THE SEARCH FOR HOME:
A DIALECTIC OF ALIENATION AND BELONGING

by
DARREN JUDD BASSERABIE

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Supervisors:
HILTON RUDNICK and LIZBE VOS

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ABSTRACT

The notion of home is one which stirs deeply within us. The search for home is guided by an almost ineffable sense of longing. It is search which we share as common, yet the longing is intensely personal and the constructions of our home unique. At the heart of this search are our experiences of alienation and belonging. The process of negotiating our sense of alienation and belonging, separation and togetherness is fundamental to the way in which we experience, construct our identities and make meaning.

Our sense of home is inextricably related to our sense of identity. Our identities carry with them the markers that help us to resonate with a situation or feel alienated from it, to join with it or remain apart. At the same time our sense of alienation and belonging will play a role in the construction of our identities.

This study explores the participants’ experience of their search for home and their experiences of alienation and belonging that pave this journey. It suggests that there is a dialectical nature between alienation and belonging. This particular dialectic influences our meaning making and can be a frame through which we view our experiences. The dialectic shifts and shifts along with identity. Identity in turn operates to shift our experience of alienation and belonging.

The study will explore how I see the theme of alienation and belonging operating in my own life and will create a context for the rest of the study. It will explore the relationship between epistemology and identity. It will make particular reference to then theme of the bounded monad that runs through modern epistemology. It will look at the potential for this to shift to one of greater connections as understanding of identity is seen within a postmodern epistemology. Epistemology and identity therefore form a broad context in which a sense of alienation and belonging is experienced.

The study views alienation and belonging as a broad template of experience that can be used to frame experiences and negotiate a way through experiences of 'stuckness'. It does not seek to prove, but rather to open a domain of conversation with which the reader can explore her own experiences and perhaps find resonance.
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Chapter 1

Personal Prologue:

Constructing the context

The patterns that connect are always there and often unnoticed. Sometimes staring me in the face is the most beautiful spirograph. I know it is there, somewhere in the held-at-bay part of my experiencing. The key turns and it all comes rushing in, overwhelming my senses, overwhelming me. I can see the invisible forces that are far greater than me, and I feel like a part of that pattern. It scares me to think that I am always a part of that pattern and usually just oblivious to it. What else am I also missing? The same reality stands in front of my eyes and I can see it in such different ways. I become part of a different pattern in an instant. One way that it changes is in the dialogically created meaning making moment. The same event discussed with a different person becomes a different event, reveals a different pattern, through the words that it is clothed in, (or it is created into something different through the words that are used). The frame that is created in the intersubjective space is not just a different opinion that is harmlessly tacked onto the list of different opinions, that leaves the event unchanged but rather the event is created and recreated, changed and becomes something different through the different speakings about it.

There is nothing better then sinking into the cool dark recesses of a cinema with a box of popcorn and the anticipation of encountering another world. This may last only a few moments, but each moment holds the promise of never ending envelopment, of being rapt by and wrapped within a story.
I remember once relaxing in a Jacuzzi, thinking what more could one ask for, with a view of Lions Head behind me and the ocean in front of me, on holiday, reading a great book and my girlfriend (now my wife) sitting close by in the sun. A scene which smacks of utopia and yet I did not have that feeling of in-the-moment contentment. I remember wondering about that, and thought to myself, “If this was a movie it would seem like the perfect scenario.” Was I watching that scene, I would long to be there with the assumption that it would hold completion and serenity. The scene would show that that is what constitutes life at that moment.

A movie portrays only the image that is constructed for that scene. The impression is that this is the entire story. However there is a life not captured by the camera, the background, the history, a myriad of intruding thoughts, a greater network of people and life after the happy-ever-after ending. The scenes are chosen to tell a story. Michael White (1990) describes the fullness of our experiences, including those of which we are not aware as ‘lived experience’. We select from the fullness of this lived experience and construct our own personal story.

My story, I have learned can be told in many ways. I believe that a theme in my life is regulating distance, negotiating separation and connection, the dialectic of alienation and belonging. I call it the search for home. My story of alienation and belonging will present the context of this study.

To present this story seems all too daunting – so I would like the reader to know that these ideas have been culled and packaged for the academic context and so that you know that this is but a colour of a spectrum.

