which may challenge the taken for granted assumptions of the group, or falsify some part or all of the initial hypothesis.

(4) There is some check on the <u>degree</u> of authentic collaboration among all co-researchers throughout the inquiry process: as initiators we expect to be significantly influential but not overpoweringly dominant.

(5) There is a balance between inquiry/research and commitment/growth/action. The rigour of being creatively poised between the two is adequately sustained throughout the project.

Interestingly (particularly in view of our comments above about the
distress patterns which are aroused by research) having put together
these criteria when we conceived the project we did not use them
systematically.  It was as if we almost forgot that we had made the
list.  We "rediscovered" our criteria of excellence when going through
our notes to prepare to write this report.  We will refer again to this
list later, in order to review our actual performance against these
criteria; some of them informed our awareness throughout the project,
others less so.

Briefing meeting

In our letter of proposal we invited co-counsellors to attend a meeting
at which the project would be discussed before a commitment to it was
made: about 20 people were present, and others who were unable to attend
expressed interest.  At this meeting

 (1)  We (JH and PR) presented an account of new paradigm research in
general and of our proposed approach to this project in particular.

 (2)  We discussed alternative options for the focus of the research.
Our original proposal had been to map the psychic spaces which the client
visits in a session (i.e. the states of consciousness and qualities of
attention), and to explore the strategies for moving between them.  In
some ways this was a proposal to explore systematically the basic theory
of co-counselling, as well as the tacit theories which individual
counsellors may hold.  To this original proposal were added the
alternatives of either tracing individuals' personal psychic history
in order to identify common developmental processes, or exploring the

outcomes of co-counselling (i.e. "what co-counselling has done for me").  No decision was reached, since it was decided that all three options were worthwhile projects, and that it was up to the actual group of co-researchers to choose for themselves.

(3)  We (JH and PR) put forward our view about our roles as facilitators,  saying that we were aware that we were both powerful and articulate males, well used to operating as researchers, and competent with words and concepts.  We also said that it was clear to us that in a project such as this a degree of active facilitation is essential, at least to get the project off the ground, initiate the co-researchers into a common method, and to help the project move in fruitful directions.  But we emphasised that we were also committed to being part of a fully collaborative project, and were aware that our leadership could well become oppressive.  Our proposed approach, therefore, was to be influential but not dominant, and we asked for help and feedback in doing this.

(4)  The group took time to do a co-counselling "mini-session" to deal with restimulation aroused by the notion of research.

(5)  We made a series of agreements about dates, times, and locations of the research (one of our major problems was the practical one of finding dates which everyone who wanted to participate could manage; this was not possible).  We agreed that one condition of participation now be that each person would attend all 3 weekends.

CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF THE PROJECT

First weekend

Thirteen co-researchers met for the first weekend at the University
of Bath.  We started with a traditional co-counselling open circle,
and then JH and PR proposed that as a decision making model for the
start of the project only we should adopt a "propose and consult"
approach — that is to say we would propose a course of action,
consult with the group to obtain their consent or amendments, after
which that action would be adopted.  This decision model was agreed.
JH and PR then proposed that the focus of the research should be a
mapping of the spaces we move through as co-counsellors, and the
strategies we adopt for moving between them; and that this should be
applied to both co-counselling sessions and to everyday life; this
was adopted after some discussion.

JH then presented a version of the traditional basic model of attention
in co-counselling, including the notions of attention out into the
external world; the balance of attention between distress and the present
for catharsis or discharge; attention sunk or swamped in distress;
and attention lost in acting out, dumping distress.  He pointed out that
this was a map of attention, not a discussion of the content of
counselling, stressing that the former was the focus of the research.
This presentation was followed by a reworking of this basic map, in
which all sorts of ideas were put forward for its amendment and develop-
ment, and objections were stated about its ambiguity and lack of clarity.
(Note: none of the actual maps will be presented in this chronological
account; all the outcomes of the research are contained in a separate
section below.)

This discussion was followed by a long debate as to how to proceed:
whether we should agree all to do the same thing; whether we all would
use the same map; how to map; what a map was; and so on.  We seemed to
be struggling to cope with a new and strange task, and also with the
formulation of a new group and of finding a way of working together.
In the end we decided to start off by allowing complete idiosyncracy: we
simply agreed that we would all have a counselling session and that we
would then "map" it in whatever way seemed appropriate for that person,
and share our maps at a specified time.  And this is basically what we
did for the rest of the weekend; in order to build up our skills in mapping:
in all we had three counselling sessions, and shared our maps with the
rest of the group.

We found the sharing particularly difficult; there was reluctance to share
maps rather than verbal descriptions of the session; it was difficult to
put over the essence of a session without going into detail about the
content; it took a long time to hear from everyone, and our attention
lapsed; and we found it difficult to communicate, to find a set of shared
symbols and a common language.  For one session we worked in smaller groups
to share our maps, and then made a set of presentations from the small
groups to the larger group, which helped, but overall the sharing sessions
were difficult and confusing.  It was during one of these sessions that one
of us (DP) made a critical intervention that we should stay with this chaos,
and beware of premature closure; after this we were able to allow ourselves
to continue to be messy, inconclusive, and creatively divergent.

We ended the weekend with an agreement about homework: each person
agreed that they would do at least one counselling session a week and
map it, and also that they would map some piece of everyday life.

The themes that we can identify in this weekend's work are as follows.

(1)  Early stages of group development: process issues of inclusion, membership, how do we fit together as a group.  The group characterised early on by relatively isolated individuals, and with growing cohesion. Issues of competition for air time, of developing a common language.

(2)  Learning how to do experiential research: it became increasingly clear over the weekend that we needed to develop skills in paying attention to our experience and mapping it.  We were adding another dimension of critical awareness onto our counselling experience, and we had to discover how to do this, which simply took time.

(3)  Allowing the element of chaos and ambiguity: as has been mentioned above, within a framework of mapping sessions and strong maps our process was at times untidy and confusing, and we had to accept this.

(4)  The abandonment of facilitator control: after our early positive leadership proposal, we (JH and PR) took far fewer initiatives, so that the decision making process became more participative.  We did not fully abandon our facilitation of the process of the group, but this was increasingly widely shared.  The propose and consult decision mode was tacitly adopted with a wide number of proposers.

At the end of the first weekend one of the co-researchers announced that he was withdrawing from the project; he found that analysing and discussing his counselling sessions was in some way spoiling their meaning for him.

Second weekend

Eleven co-researchers met for the second weekend at the University
of Surrey.  A second person had dropped out unannounced.  After an
opening circle, we spent the whole of the first morning sharing
our experiences and maps of counselling sessions and everyday life
since the first weekend.  This was a crucial sharing period in the
whole project: we had reached a stage where it was much easier to
share with and understand each other, and at which some of the
tentative maps produced during the first weekend had matured and
were clearer.  At the same time we were more able to respect those
parts of experience which remained inchoate.  We tentatively explored
our resistance to mapping (five people reported some resistance) and
looked briefly for any restimulation arising directly from the inquiry
process (the outcome of this was unclear).  Two co-researchers had
produced and shared written statements arising from the first weekend.

After lunch we did a counselling session and mapped it, sharing the
maps in the later afternoon.  A lot of time was spent discussing the
transpersonal aspects of co-counselling, and the notion that outside
the distressed empirical ego there is a fundamental ground where the
person is "at cause".  It became clear that this dimension was making
an important contribution to our understanding of co-counselling.
For further discussion of these basic concepts, see below (pp 27 and 28).

On Sunday we agreed to experiment with all doing the same thing in a
co-counselling session.  After discussion and debate we agreed to
experiment with high arousal, and specifically to start the session
running on the spot with arms upstretched for 10 minutes, and then to

work with a free attention contract for 20 minutes.  When we shared

our maps of this experience, we found no significant similarities

among the experiences, except that lots of interesting ideas emerged

in the maps.

Finally that day we all did a fantasy exercise, journeying inward to

consult the inner guru about this process of mapping our experience,

shared this, and finished the weekend with an agreement to continue

mapping until the final weekend.

The themes which emerged from this second weekend were as follows.

(1)  Middle stages of group development: considerable consensus and

cohesion, but at the expense of suppressing differences and opposition,

so that expressions of deviance from majority norms was difficult.

(2)  Coming together on the mapping: despite the existence of some

false consensus, a lot of useful mapping work was done based on

better understanding of each other.  There was more commonality after

the divergence of the first weekend.

(3)  A sense of greater competence in experiential research, of knowing

what we were doing and how to do it.  (But importantly, to the extent

that this feeling was not shared throughout the group, it may have

tended to increase the sense of exclusion of some co-researchers.)

(4)  The emergence of the transpersonal dimension as an important part

of the co-counselling experience; it was a vital aspect of the weekend

for at least six members.

(5)  Altogether this weekend was an experience of middle ground between starting and finishing, a weekend balanced between contradictory directions.  There was considerable success and achievement, but bubbling away underneath was considerable divergence, and also resistance to the inquiry process itself, as became apparent on the final weekend.  It is interesting that we failed explicitly to explore these issues during the weekend.  Indeed, most facilitator initiatives were task oriented.

Third weekend

Ten co-researchers met in London for the third weekend, one absent member being reported as "emotionally exhausted"; another left at the end of Saturday due to other engagements.

There was a tacit agreement carrying over from the second weekend that this final weekend would be a time for pulling things together, thinking about writing some kind of report, and generally concluding the project with some clear outcomes.  This was initiated by one co-researcher (MB) at the end of the previous weekend in a proposal for the contents of the report, and reinforced in a brief planning meeting between JH and PR when they decided to propose that the bulk of the weekend be spent refining the maps that had been produced so far.

As this proposal was considered, two members of the group protested their dissatisfaction with the project so far: they were distressed at their inability to conceptualise and communicate with the rest of

the group, felt that they didn't understand what the mapping was all about, or the point of it——they can be seen as expressing both for themselves and for the whole group the concerns which had been so thoroughly suppressed during the previous weekend.

 (As theories of group process have pointed out, it is often the individuals who are most personally distressed by an issue who will raise it and "work" on it; very often they are not only dealing with their own distress, but are pointing to significant issues within the whole group; the danger is that the group will ignore these signals, and the individual will take the distress of the whole group onto themselves.)

This intervention into the process aroused much restimulated distress and confusion, and certainly drew our attention to the ways in which the inquiry process itself was rousing distress among us.  We chose to spend time exploring the ways we felt restimulated by the inquiry process itself (this issue will be developed further in the section on learnings about experiential research).  And we closed the morning with a 30 minute each way unmapped counselling session to clear the air.

After lunch we agreed, having dealt to a great extent with the restimulated distress, to slog through refining the maps, with the ground rule that anyone who felt tired or overwhelmed should say so, and do whatever they needed to take care of themselves.  And again on the Sunday, we spent most of the time working on the maps, with two counselling sessions to relieve the tension.