I will therefore attempt to tell this story in the shape of a movie: certain scenes are chosen to be storied and not others. These scenes are shot from a specific angle to convey certain meanings. They do not come in chronological order, and can often seem disjointed, hopefully to be tied together at some point in the narrative. Unlike a carefully edited version, there may be scenes that do not fit perfectly with furthering the aim of the plot. Perhaps that is where life departs from cinema. They should, however serve to enrich the story, perhaps like a European style ‘slice-of-life’ movie and not the tightly packaged Hollywood blockbuster.
It’s a bit like the emperor’s new clothes, only inverted, or something. That’s why it seems impossible to write about. I mean, it’s right there all the time and then the very act of describing it kind of makes it disappear slightly.

By trying to put it into words conceals some of what it is about. Clothing the notion of home, that is so personal and ineffable, with words, one would assume brings it to light and puts it out there for all to see and grapple with. Instead it seems only to mask what is not being storied and makes of it less then it is (or could be).

And yet it’s through words that hopefully a domain of conversation can be opened. We can enter it and hopefully enough will be said so that each person can find some sense of resonance on her or his own search for home.

Take one...Action...!

Scene - learning the line

It was not exactly the green mile, but it was a walk to the end of the corridor to see my supervisor. We were going to decide on a dissertation topic. I had a list of about 15 options. I was reviewing them in my head as I walked when the words resounded in my mind – the search for home. She is going to suggest that I research something to do with the search for home.

We went through the ideas, discussed them for a bit and she then said to me, “There is a common theme that runs through the ideas...the search for home.” These words began to play around in my mind, and I found that they formed a category into which many of my experiences began to group themselves. With these words in mind, it gave me the opportunity to make meaning of certain memories in a new way. That was learning the line.
Scene – my umbrella context (a metaphor?)

In the beginning God created... before the beginning there was one, there was unity, and then in the beginning God created the world. He contracted and made space for duality: He created the world. And forever the duality would search to return itself to unity. One of the Hebrew names of God is Ha'makom, the place. The place in which the world resides. The world, and humankind in it would search to bridge that gap and re-connect to God Ha'makom. And so longing was created.

Adam and Eve perpetuate the separation and are banished from the Garden of Eden, their home. Outside the garden they are placed in the never-ending realm of longing... longing to return to the home that once was theirs. And forever humankind will wander the earth trying to find their way back home...

This search can be traced through history via different avenues as we struggle with who we are and how best to live. These attempts give birth to different ways of livings, assumptions about life and humanity and epistemologies as we try and try again to find a fit with the world in which we live.

The reason why I have “a metaphor?” in brackets after the title of this section is because it does not have to be taken literally by the reader if he or she is not inclined to do so. But the idea is still useful as a metaphor. (To add another level of reflection – I also am unsure as to whether I am comfortable bringing religious type ideas to this context so early on. But more about that in a later scene.)

Scene – vacillations closest to home

I am married and together with my wife we often enjoy a touch of uncomplex happiness that smacks of home. But it didn't just happen that way; the pathway that led here has been a long and winding road. We went through, I say 7 and a ½ and she says 8 years of see-saw difficult times, where simplicity in happiness seemed nowhere on the horizon, or was kept at bay. (By me anyway). When we had broken up for the
final time and had not spoken for 10 weeks, I called her and she was out. Now even though we had broken up for the last time and were not ever going to contact each other, I still intended to marry her.

When I put the phone down, I felt desolate. I had tried to reach out to her and she was walking around somewhere without that knowledge. She had a sense of permanent and perpetual disconnection, and she did not know that I had tried to cross that chasm. For some reason the disparity of knowledge filled me with untameable emptiness. Through the tears I decided to use the pain to write about this search for home. It seems like a strange thing to do at that time, but it was an unmasked moment of alienation and desperation for connection. I wanted to capture it and this is what I scribbled down:

The search along the journey to find home and belonging. The world around us in its natural state seems to be one of entropy when it comes to connection. If connection isn’t actually mentioned it disintegrates. The world seems to have inherent in it a drive toward fragmentation. I can either live with that fragmentation or find a way to make connection and in so doing find a place that feels like home.

I find myself constantly trying to negotiate the fragmentation. Sometimes wishing it away, sometimes just assuming it away in a hope that it will be enough, sometimes caught between confusion and frustration and rage on the one side and confusion and compassion on the other. Both in an attempt to make sense of something which feels alienating and so pointless.

I wonder if I need to find that place called home inside in order for it to resonate with outside and so enabling that place to become home. In finding that mirroring between inside and out I find a process of shifting identities – the negotiating of a fragmented world fragmenting identity and impacting the quest for belonging. And the quest for belonging working its way to connect the fragments.
The search for connection though in its comfort carries pinions, ostensibly hidden but undeniably sensed, for the fragmentation can serve its purpose – protection. And when the boundaries are broken and connection is made that protection is cast off. The connection carries with it the flipside – vulnerability. And they diminish and grow together. Or do they? Is there not somewhere in connection, without protection, a greater security?

Scene – the yearning of a people

Every day, three times a day, my people and I amongst them turn to Jerusalem to pray. We have been doing this for three thousand years. For the past two thousand years we have done so with an incurable yearning to return home. The Jewish people have directed their hopes and prayers to one-day return to their land. These years have been fraught with persecution and defined by exile.

The Jew received the appellation wandering Jew. Because she would live in a foreign country, a land not her own and would make every attempt to make that place home. To understand, become part of and live within the culture of that people. Searching for a place to belong, knowing that she was different and had to negotiate those differences in order to fit in.

Time and time again the Jew managed to make a foreign land home. Only for it to end in persecution and exile. Moving on to find another place to make a life. All the while hoping, yearning and waiting for the exile to end and to be returned to a land that was once theirs to call and make home.

Political, sociological and spiritual changes paved the way for this yearning to be converted into a reality. The years of wandering and persecution culminated in the Holocaust, a large scale attempt to eradicate the wanderer from the face of the earth. In a strange twist of destiny, it was three years later that the Jew was able to return home, the United Nations in an historic moment came together to vote Israel into existence. The Jew could return home after 2000 years.
Both the yearnings of thousands of years and the nature of this home have informed my notions of alienation and belonging. I am born into a people who have been defined by being in exile for so long, for the notion of longing for home being central and always present on some level. Obviously this connection is felt more by some and less by others, but when exile is imposed, it has not asked the extent of that connection and has applied equally to all.

And so our prayers have been answered, but if I look to Israel as a paradigm for home, I am jolted out of the implied simplicity of the word. From the moment of birth, the infant country had to fight for survival as it was attacked by its neighbouring countries, and has been under that constant threat ever since. But it is the internal complexity that challenges the notion of home. Israeli society is polarised on almost every issue. The battles are fought constantly and very often without respect. It often feels like the last environment one would want for home. Yet I think the reason why the disagreements are waged so intensely is because home is exactly what they are fighting for. The struggle is to define what it means to live as a Jew at home after so many years of this discussion being only theoretical.

Scene – leaving home...the first time

I was lying in bed and my mother was telling me how exciting the world that lay beyond our house is. “There is a big red van,” she said, “and you can play in it tomorrow.” I was going to be introduced to my nursery school. My mother was talking to the teacher. I interrupted her to say, “I am going to play in the red van”. I had obviously spotted it and ran off with an air of natural independence, excited and with the assumption that that was the place for me to be. (The soundtrack music begins to build).

Sitting in the red van, three faces appeared round the sides and said, rather jeered, “Fat boys can’t play in the red van...” (Looking at pictures many years later, I realised for the first time that I wasn’t even fat.) At that moment the world felt hostile I felt like I was being squeezed out of any place that I had in it. I did play in the red van again, but always with caution.
The next day I was in a lift scheme on my way back. The kids in the car were talking about Ari. "How was Ari getting to school?" was the question on the table. "He must be coming by helicopter or by rocket or maybe by racing car..." now the only Ari I knew was my cousin’s dog – Ari. I had distinct visions of Ari the dog standing by the open door of a helicopter hovering above the school wondering how he was going to get down. I also knew that they all knew Ari, and for some reason I did not.