To refine the maps, we first of all drew them all out on a large
piece of paper on the floor in the middle of the group.  (On the
first weekend we used a chart pad on the wall, which meant that
anyone who wanted to write something had to get up and talk down
to the group; from the second session we worked on a pad on the floor;
which was much more relaxed and collaborative.  Among other things
it meant that several people could easily contribute to the same
drawing.)  We then went over each map in turn, comparing it to our
experience of counselling, criticising it, categorising it, discussing
its uses and limitations, until we were clear about what it represented,
and had modified and developed it to accomodate criticisms made.  Thus
all the maps of experience described in this paper were derived and
refined through a collaborative process.

Finally, toward the end of the second afternoon, we shared and recorded
what we had learned about co-counselling, and what we had. learned about
experiential research; these learnings are recorded below.

The themes from this third weekend are as follows.

(1)  A fuller  coming together  of the group: in this final weekend
we seemed to develop a remarkable capacity for work.  The task of
going through and refining all the maps we had produced was an enormous
one, which required sophisticated task-oriented processes and an ability
to deal effectively with the emotional and interpersonal processes of
the group - supporting, confronting, listening acutely, tolerating
and using differences, and so on.

(2) At the same time as being more cohesive, the group was better able to deal with deviant behaviour: one co-researcher, (AC), spent her time drawing the group as it went about its task, producing for us a valuable representational account of our process.

(3) An ability to open up and look at restimulated distress; this was a major qualitative difference between the second and third weekends.

(4) Sheer hard work: simply keeping at it through the sustained concentration of refining the maps.

(5) Economy of resolution: we worked hard, but we also settled for what was realistic, and planned our time effectively.

(6) Greater intimacy.

THE MAPS


Mapping procedures and agreements


On the first morning of the first workshop JH presented a simple
"basic" map of states of attention, drawn from general co-counselling
usage and practice, as a backdrop for further mapping during the
project.  This "basic" map consisted of four quadrants: (1) Attention
out, away from distress - creative living, talking and thinking;
(2) Attention balanced - in touch with distress and in touch with
something safe/positive outside distress - for catharsis and re-
evaluating; (3) Attention sunk in, swamped by, distress - disabling
depression, emotional pain; (4) Attention conspiring to dump/displace/
act out/dramatise distress - distorted behaviour afflicting others.
This map was then discussed for some time, with several additions
and refinements proposed and listed in order to improve it, make it
more comprehensive.  A fully revised version of this map was evolved
by the end of the project - see below for both.


We then proceeded, over the first two weekends, to do a series of 5
co-counselling sessions, in each of which the client mapped their
session as client.  The sessions were 20 to 30 minutes each way, each
client taking 10 to 15 minutes for mapping immediately after their
20 or 30 minutes.  After each of the 5 sessions the group met as a whole
and each person shared, explained and engaged in discussion about their
map.  We also agreed to map a session a week for each of the six weeks
between the first and the third weekends: several maps from the first
four of these weeks were shared and discussed at the start of the second

weekend.  Ideas and discussion generated by individual maps were
a significant part of the inquiry process.


We agreed that we would all map <u>states and processes</u> of mind-body
during a session, but not the detailed <u>content</u> of sessions.  In other
words we would map the psychosomatic <u>where</u> and <u>how</u> of working, rather
than <u>what</u> we worked on.  The client would map their own session, but
with feedback from and prompted by the counsellor.


We agreed that the method of mapping would be entirely idiosyncratic,
each person using any kind of graphic only or graphic-cum-verbal symbolism
that seemed appropriate to portray the processes of the session.  This
was to allow the greatest amount of creative divergence in mapping, and
to allow each person to develop mapping skills in their own way.  We
also agreed that each person as client would work on whatever they
chose to work on in a session, or on whatever came up, using any method
they wished.


Thus the only thing we agreed to do in common was to map states and
processes rather than content of a session.  Everything else - method
of mapping, what the client worked on, method of working - was, with two
minor exceptions noted in the chronological account, idiosyncratic.
This was in order to cast the net of inquiry wide: to gather in the
greatest amount of creatively generated data about what there is to
map, and different ways of mapping it.


Intermittently, over the three weekends, during our sharing of and
discussion about individual reaps, we considered tentative classifications

of the sorts of maps that were emerging.  Such classifications are
one of the provisional findings of the inquiry.  There is a section
on classification of maps below.

The last weekend was devoted primarily to talcing a selection of the
most coherent individual maps, discussing each in turn with anyone
proposing amendments and modifications, which were incorporated in
the map if there was general agreement that it was thereby improved.
What was improved, of course, was a method of mapping in general, not
a method mapping this or that particular session.  These improved maps
are the primary provisional findings of the inquiry, and are presented
and explained below.

It is interesting to note that the second area of inquiry originally
proposed - identifying and clarifying the range of strategies used in
moving from space to space in a session or in everyday life - was
scarcely touched on in any systematic way during the project.

SORTS OF MAPS


Two basic sorts of maps emerged from the many idiosyncratic individual maps: state maps and process maps.  State maps depict the invariant mental geography that lies behind experience of a session or everyday life: the possible states of mind and being that are available.  State maps themselves seemed to be, roughly, of  two types: those that were more static in their depiction of the mind, and those that indicated or implied a dynamic tendency or influence between the component parts. We will use this classification, of static and dynamic state maps, when presenting the series of maps below.


Process maps depict the experiential changes that occur in a client's session or in everyday life.  They show how the client in a session moves through some basic state or from one state to another.  They depict client change as a function of the interaction between two or more of a whole range of factors.  Each process map given below uses a different selection of factors from the total range.


The logical geography of all this is that we have (i) basic states of mind and being, (ii) changes of state, (iii) factors interacting in changes of state.  There is one  sort  of  map, the Catastrophe Theory map, that has the power to integrate key elements from each of these logical components.


When presenting process maps below, we shall give a full list of all the factors we considered.
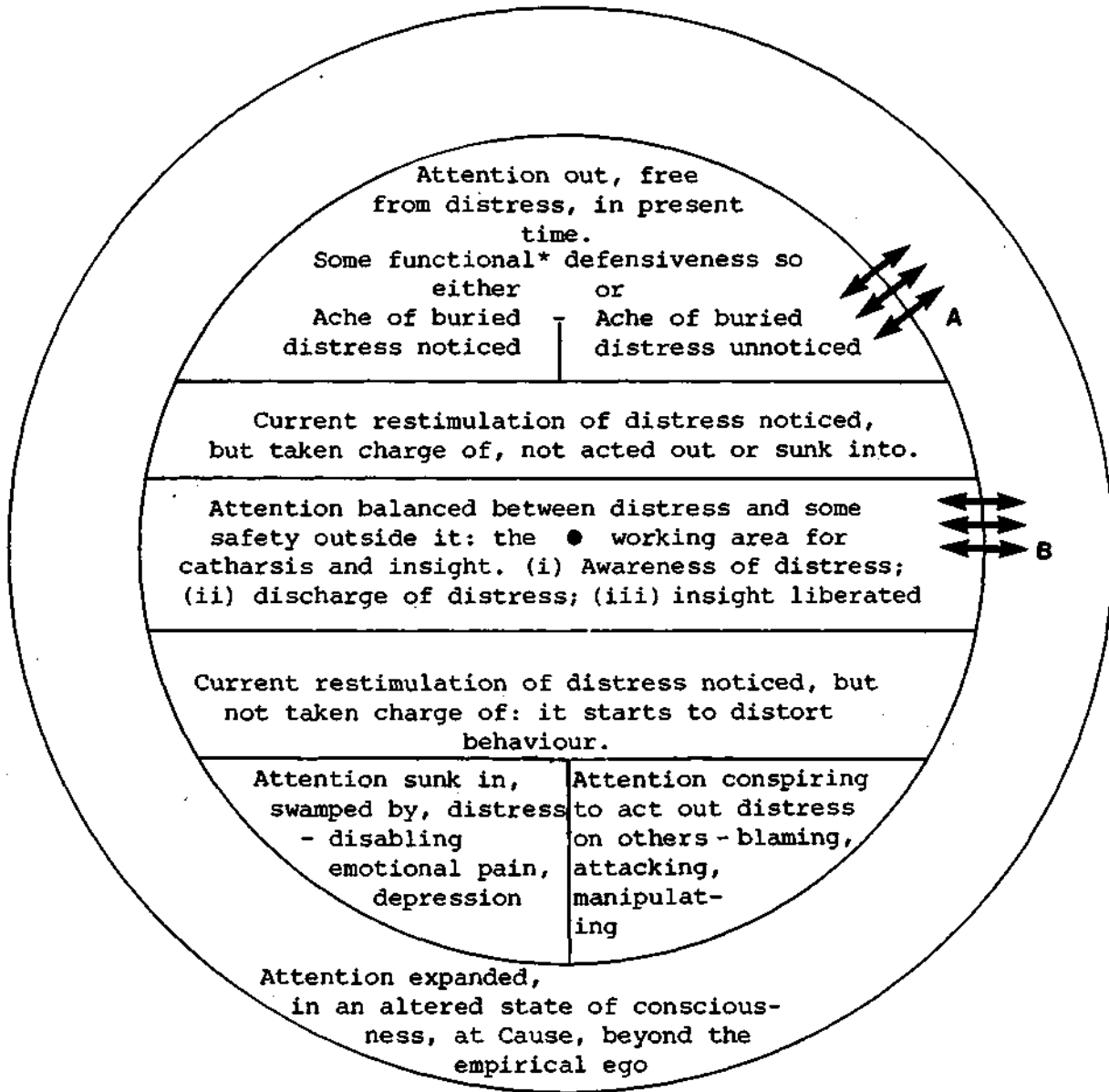
STATE MAPS : STATIC


1.  The introductory Map : Basic states of Attention


This is the map, already referred to, presented by JH at the start
of the first weekend, as drawn from general co-counselling thought
and practice.

| Attention out, away from distress - creative living, talking and thinking | Attention balanced between distress and safety outside it - for discharge and re-evaluation |
| --- | --- |
| Attention sunk in, swamped by distress - disabling depression and emotional pain | Attention conspiring to dump/act out distress on others |

This map received considerable initial discussion and modification,
and was revised at each subsequent weekend.  The final version follows.

Basic States of Attention : Final Revised Version

Attention out, free
from distress, in present
time.
Some functional* defensiveness so
either        or
Ache of buried    Ache of buried
distress noticed   distress unnoticed

A

Current restimulation of distress noticed,
but taken charge of, not acted out or sunk into.

Attention balanced between distress and some
safety outside it: the ● working area for
catharsis and insight. (i) Awareness of distress;
(ii) discharge of distress; (iii) insight liberated

B

Current restimulation of distress noticed, but
not taken charge of: it starts to distort
behaviour.

Attention sunk in,     Attention conspiring
swamped by, distress   to act out distress
- disabling            on others - blaming,
emotional pain,        attacking,
depression             manipulat-
                       ing

Attention expanded,
in an altered state of conscious-
ness, at Cause, beyond the
empirical ego

* ie to sustain attention out

The functional usefulness of the map, in a session, but especially in

everyday life, depends on a person (a) having a clear working grasp of

all its concepts, and (b) having a clear belief in the negotiability

of the spaces indicated.