Some weeks later that changed. When one would hurt oneself at nursery school the salve was often a sweet. And the custom was to break that sweet in half and give it to some one. Ari hurt himself, received a sweet, broke it in half and the crowd went wild. "Ari give it to me give it to me". I was quiet because I had no claim to the sweet. And then (slow motion) through the crowd our eyes met and he walked straight through everyone to give me the other half. And the friendship began and the years of belonging at nursery school.

Scene – early defining context

When I think about growing up, the most defining context for me was my brother and 2 cousins – our foursome...in which I always felt different. There was a time when the four of us spent every moment, waking and other types, together. I remember some of the rules we developed – when at the other’s house, if one person said he was hungry it must immediately result in a trip to the kitchen. The rules around deciding what game to play next: one person would shout out, “last suggesting” and a verbal race would ensue for the order of suggesting, the loser having to make the first suggestion of an activity and then the next and so it goes. We would only play the game on which there was 100% consent.

Somehow I was different. The other three were that much better at sport, more adventurous, less hungry and well... I just had many thoughts that were foreign. The space to say them was just not there. There was no doubt this was my place, but it was not entirely comfortable. The order of age is significant – Gavin, my cousin is oldest, then myself, followed by Gavin’s brother, Trevor and finally my brother Lance.
When we teamed up against each other it was always Gavin and myself versus the younger two. There was always a subtle message with which I colluded – I needed the oldest on my side in order to compete. I remember two occasions where the three of them ganged up on me, it never happened any other way around. I was always just different and we all knew that. It was subtle, but enough to give me a sense of being alienated at home.

**Scene – able to belong...elsewhere**

Yet at the same time I still did belong to the foursome. That was something that helped me when I came to a new school. In the beginning, in the initial struggle to find myself, I had the resource of a place of belonging elsewhere from which to draw. I knew that while I was new and did not yet have a place, that was fine because I had a strong place with my foursome. It allowed me to bide my time until I did start to find a place for myself.

This was a dynamic that I have experienced many times. Feeling alienated in one place and drawing from the sense of belonging elsewhere. This could either be experienced positively in that it would give me a sense of strength and confidence or negatively in that I would feel alienated and have a ‘don’t care or need to connect with you’ attitude because I belong elsewhere.

So feeling alienated in one place often enhanced a feeling of belonging in another. The strange thing is that it does not necessarily mean that when I am in the other place I do actually feel more a part of it. I have often wondered if it were possible to go from context to context not actually belonging, but using the other imagined place to make me feel okay. This sounds like a disconnected existence and I realise that this depends very much on how I am feeling about myself at the time.

**Scene – the school collage**

On the positive side of the resource of alternate places of being, I have often found it useful and enjoyable. I would often look at my brother and marvel at the way he had
the same core group of friends from nursery school all the way to the end of high school and beyond. I would sometimes yearn for that solid sense of belonging but then I enjoyed the experience of membership to many different groups of people.

This was my first experience with a contextually created identity. I noticed how my sense of confidence, way of speaking, way of thinking about myself and even my opinions would change between contexts. In my mind, I had different categories for the different groups. There was the alternate Jim Morison-Dungeons and Dragons types, the cool top of the social hierarchy types, the social struggling types and the solid 'good oke' types. Another thing that I enjoyed about the different groups was that part of my identity was always elusive to one specific group. This allowed me to always remain slightly enigmatic, which also was a way maintaining some safety in distance.

I have on many occasions fantasized about having the perfect day bringing all these friends together and having an incredible time. However whenever I have tried it I have found it quite an uncomfortable experience. Besides for it being difficult to keep many different people happy at the same time, I found it difficult to negotiate the different identities at the same time.

**Scene – concerns of a pastiche personality (Gergen, 1991)**

Although it was enjoyable to be able to befriend many different people, and experience myself in different ways, I had my concerns about it especially when I first started noticing it. When I was 15 years old, I again found myself on my bed. This time talking to my father. It was time to come clean – I was nothing but a con artist. I profoundly felt that I was not one solid person, sporting one identity. Surely that meant that I lacked integrity. Gergen's pastiche personality was an excruciating experience for a romantic/modernist teenager searching for authenticity. I felt like I could not identify who I was. And more difficult than that, I could change whom I was at will. It felt powerful but in a way that lacked integrity and was using the power to deceive the people around me.
I was reading at the time, a series of books called the Belgariad by David Eddings. The characters were so well defined and distinct from each other. I felt that I could choose to be any of them and live that personality for a while. My father had the wisdom to show me the positive in such a broad repertoire, but alas to myself I remained under the spell of the magician’s hat, pulling out different identities at different times. It gave me the sense that I was always skimming on the surface and never really a part of something.