At the top of the inner circle is the space "attention out in present time".  This is attention out in an ordinary state of consciousness. Interaction with the outer circle as indicated by arrows A, adds an extra dimension to the experience of attention out/attention free. (See the last paragraph under the next map.)

The second main space in the inner circle "current restimulation noticed but taken charge of, not acted out nor sunk into" subsumes a variety of strategies.  Taking charge of current restimulation may mean (i) arranging a session now and thus moving into the centre space in the inner circle; (ii) disengaging and withdrawing from the restimulating situation; (iii) switching attention from the restimulated distress to some new stimulus or activity in the immediate environment; (iv) changing the negative perception of the situation that is generated by the restimulated distress into a positive perception; (v) disengaging attention from the restimulated distress and laying back into the outer circle; and so on.
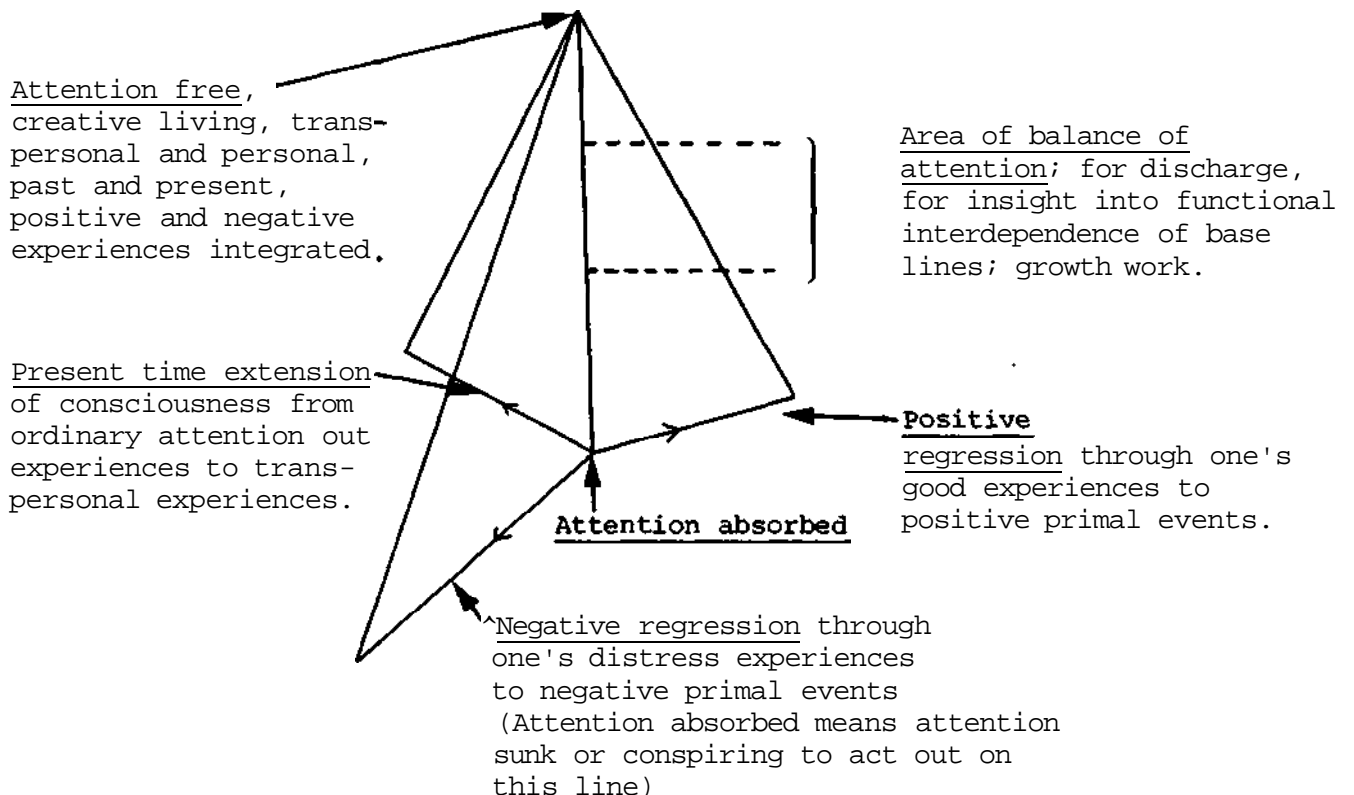
The person entering the at Cause outer circle is entering another dimension of being that is simply outside/within/other than, the area of being where distress can manifest (the inner circle).  The outer circle, and also the dot in the middle, indicate an altered state of consciousness: attunement to the transpersonal, originating Source, the well-spring whence distinctness of personal being and capacities emerge, the noumenal ground of phenomenal reality.

Arrows A indicate an approach to expansion of consciousness that does not precipitate incidental catharsis.  Arrows B indicate an approach that does, eg in transpersonal co-counselling.

You can simply step out of the inner circle into the outer and
dissociate from the area of being where distress manifests, or maintain
interaction between the two circles - in ordinary co-counselling, in
transpersonal co-counselling, in everyday living.  Such interaction
may facilitate, in complementary ways, both the discharge of distress
and the transmutation of distress (turning base metal into gold).


3.   Some Basic States and Sorts of Content


This map takes some of the basic states of attention and relates them
to certain basic sorts of content - of a session, or of human experience
generally.  This map is to be visualised in three dimensions: the three
arrowed lines lying on the horizontal plane at the base, the other four
lines rising vertically to the apex.

Attention free,
creative living, trans-
personal and personal,
past and present,
positive and negative
experiences integrated.

Area of balance of
attention; for discharge,
for insight into functional
interdependence of base
lines; growth work.

Present time extension
of consciousness from
ordinary attention out
experiences to trans-
personal experiences.

Positive
regression through one's
good experiences to
positive primal events.

Attention absorbed

Negative regression through
one's distress experiences
to negative primal events
(Attention absorbed means attention
sunk or conspiring to act out on
this line)

At the base of the structure, where attention is absorbed, attention
may\swing out exclusively along one of the base lines.  In the middle
of the vertical part of the structure, where attention is balanced as
in co-counselling, attention moves out simultaneously on the present
time extension and one or both of the regression lines.  Toward the
apex, attention is freely engaged in integrated creative living.

On this map the concept of <u>attention absorbed</u> is wider than and includes
as a special case of itself the concept of attention sunk or swamped.
Human functioning, when attention is absorbed, is with low level aware-
ness and discrimination, with wide swings of feeling and behaviour due
to unaware regression.  The concept of attention absorbed hypothesises
in undeveloped uneducated human consciousness, an inveterate tendency
to become identified with the contents of experience, to become caught
up in them, fascinated, hypnotised, seduced by them - whether these
contribute in an ordinary or non ordinary state of consciousness.  So a
special case of this tendency is when attention is sucked into distress,
or is seduced into acting it out.

Furthermore, this map brings out an extra dimension of the concept of
attention free.  For when attention free is put as the polar complement
to attention absorbed, it means not only attention free from distress,
it also means attention free from total identification with, absorption
in, <u>whatever</u> it is engaged with.  There is an extra dimension of liberated
awareness enveloping the contents of experience.  Compare the notions of
inner alertness, witnessing, <u>satipatthana</u>,in oriental consciousness
training.

STATE MAPS : DYNAMIC

1.  Developmental Stages

This is a series of maps showing different states of being, different
stages of development, as a function of client work in co-counselling.
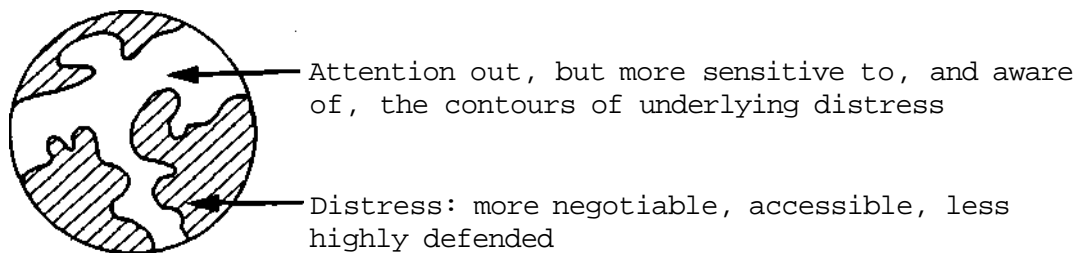
First Stage;  The person has done no growth work; consciousness is not
raised about the dynamics of distress.  Attention out of distress,
alternating with phases of attention sunk in distress, or attention
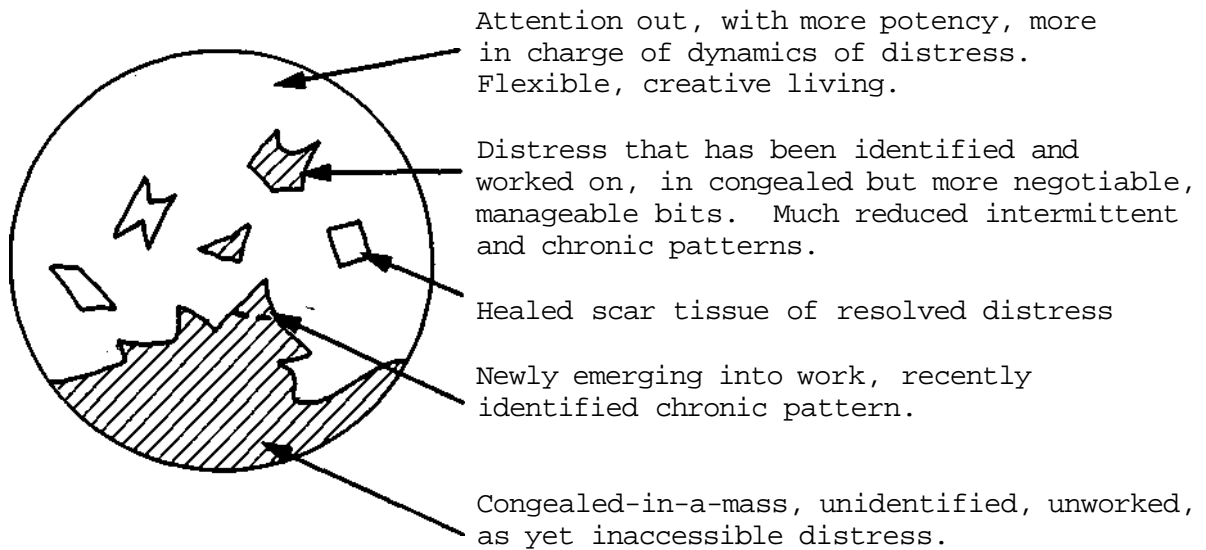seduced into acting out distress.



Attention out

Defensive crust

Distress congealed, cut off, all in a mass

Alternating with:



Attention
sunk in,
swamped by
distress



Attention
seduced into
acting out distress
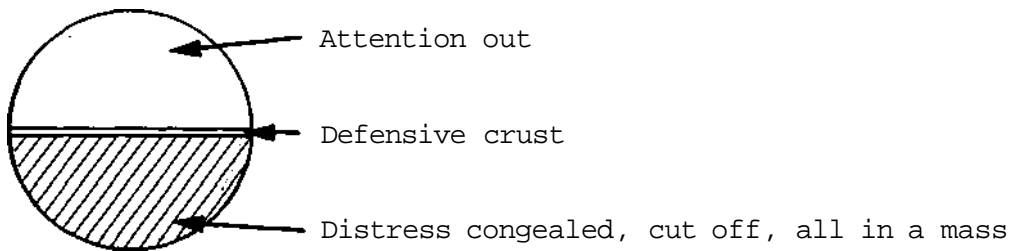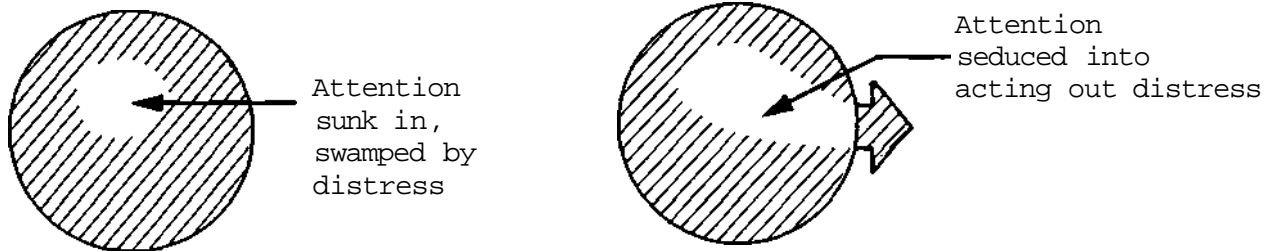
Second Stage;  The person has initiated some growth work, has consciousness
raised about the dynamics of distress.



Attention out, but more sensitive to, and aware
of, the contours of underlying distress

Distress: more negotiable, accessible, less
highly defended

There may also be a somewhat reduced incidence of, a somewhat

increased awareness of, a modest capacity to take charge of, phases

of attention being sunk, or being seduced into acting out distress.


Third Stage;  The person has done considerable co-counselling, and

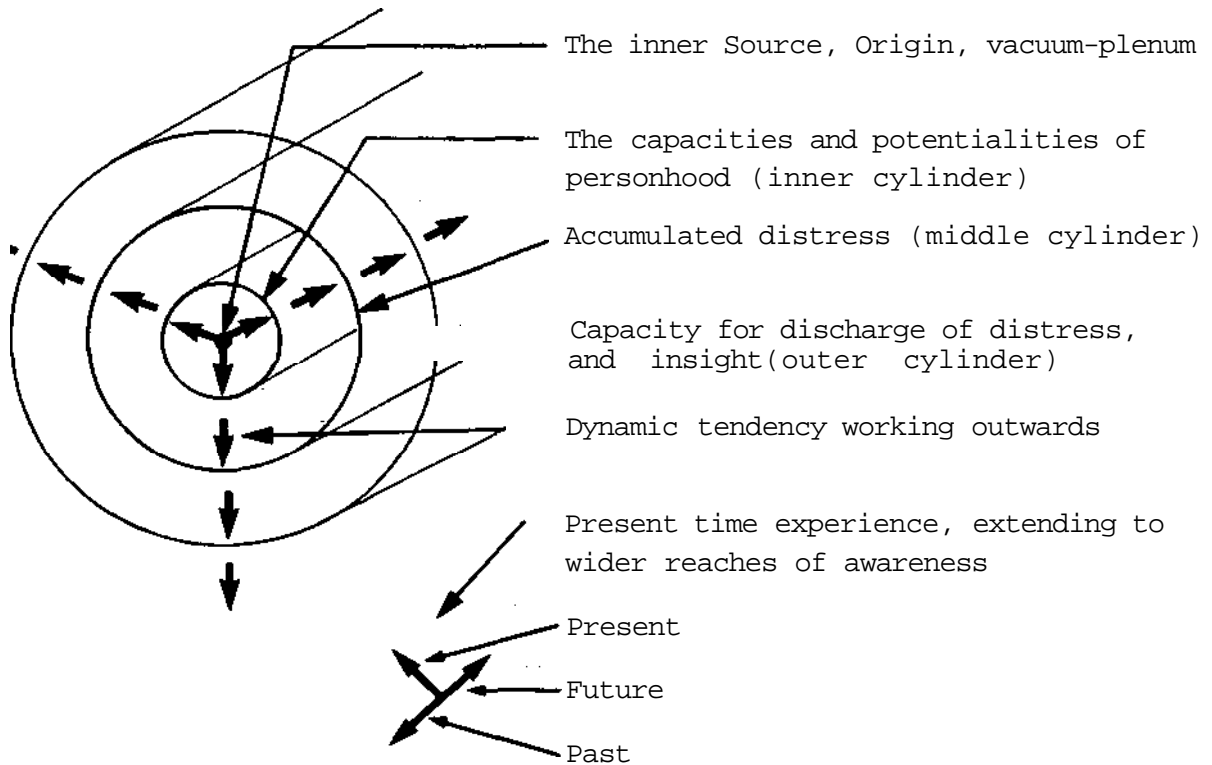has learned how to apply its gains and benefits in everyday life.



Attention out, with more potency, more in charge of dynamics of distress. Flexible, creative living.

Distress that has been identified and worked on, in congealed but more negotiable, manageable bits.  Much reduced intermittent and chronic patterns.

Healed scar tissue of resolved distress

Newly emerging into work, recently identified chronic pattern.

Congealed-in-a-mass, unidentified, unworked, as yet inaccessible distress.

This stage is associated with greatly increased capacity to identify,

take charge of and resolve phases of attention swamped, and attention

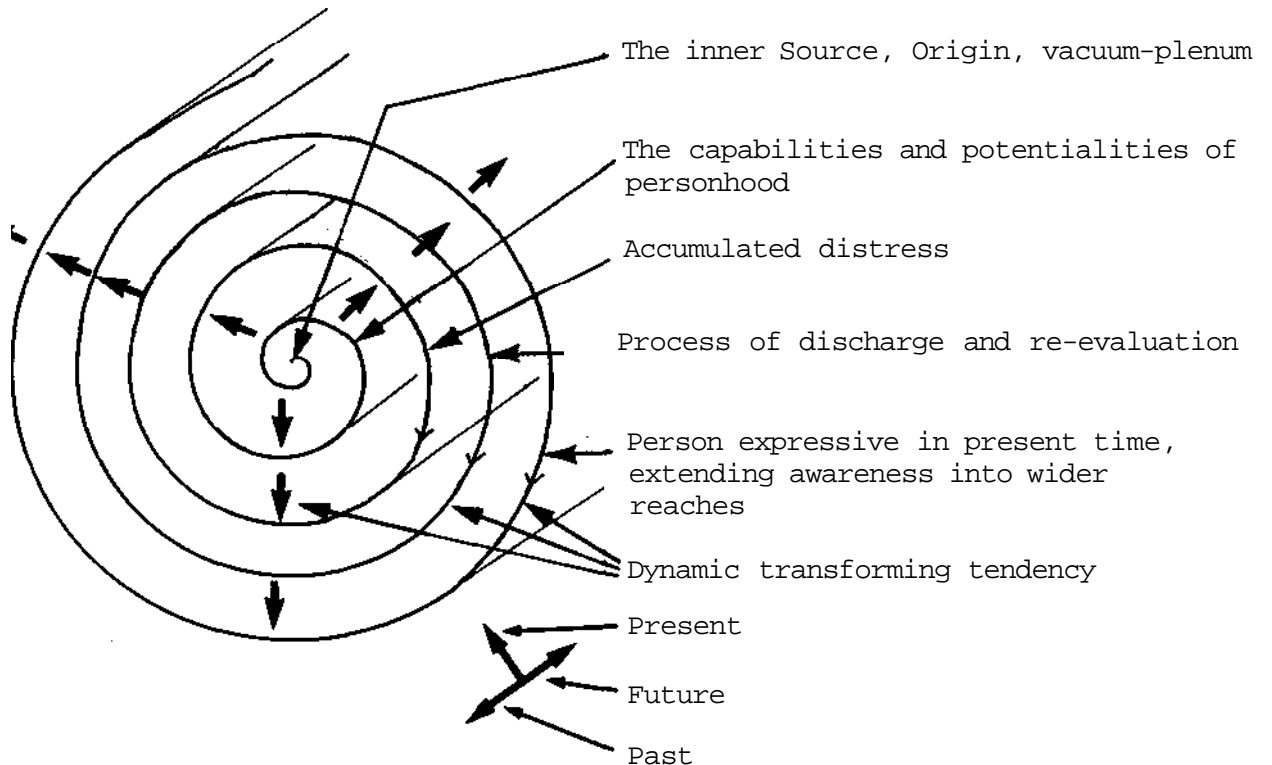seduced into acting out distress.


2.  Dynamic Tendency


This map depicts, in its two versions, a dynamic transforming tendency,

from the source of personhood, through the growth and development of

the person, to the wider reaches of awareness.

First Version:  This version shows the dynamic transforming tendency
of the source as more latent, as potential energy.  The symbolism is
via concentric cylinders.



The inner Source, Origin, vacuum-plenum

The capacities and potentialities of
personhood (inner cylinder)

Accumulated distress (middle cylinder)

Capacity for discharge of distress,
and  insight(outer  cylinder)

Dynamic tendency working outwards

Present time experience, extending to
wider reaches of awareness

Present

Future

Past

Second Version;  This version shows the dynamic transforming tendency in
action, as kinetic energy, in the being created and self-created person.
The symbolism is via an expanding, unfurling scroll, continuously
generated from the source.