**Scene – acquiring a world**

After school a different journey began – one that has brought me to a place where people would call me religious. I decided to do something unpredictable for myself and so I went with some religious friends to spend a year in a yeshiva (an academy of intense Jewish studies) in Israel. I seem to find great comfort, a real space to be, when I do something different. It gives me the freedom to ‘de-box’ and explore my identity while others are caught by surprise. Yet in another way this was also coming home. I was not at a Jewish school in grade 1 and I would nag my parents to send me to one – I was Jewish after all. I remember telling a friend that I wanted to be the most religious person in the world. He told me that you couldn’t have pictures or corners in your house because that is like idol worship. I imagined having to live in a bare igloo and gave up the entire idea as too difficult.

By the time I left for yeshiva, I had passed through a good dose of pseudo intellectual atheism. In fact I went to yeshiva not really concerned whether God existed or not, just with the plan to learn as much as I could about as much as I could. I think that was just a way of holding it all at a distance so that I could climb inside without threatening my identity, until I was used to it. I spent the year in yeshiva asking as many questions as I could and taking an anti stance. When I left and came back here, is when I began to develop my new identity of being religious.

One thing I was scared of was having left South Africa living as a traditional but secular Jew and returning a religious Jew. How was I going to fit with the things that I used to do and the people with whom I was friendly? In some cases it was an easy re-
entry and in some not. With one particular friend with whom I had a relationship of intense discussion, it was difficult to reconnect. We suddenly saw things too differently. But as time went on and I became more confident with my ideas, it once again became easier to relate.

I was debating whether to call this scene ‘acquiring an argument’ because one thing that I enjoy about being religious is it puts me in the midst of a constant debate. Debates that involve bringing seemingly disparate ideas together – especially those more liberal ideas that usually do not seem to dovetail with religion, but with the correct approach can. I decided against that name though because even though it is one important aspect to me, it would belie the more important fact that it has been a place to belong.

Scene – epistemological violence...definitely 2-21

At some point in time during the first year of my MA degree the carpet was pulled out from under me. This carpet was the assumptions that I held about the world, about everything. I was experiencing what Lawson (1985) described as a sense of vertigo as the concepts I knew crumbled. No-one ever explicitly said this is the “new order, no-one ever made a gentle connection by saying this is what you have been thinking and this is another way of seeing things. We used to call it being thrown into the wasteland of postmodernity.

My encounter with postmodern thinking was at times refreshing but mostly it was disconcerting and unsettling. Partly because of the ideas themselves and partly because meeting them was so unclear. At this point I no longer feel the sense of violation that I did and am now comfortable in that mode of thinking, but there was a time when I found them incredibly alienating.

Having the ideas that formed the basis for my understanding the world turned on their heads was certainly alienating. I was walking around and not knowing how to understand anything. Having an inkling of how my old notions were not so useful but not understanding the implications of the new. As Keeney (1983) puts in quoting
Mathew Arnold, “wandering between two worlds, one dead, /The other powerless to be born”. I felt like a stranger in the world of my own ideas.

At first it seemed like semantics. “So you say there is no essential personality, well whatever other way that you describe it, you are just saying the same thing.” Then when I noticed the difference, I noticed that there was a focus not on how things are, but on the consequence of describing in a certain way. That seemed to me like avoiding the issue to get the result that you wanted. I believed that it was all in the spirit of getting people unstuck, of helping to expand repertoires, and of avoiding being categorised to one’s disadvantage. The implication of that for me was that one could have both essentialism and constructionism at the same time. For example a person could have a soul at their essence and at the same time live with constructionist principles, which would give all the benefits of not getting stuck.

My journey has moved forward into the understanding of postmodern epistemology, and as my journey continues it is becoming more a part of my way of thinking. This study is based on postmodern and social constructionist epistemology, partly because I believe it as an appropriate epistemology for this study, as an attempt to broaden my understanding of it and because I prefer it as a way of negotiating the world. Having tasted it I could not imagine seeing as if I hadn’t.