The inner Source, Origin, vacuum-plenum

The capabilities and potentialities of
personhood

Accumulated distress

Process of discharge and re-evaluation

Person expressive in present time,
extending awareness into wider
reaches

Dynamic transforming tendency

Present
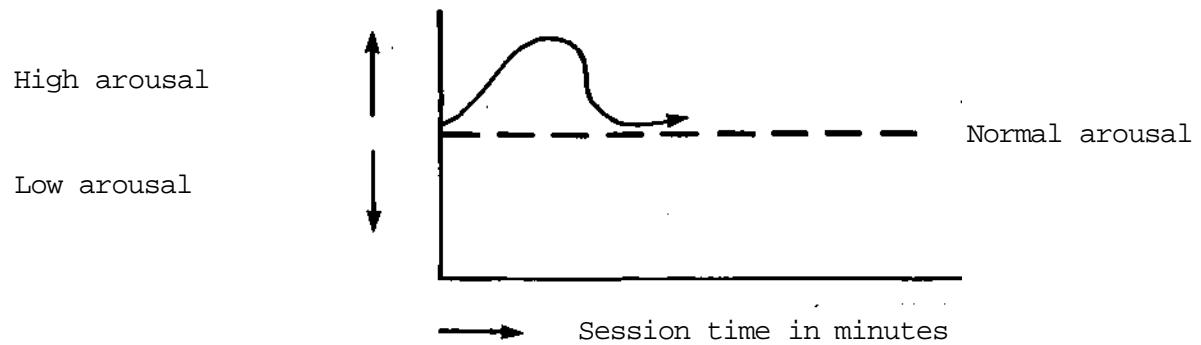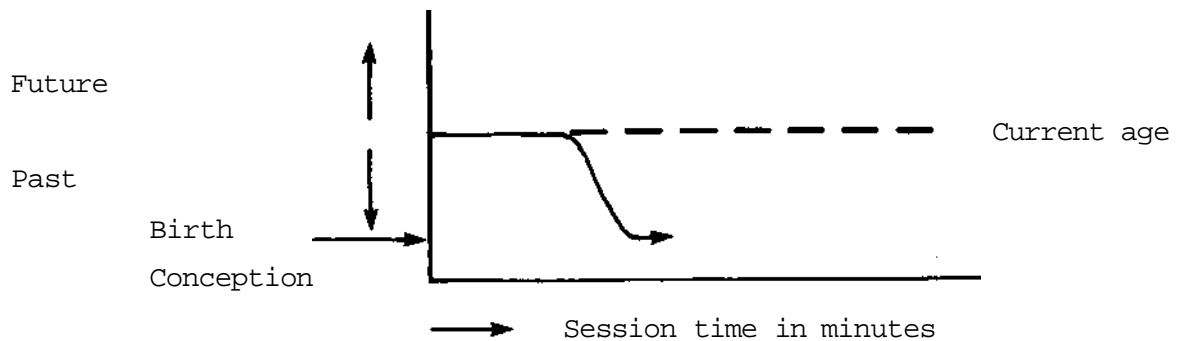
Future

Past

PROCESS MAPS

1 Some Basic Processes

This is a series of maps each of which shows the fluctuations of some
basic client process over the time of a session when co-counselling.
The four processes could be combined on one map, each process represented
by a different colour, with the dotted line having, of course, a different
meaning for each colour.

1a Attention
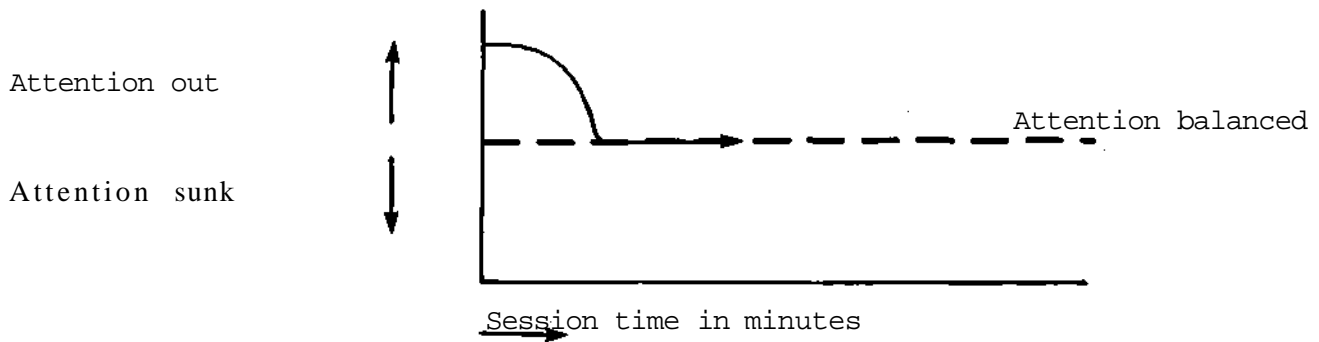


1b Catharsis

lc  Physical arousal

High arousal

Low arousal

Normal arousal

Session time in minutes

Id  Regression

Future

Past

Current age

Birth

Conception

Session time in minutes
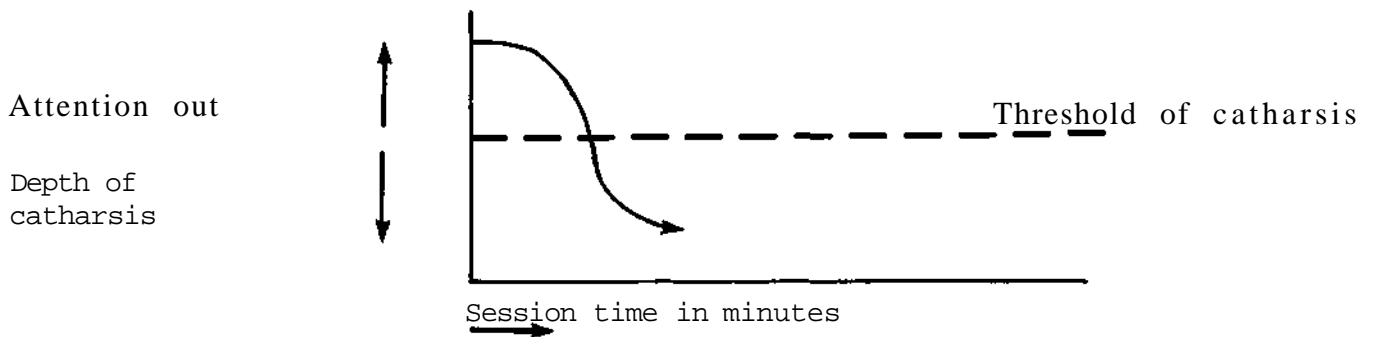
The retrospective use of these maps by the client will only give very
approximate results.  This can be counterbalanced by the counsellor
using these maps to record the client's processes continuously throughout
the session.  The counsellor's record of the client can be compared with
the client's retrospective record after the latter has been done.  The
most accurate way the client could use these maps would be in relation
to a video recording of the session.  We did not experiment with this
method.  Nor did we make any attempt at calibration in using these basic
process maps.

On the attention map, some variation in the line could be used to indicate
when attention is out in a productive and insightful way, and when
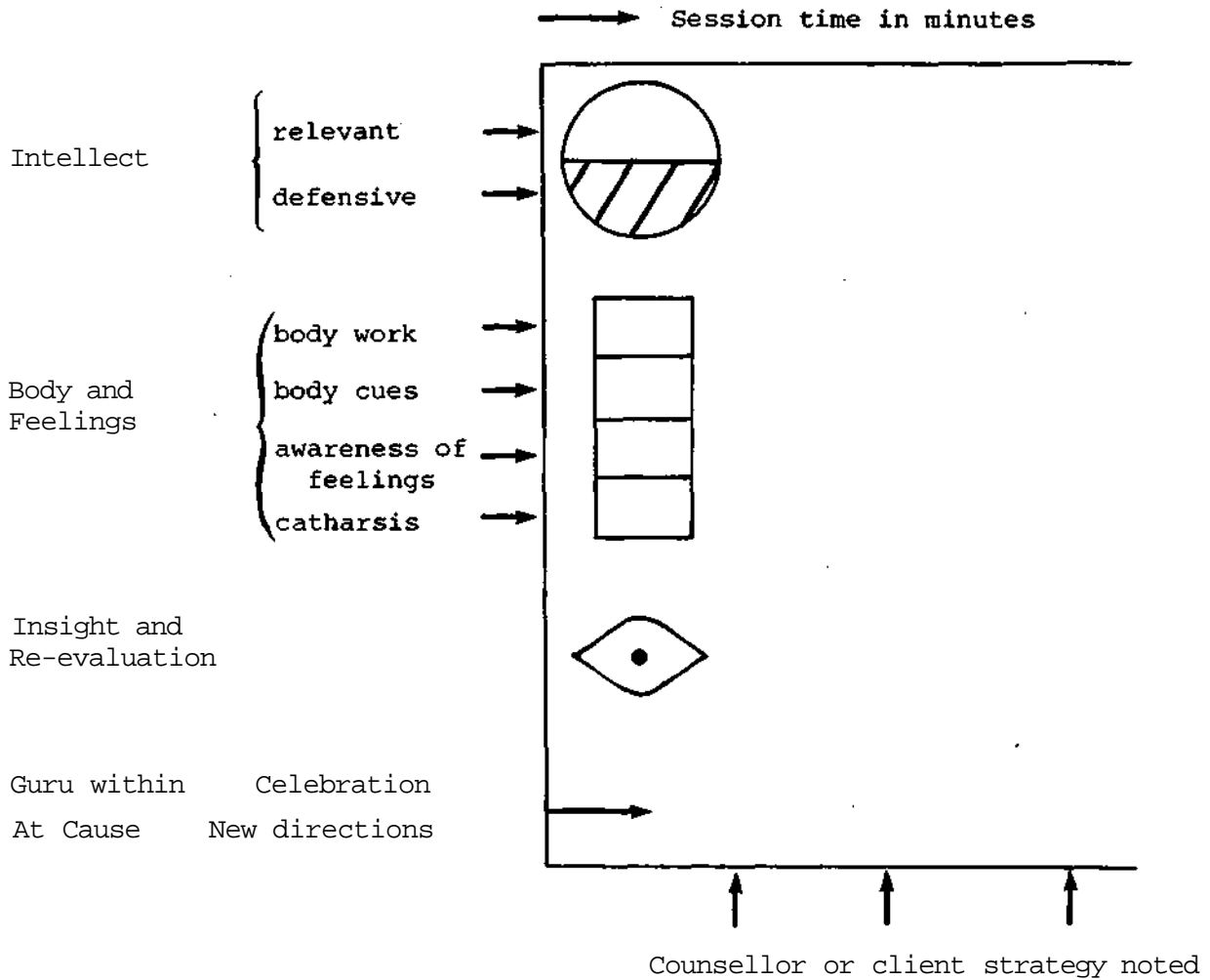attention is out in a defensive, evasive way.

On the catharsis map, some variation in the line could be used to
indicate pseudo-catharsis or dramatisation.

With respect to the physical arousal map, it is important to note
that both high arousal (body work) exercises and low arousal (relaxation)
exercises may help precipitate catharsis.

Small arrows at right angles to any process line on any map can be used
to indicate (a) counsellor or client strategies, (b) client insight
or re-evaluation.

## 2.  Psychological Functions

This is a comprehensive map for noting down what is going on for oneself
as client with respect to a variety of different psychological functions.
What is noted down is a summary of sequences, changes and combinations
of content under the different functions.  The map is filled in with
very brief content notes and cue words - in relation to both session
time and psychological function involved.

Session time in minutes

Intellect { relevant / defensive

Body and Feelings { body work / body cues / awareness of feelings / catharsis

Insight and Re-evaluation

Guru within        Celebration

At Cause        New directions

Counsellor or client strategy noted

Other symbols that can be used:

For catharsis:

grief; ⟨symbol⟩

anger; ⟨symbol⟩

fear; ⟨symbol⟩

embarrassment. ⟨symbol⟩

For centredness:

more centred; ⟨arrow right⟩

less centred. ⟨arrow left⟩

Age of regression work can also be entered next to relevant content cue words.

As with the previous set of maps, the counsellor could also use this map

for recording what is going on in the client during the client's session.

And the client could use it effectively in relation to a video recording

of the session.

3. <u>Sequences of Spaces</u>

This map represents a series of the main different spaces a client moves

through in a session.  It shows change from space to space as a function

of a cue or trigger that gives rise to a strategy devised by client or

counsellor.  The cue or trigger may be a content cue (the meaning of what

the client says), or a process cue (facial expression, gesture, posture,

tone of voice, etc).  The strategy will be one or other of the basic

techniques used in co-counselling to facilitate the client's work.  Each

cue and strategy would be indicated on an actual map by an identifying

word or phrase: eg "clenched fist" (cue); "Co: act into" (strategy -

counsellor suggests client acts into feelings).
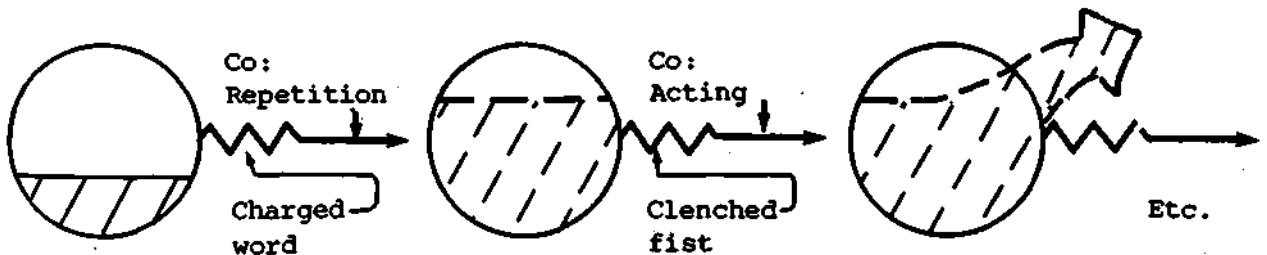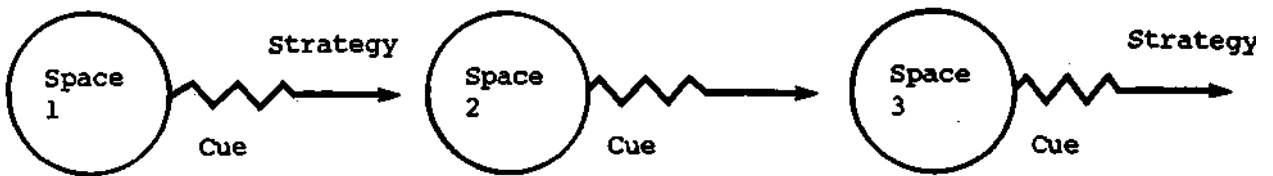


| Space 1: attention out, talking over controlled distress | Space 2: balance of attention, open to and aware of distress | Space 3: balance of attention, discharge of distress |
|---|---|---|

For some of the other items that could be used to characterise the spaces,

see the List of Factors in 5 below.  The virtue of this map is that it

brings out clearly the dynamic effect of strategies used.  It would be

interesting to see both the counsellor's and the client's time perspective

on this map, the client being subjective and the counsellor using a watch.
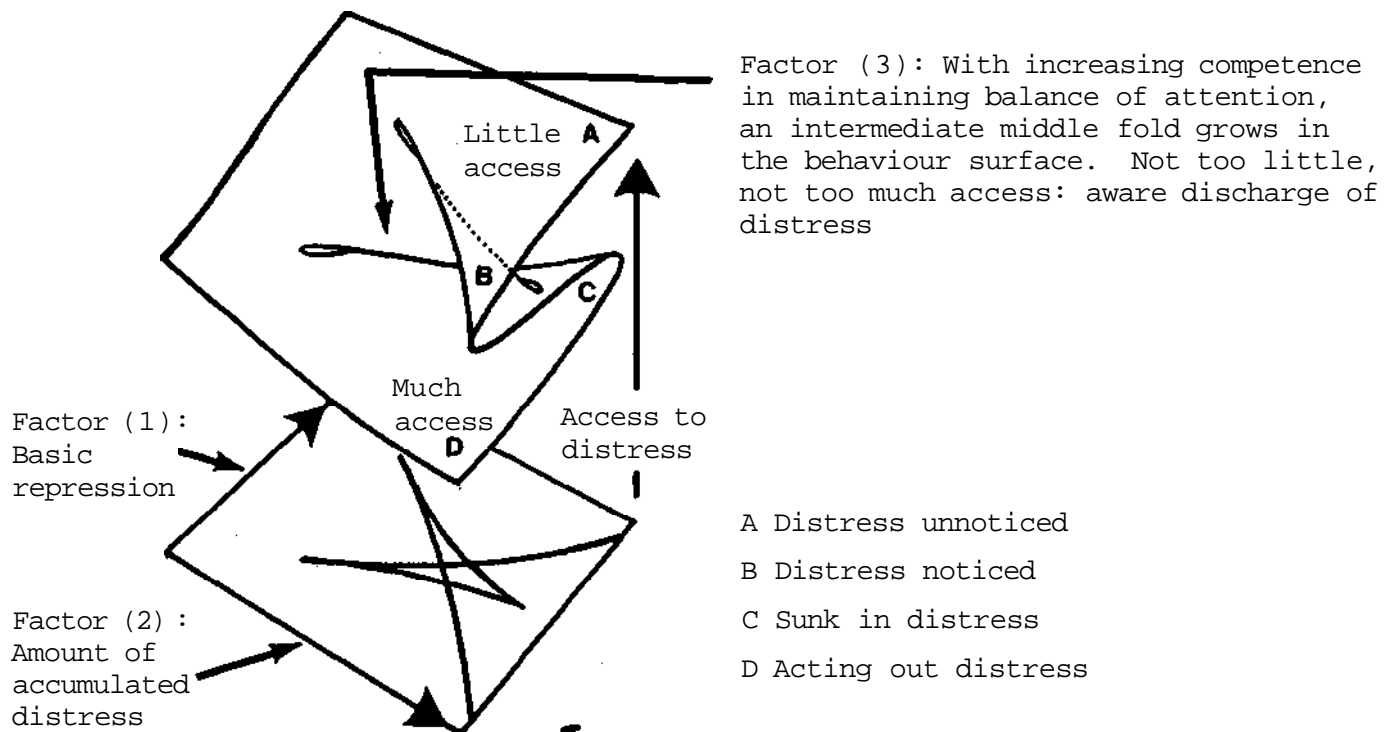
4.  <u>Catastrophe Theory</u>


This is in some ways the most sophisticated map we considered.  It was introduced into our research project by one of our number (DP) who had already written an excellent book on Catastrophe Theory (CT) (Postle, 1980) and its power to portray sudden discontinuities in several domains of human experience and behaviour.  This map takes four basic factors that interact to produce changes of state of mind in the client in a session and/or in everyday life.  The interaction of the four factors can be portrayed on a three dimensional surface like a sheet of paper with folds in it.  On this surface certain critical and sudden changes of state in the client can be plotted as a line dropping (or rising) from one part of the folded surface to another.  Furthermore, different parts of the surface accurately designate some of the basic states of mind given, for example, in State Map (Static) No 2 above.  Thus the CT map can elegantly accommodate basic states, changes of state and factors affecting such changes.


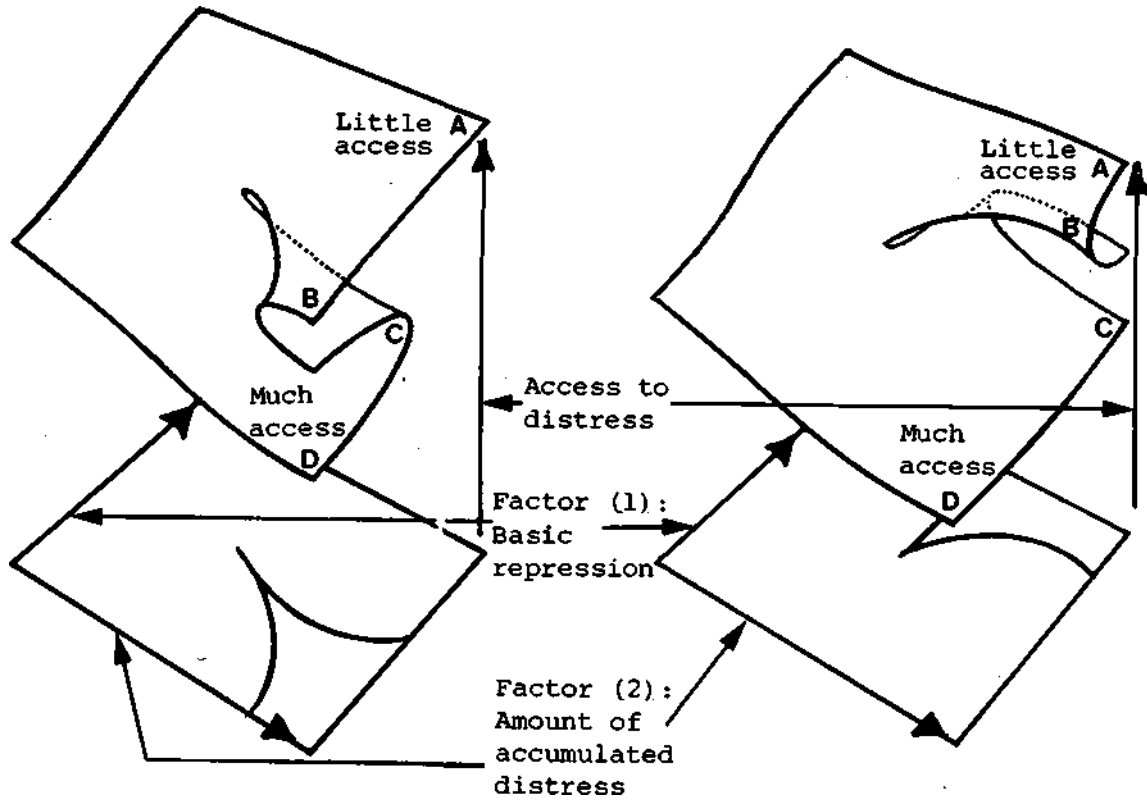The CT map portrays the interaction of the following four factors:

(1)  Degree of basic relatively stable repression: this is the amount of underlying psychosomatic armouring that keeps archaic distress denied and blocked off from consciousness.

(2)  Amount of accumulated distress: this is the amount of grief, fear, anger and other distresses which the person has acquired through traumatic experiences and which are blocked off from consciousness.

(3)  The degree of competence in maintaining balance of attention: a special state of mind, or way of managing attention so that it is balanced between distress and some safe, positive content outside it, in order to discharge the distress and gain insight into its origins and consequences.