**Scene – home from home**

The sense that I have of my parents is tied intimately to these ideas – to separation and connection. It seems to me that these dynamics touch deeply the way that they live. These are images from growing up, I think that with time, the dynamics and my relation to them have become much more relaxed. My mother struggles with regulating distance. She would seek out intense connection and at the same time would struggle to find a comfortable place in the closeness. She would have a fear of being rejected in those intense connections. And so she would make every effort to connect deeply with people. Then at times pushes them away and find solace in connection elsewhere. Only to re-establish connection and lose it where she had it
last. This is the dialectic that she would live in; as I said she is now able regulate it with more ease. I believe that I have many times experienced similar dynamics.

My father is the most friendly, easygoing and popular person, yet I don’t see him forming intensely close relationships. My experience of him is that he yearns for deep connection from his family, but has often been unsure as to how to get it. He has a sense of respect and concern for not intruding on anyone’s space but that seems to impede this desire. My father has an overdeveloped self-monitoring system, which allows him to regulate relationships. He is able to keep them at a place that seems comfortable to everybody involved. At the same time it can form an invisible boundary that can keep him lonely. As with my mother I also see this easing and him finding closeness with his family.

If we learn about interaction first from our parents, then I believe that these issues have touched me deeply too. Part of my quest is to understand these processes so that I can operate with them in as useful a way as possible. I am perhaps only beginning to manage.

Having said that, there is a concept in Judaism that the achievement of something, especially spiritual, is made easier if one has a previous experience of it. Thanks to my parents, in my search for home, I always have an image of the beauty of what a home can truly be. The home that they created for me to live in will always be an inspiration for me to create my own in the same image.

**Scene – some personal scenes**

... in some way when I think of home I think of something that is out of reach... it expresses itself in intense longing...a scene comes to mind: I have this image of driving in a car, an old American type convertible, driving in a mid-west U.S. desert, with the orange and red sun setting in front of me. That image is suffused with nostalgia... it is an experience though which I have never had. Yet the image cries of home to me, I long for... something in it...it smacks of being exactly where I want to be, having just achieved something incredible and not yet arrived at the next place, so the incredible
achievement is still with me. In the car with me are people who I love to be with, who I am comfortable with, who understand me and people who learn from me and I from them. The feeling is of tired contentment and relaxed excitement. As the sun rides her crimson tinged chariot across the sky, the day ends with each moment complete, there was nothing missing. And the destination holds promise of another such day, yet it is the journey itself that is satisfying.

**Scene – where to with this**

The notion of home is something which stirs deeply within each of us. The search for home is guided by an almost ineffable sense of longing. It is a search which connects us all, one which we share in common, yet the longing is intensely personal and the construction of our homes unique. At the heart (or hearth) of this search are feelings of belonging and alienation. The process of negotiating our sense of alienation and belonging, separation and connection is fundamental to the way that we experience, construct our identities and make meaning.

I have a sense of what home is to me, but I am uncertain how to articulate it. I have shown here parts of the picture, which gives that sense but is still incomplete and fragmented. This study will go some way to filling in the spaces in the picture and to open a domain of conversation with these concepts as tools to negotiate the domain.

**Movie credits**

The remainder of this study will continue to follow the metaphor of a movie through. It will do so more subtly, not with clearly demarcated scenes (except for two at the beginning of the next chapter), but rather with the different voices, involved in the making of a movie, speaking through the text. I will identify the voices here to assist the reader in engaging with the script:
The director presents in this font and will speak in the form of headings, sometimes underlined to indicate a higher order of heading that will include the ones that follow. The director chooses the scenes that he believes will further the plot and create an exciting, unfolding adventure along the way.

The main script is written in this font. It provides the journey through the ideas. It comprises the cast member that speak with the academic voice of research and analysis. It also contains the voice of my personal experience when the aim of bringing it is not a reflection on the text, but to add to and be a part of the academic voice. This presents itself particularly it this chapter and toward the beginning of chapter two.

The voice of my personal reflection will present itself in this font. It's role is to broaden enrich the academic voice with connections that bring the themes together and complexify them. It also shows part of my own journey through the ideas.