(4)   Fluctuations of more superficial defensive strategies and/or
restimulations: these either support and reinforce the stable repression
mentioned in (1) or have the effect of threatening it and stirring up the
buried distress.  Also strategies used by a client in a session, which
give access to distress for discharge.


In the portrayal below, the upper three dimensional folded surface models
changes in behaviour/mental state.  It is above the two dimensional control
surface.  Differences in height between the lower surface and various parts
of the upper surface indicate differential access to distress.



Factor (3): With increasing competence
in maintaining balance of attention,
an intermediate middle fold grows in
the behaviour surface.  Not too little,
not too much access: aware discharge of
distress

A Distress unnoticed

B Distress noticed

C Sunk in distress

D Acting out distress

Factor (4) might also be termed <u>porosity of defences</u>. When porosity
is very low or totally absent, the fold is pulled left (below left),
the person's attention is well out of distress and the area of little



Little access A

B

C

Much access

D

Access to distress

Factor (1): Basic repression

Factor (2): Amount of accumulated distress

Little access A

B

C

Much access

D

A Distress unnoticed                     C Sunk in distress
B Distress noticed                       D Acting out distress

access to distress is vastly <u>increased</u>. But also the intermediate
fold in the middle of the surface corresponding to the balance of
attention state, becomes unstable, ie very difficult or impossible to
enter and maintain. When porosity of defences is very high the fold
is pulled right (above right), the person's attention gets overwhelmed
by distress and behaviour becomes compulsive and irrational - distress-
driven. But here also the intermediate fold becomes unstable and
balance of attention is a much more difficult state to enter and sustain.

5.  <u>List of Factors</u>

Here is the set of factors which were used by one or more persons at one time or another during the project to map changes of mental state in a session or in everyday life.

<u>Attention</u>;  whether balanced, sunk in distress, lost in acting out distress, outside distress.  Angle of attention: whether taking in a lot or a little.

<u>Bodily arousal</u>:  whether high as in active body work, low as in relaxation and reverie, medium as in normal talking.

<u>Catharsis</u>:  kind of, intensity of, whether intermixed with <u>dramatisation</u>.

<u>Regression</u>:  to what age (including birth and foetal life), whether to positive experience or to traumatic experience.

<u>Time</u>:  time into session, sequence of states, use of time.

<u>Cues</u>:  verbal and nonverbal behaviours in the client which trigger off strategies.

<u>Strategies</u>:  an intervention, generated by client or counsellor, involving words or body movements or both, to further the client's work in the session.  Includes the use of the space of the room.

<u>Restimulation</u>:  events that activate buried distress so that it starts to invade consciousness in some form; whether taken charge of, or not.

<u>Strategic defensiveness</u>:  surface defences that fluctuate to cope with varying degrees of restimulation.

<u>Basic repressive armouring</u>:  the underlying more constant defences that deny archaic, accumulated distress access to consciousness.

Amount of distress:  how much accumulated distress a person has.

Insight:  client understanding, self-generated through catharsis, of the
dynamic interaction between past and present events.  Grasp of the dynamic
of the current situation.

Intellect:  creative thinking and problem-solving, or defensive analysis.

At Cause:  transpersonal states, Guru within, Source, Origin, a state
of awareness other than that where personal distress manifests.

Psychic states:  ESP type phenomena or states.

Pulse rate:  taken at various points in the session.

Somatic sensations/clarity of physical vision:  as noted by the client.
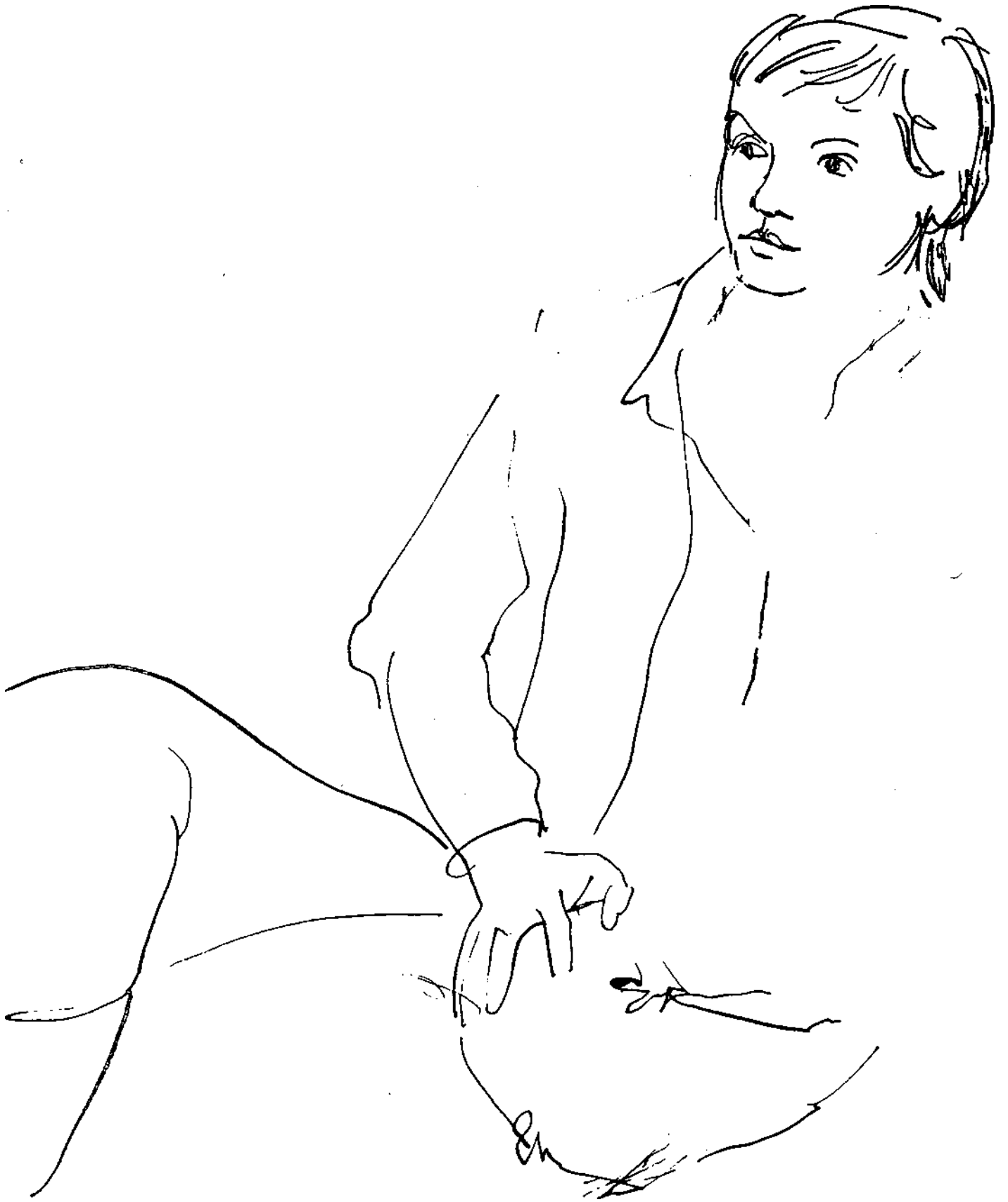
## WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT CO-COUNSELLING FROM THE PROJECT

On the final weekend we shared in the group what each of us had learned about co-counselling from inquiring into it as co-researchers. These were the statements made.

1.  The basic concepts of co-counselling have stood up well to being rattled and shaken.

2.  From co-counselling emerge rational people who can engage in cooperative inquiry in a sustained way.

3.  Inquiring into co-counselling has at the same time deepened my work, my discharge, as a client, and sharpened my access to work on myself.

4.  The project has spotlighted for me the factor of "unnoticed distress" in everyday life.

5.  I have got from the project the idea of asking for a free attention contract from my counsellor and giving myself an intensive contract.

6.  Giving attention to my degree of attention out when my attention is balanced for discharge has given another dimension to my attention. It gives me more permission to explore deeper areas.  I have learned to keep a minimum of attention out to get into very deep discharge.  I get in quicker, am more economical and relaxed about it.  I trust myself not to lose it.

7.  The project has raised my consciousness about my attention level, so I have been able to facilitate my own discharge when on my own, by getting my attention up and out and into balance.

8.  I've learned about the state of being at Cause, the ground on which co-counselling stands, its difference from everyday attention out states.

9.  I want the Guru within to make a statement in each session; and this is different from insight and from celebration.

10.  The way I map a session is probably in part defensive, so I should often use an opposite sort of mapping.

11.  Idiosyncratic maps make a valid, a better, contribution to the understanding of co-counselling even if they have a defensive component.

12.  Knowing the shape of the territory through the Catastrophe Theory formulation of the territory enables me to take many more risks in my sessions.

13.  Mapping will be useful in teaching co-counselling and in explaining and sharing it.

14.  It is possible to produce a map of feelings without "knowing" - being able to express in words - what that map represents.  The attempt to explain the meaning of such a map may facilitate discharge and insight.

15.  Mapping can act as a catalyst to client insight by demonstrating connections between apparently separate areas of work during a session.

LEARNINGS ABOUT EXPERIENTIAL RESEARCH

We discovered in doing this project that experiential research is not easy — at times it is a major struggle — but that it is possible. And we found that we had all been doing it before, in tacit and inexplicit ways, as teachers, therapists, parents, couples and so on. We listed the things we had learned about this process, and the following points are an expansion and an organisation of that list.

(1)  The skills of experiential research have to be learned.  While we had all been doing some form of experiential inquiry before, we certainly needed to learn how to do it explicitly and well.  All the items in this section can be seen as competencies which need to be learned, and in addition the following are important:

- discrimination of experience: the ability to notice differences and similarities, the nuances as well as the obvious, in experience accurately and subtly.

- accurate and comprehensive recollection: memory played a large part in this project, and at times we found it difficult to remember aspects of our counselling experiences.  There are clearly ways of aiding and reinforcing memory (audio and video tapes; photography) which need to be tried out;

- ability to balance noticing and doing: experiential research involves the capacity to be engaged in an activity and to notice what is going on at the same time, not getting hooked into either. In the co-counselling project, there was always the danger of getting so involved with the content of the session — i.e. the specific distress patterns — that noticing the process suffered

(although some of us found in practice that as we became

better researchers we also became better as clients in the

co-counselling process).


(2)  The process of inquiry restimulates distress patterns.  Maybe

this was the biggest learning: a lot of personal distress was stirred

up by the actual process of doing the research, so the research had

an impact on us as researchers.  This distress was manifest in illness

during the project, reluctance to map sessions, forgetting to map

sessions, losing records, disaffection and alienation, and so on.


It seems likely that there is a general distress, common to most persons,

which is stirred up by the process of inquiry.  The need to know and to

understand is in conflict with a fear of the unknown and of disturbing

current understandings.  And this is coupled with a realisation that

complete understanding is impossible.


Then there are specific distress patterns owned by particular persons,

which are associated with the ways our quest for understanding has been

interfered with in childhood.  Curiosity, needing to know, asking

questions, poking things, and other ways of trying to find out are

often experienced as irritating to parenting adults, and so inquiry

processes can be very heavily interfered with in childhood — especially

inquiry into feelings, which was part of the focus of this project.

Similarly the child's eagerness to communicate its discoveries is often

interrupted and invalidated.


The following specific distress patterns were reported as aroused in

our group:

- a fear of speaking in front of a group; the emphasis

on words and diagrams; difficulty in explaining thoughts;

"I shouldn't talk because I'll get into trouble"

- distress about belonging, connection, membership

- a "working class" puritanism about simple words, vs a

value on specific articulation.

- other people's clever and competitive use of words

- "my mother was determined not to understand"

- a panic about male-female polarities; not wanting people

to be divided into camps; not wanting to have to join a camp

- body and enjoyment are not possible

- resentment that ideas and words are seen as heavy

- conflict about whether to record things or not

- feeling responsible when other people are criticised.


In this project we could have given more time to explore these issues:
from a negative point of view, because the distress interferes with
the research; from a positive point of view, because the research can
be seen as a potential experience of personal growth.  It is interesting
to speculate that a possible criterion for the validity of such research
is that it <u>does</u> stir up distress.


(3)  <u>Accepting chaos facilitates the emergence of order</u>.  Experiential
researchers need to have high tolerance for ambiguity and confusion.
New ideas may be found by allowing, celebrating and encouraging, going
through the stages of confusion which the inquiry generates.

(4) <u>Divergence aids convergence</u>.  This is a related but slightly different point, that allowing and encouraging idiosyncratic behaviour during the research process allows the researchers later to come together with their differences.  It is essential that different approaches to the topic are taken, because often these are    ' complementary: thus in this project state maps and process maps complement each other.  It is important that people have space to discover their particular unique identities and contributions to the project.  Thus to an extent we can argue that the validity of the process rests in the inquiry group — whether enough divergence and idiosyncracy has been built up for the group to become supportively confronting and test each others ideas strongly.  So putting these points (3 and 4) together we argue that allowing and encouraging divergence and chaos will lead to a richer convergence, greater creativity, novelty and excitement, and to a greater validity in the reasearch.


(5)  <u>Experiential research requires a high degree of emotional competence</u>. We define emotional competence as the ability to notice emotional restimulation in oneself; the ability to take charge of it, to choose to work on it or temporarily to bracket it; and the ability to tolerate adaptive, perhaps unconventional behaviour in others as they similarly manage their distress.  High emotional competence is required because of the possibilities of distress arising from the nature of inquiry, and the chaotic and divergent processes which may be part of inquiry.

(6) <u>Experiential research requires high interpersonal competence</u>.
Co-researchers need to be able to listen openly over long periods;
they need to be able to give attention to others over long periods.
They need to listen without accepting, without rejecting, but really
getting "under the skin" of the other persons' constructs; really
hearing empathically.


(7) <u>Experiential research is an intimate business</u>.  It is facilitated
by a mutuality and an intimacy which goes beyond normal cooperative
conventions.


(8) <u>Maps of experience need to be simple</u>.  The aim of this project
was to map the psychic spaces involved in co-counselling.  And we found
there are all sorts of different maps, like the different geographical
and political maps that may be found in an atlas.  "The map is not the
territory", and if you try to put all the territory onto the map, the
map gets too complex and is no longer very useful.  And then, no one
map is sufficient: different maps illuminate different topologies and
thus complement each other.  So maps do not have to be very complex or
sophisticated, they have to be adequate.  One member took the view that
the more comprehensive a map is, the more inaccessible it becomes.


(9) The <u>behaviour of research initiators and facilitators is important</u>.
It is essential that the role of the facilitators is clear and agreed.
In the current project, JH and PR announced their status and intent,
proposed a decision making model, and kept to it fairly well.  But it
is difficult to know how dependent the project was on us after our
initiation: as one co-researcher (MB) said, "Is this our research or
Peter or John's research?  Did they set it up for us to do?  I feel

like I have been <u>helping</u> Peter and John to do their research, but
also <u>part</u> of a peer group".  So while the role of facilitators must
be clear, it is always (paradoxically) ambiguous, and must be
negotiated sensitively as the project goes along.


(10)  "<u>It behoves experiential researchers to move toward androgyny</u>"


(11) <u>Co-operative - inquiry is the only way to get  "clear" about God</u>.
This is a tentative hypothesis.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE VALIDITY OF THE PROJECT

As we mentioned above (page 9 ), as initiators we (JH and PR) identified five criteria of excellence for this project, and in this section we review our actual performance against these criteria.

(1)  Rigour through a cyclic process.  This criterion is modestly well met, given the length of the project: some of the models produced we tested through three or four cycles.

(2)  Management of counter-transference.  We probably could have done this better, in that we could have dealt with it earlier, rather than later and we could have built-in ways of dealing with it rather than allowing it to arise unplanned and catching us somewhat unawares.  In the event, we managed the distress adequately.  But it is clear that this issue needs to be understood much more fully for successful experiential research.

(3) Counteracting consensus collusion.  We could have done this much better.  We made no systematic attempts at all to appoint a co-researcher to play "devil's advocate" in the research process, which was our original plan.  And the withdrawal of co-researchers during the project may have increased collusion.  On the other hand, we would argue that because we allowed and encouraged diversity in the early stages of the research, we developed a considerable capacity for supportive confront-ation.  But we question whether our performance on this criterion was adequate.

(4)  <u>Check on the degree of authentic collaboration</u>. Again we were
not systematic about this, and at times it appears that the group
was acting fairly oppressively in relation to some members.  But on
the whole we are satisfied that this was a collaborative endeavour.


(5)  <u>Balance between inquiry and growth</u>.  We are not sure.  In terms
of the division of time, an enormously greater amount of time was
spent mapping, and mapping maps, than was spent counselling.  We
consider that we spent a minimal, but adequate, amount of time on
growth work as clients.  But on the other hand, the inquiry itself
was for many an experience of growth.  Perhaps we needed to clarify
group and individual objectives with respect to inquiry on the one
hand and growth on the other.  This might also have had a bearing on
taking more charge of the issue of consensus collusion ((3) above).

NEXT STEPS FOR COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENTIAL INQUIRY

The practice of collaborative experiential inquiry is in its infancy: this was one of the very first systematic attempts to use this approach.  We believe that future projects should pay attention to the following issues.


(1)  Vary the facilitator style and influence.  At one extreme, it would be interesting greatly to increase the facilitator role, so that they are primarily in charge of the process on the basis of an informed consent by the other co-researchers.  And at the other extreme, it would be interesting to recruit a group of highly attuned people with similar competencies in counselling, intelligence, conceptual ability, articulateness, critical ability, and creativity; and work in a totally collaborative fashion.


(2)  Vary the ratio of doing and conceptualising.  On this project we spent a lot of time conceptualising.  We should try greatly to increase the amount of action time (ie in this case time actually spent as clients). It is likely that this will be more possible at later cycles of the research, when the basic maps are agreed and the research is for testing and refining.


(3)  Develop the procedures for dealing with consensus collusion.


(4)  Find ways to be more systematic.  Better checking of maps against experience: eg all use the same map, refine it over several cycles.

(5) <u>Do some research which has a purely presentational product</u>.
The product of this research was both conceptual/propositional and
graphic/presentational.  This was appropriate for identifying psychic
spaces and their interactions.  But if we want to express more the
<u>quality</u> of the spaces, it may be necessary to present a product in
verse, pictures, film, dance, mime, theatre, or music.


(6)  <u>Use more intentional divergence</u>.  The divergence of this project
was both intentional and unplanned.  It would be useful to explore
ways of increasing the intentionality.


(7)  <u>Explore more the ways inquiry restimulates distress</u>.  We just do
not know enough about this.  One way to do it would be to devise a
research method which stirs up the maximum amount of distress.  This
might be done through focussing on an emotionally charged topic, or
on ways in which inquiry processes have been interfered with.  Or it
might be done through an <u>inquiry intensive</u> - - taking several days
simply to ask each other questions such as "What do you know?", and
"How do you know?"  Or by using co-operative inquiry to explore the
nature of co-operative inquiry.  We need to know much more about our
capacities to inquire, and how these capacities have been interfered
with.


(8)  <u>Apply the co-operative inquiry to altered states of consciousness</u>.
Our understanding of the method would be enhanced by applying it to a
highly state-specific content.

NEXT STEPS FOR RESEARCH INTO CO-COUNSELLING

(1)  Clarify the empirical phenomenology of co-counselling terms.
This current research has mapped some spaces, and also developed some
technologies for mapping.  But we have not described these spaces
fully, and we need to go on to explore and to communicate the quality
of experiences such as free attention, being swamped, having a balance
of attention, being At Cause, and so on.  Similarly we might attempt
to describe the experience of moving around the Catastrophe Theory
surface.  This kind of research will enrich our understanding of the
process, making more subtle our ability to know where we are, and enable
us to understand better, for example, the difference between discharge
and dramatisation.

(2)  Apply the process maps to a co-counselling session on video with
peer feedback.  One way of experimenting with recall to make it more
accurate.

(3)  Inquire more into the strategies available for moving between
psychic spaces.  We did not really get to this on our project.

(4)  Devise a way of discovering the intentionality which is "in charge"
of a session.  What is going on when a client chooses a particular
strategy in a counselling session?

(5)  Apply maps of sessions over time with the same client-counsellor
pair.  This might greatly increase the sharpness of both client and
counsellor, as well as refine the maps used.

(6) <u>use co-counselling to explore psychological development</u>. We could learn a lot about developmental processes and how these may be interfered with by using our skills to trace the history of the development of distress patterns in our lives, and by generalising from these.

(7) <u>Apply to everyday life</u>. One test of our skill as counsellors is our ability to be emotionally competent in everyday life, to notice distress and be able to disentangle ourselves from it without taking time for a co-counselling session. Experiential inquiry might help us learn to do this better and clarify the range of viable strategies.

(8) <u>An outcomes inquiry</u>: how has co-counselling helped me?

(9) <u>An inquiry into the impact of mutual counselling in couple relations</u>.

(10) Investigate what a person learns by moving physically from part to part of their own greatly enlarged maps.

(11) Survey and use more fully the process skills and task skills of co-researchers in the group.

One of the group (SF) wrote after receiving the first draft of this report: "At the beginning of the project I was just interested to see what the outcome would be. At the end I had formulated a whole lot of new questions which I think merits further research. These are the ones which still seem important to me.

1.   Would it be possible to link our subjective mappings to objective physiological measurements?  ie skin resistance, pulse rate, brain rhythms, blood pressure, glandular activity, etc.


2.   Could the results of our research have value to people in general?  How could this be

    (a)  discovered?

    (b)  proved?

    (c)  put into practice?


3.   Does the attempt to map feelings or states of mind increase the connections between the two halves of the brain?  Does co-counselling do this anyway?  Is there any value in attempting to use both halves together anyway?

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