The narrator steps in to set the scene and add to the direction of the script. He steps out slightly from the script to add a level a level of choreography and drama to process.

The self makes an attempt at alternate narrating. He has a somewhat indignant tone because he feels that much of the story is being told about him and he would like to get a word in about it. He rushes onto the set when he can and leaves before he is caught by the narrator.

An actor makes a cameo appearance in this font in chapter 5 in order to add to the story of the search for home.

All these actors and voices are the multiple voices of the editor, myself. Behind the scenes, yet clearly revealed through the presented voices.
Chapter 2

Epistemology: the emerging shadow

Scene – the face of the narrator

Imagine the face of a Morgan Freeman type character sitting against a black background, wearing a black polar-neck and a thin veneer of smoke passes inconsistently over this image as if it is coming from a cigarette in his hand. He launches into an introductory monologue.

I’m going to begin with an epistemologically laden statement: our ideas are not born in a vacuum, they don’t arise in isolation, they aren’t just there within us, or unconnected. The perceptions that we have, the way we see the world and form ideas, are all filtered through certain lenses or based on a set of assumptions. Assumptions about what? Assumptions about the nature of our world, what it means to be a human being, what constitutes knowledge and valid knowledge at that.

Why would I begin a dissertation speaking about epistemology? We can’t move without epistemology. It is more ever-present than air. I can dive into water and hold my breath, but even while I do that my epistemology comes with me. I don’t think that there is the equivalent of oxygen deprivation in the epistemology sense, there’s no epistemological-breath holding available. As Keeney (1983) says, it is impossible not to have an epistemology. The claim to have no epistemology Bateson (in Keeney, 1983) says is bad, but Keeney prefers to say it is merely risky and reveals an epistemology that is not aware of itself.

One could probably begin any conversation or writing with a discussion on epistemology and a clarification of the assumptions involved. This would be an excellent way of really contextualising, and also probably never getting much further. So epistemology, although ever-present, often remains out of the realm of the explicit. It remains in the shadow.
There are many different nuances in the definitions of epistemology (Crotty, 1998). When I use it I am referring to assumptions that I hold which inform and shape all that I know and what I do with that knowledge. I would even take it a step further and say that epistemology refers to those notions that inform my assumptions (Gergen, 2000).

As with all things, psychology, what it is, what it can do and the way in which it develops is affected by epistemological assumptions. Smith, Harre and Van Langenhove (1995) write that psychology is in a state of flux, that there is unprecedented questioning about the nature of the subject, the boundaries of it and the ways of conducting research. These developments are reflections of the epistemological shifts in the broader zeitgeist. These shifts have been described in many disciplines as a shift from the modern to the postmodern (Gergen, 1991).

One of the pivotal elements that characterises that shift is reflexivity, especially epistemological reflexivity. Instead of making a statement alone, it is accompanied by a question looking at itself, of where it comes from, in what discourse is it embedded and what assumptions give it life (Potter, 1998). As Charles Jenks (in Anderson, 1997, p. 27) says: "no orthodoxy can be adopted without self-consciousness …". This is the illumination of epistemology – the emerging shadow.

Scene – postmodern resonations in the author’s experience

In a postmodern qualitative study, explicating the context is essential (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). This situates the study and in so doing steers it away from absolute truth claims. I myself am inextricable from the context. Gergen (2003) writes that writing and research is connected to meaning making which makes the researcher’s own experience important to the study. And the researcher’s experience itself must be contextualised and is seen as embedded in discourse. This experience is framed in language, itself an artefact of social interchange (Gergen, 1994). But let me not get ahead of myself...

At the time of writing this I am involved in work called informal education. Briefly, it is education which, generally, uses contexts other then the classroom to explore issues. The focus is less on the transmission of information and more on the
transformation of values. One programme that we run is called Encounter. It runs for a week and the theme of the second day focuses on relationships and the life cycle. The day constitutes discussions and the night programme is a multi media presentation which summarises the issues of the day.

In previous years this programme has centred around an old Jewish man reminiscing. It begins with him sitting on a park bench and thinking back. His first thoughts turn to the discussion his parents had about his circumcision when he was eight days old. His thoughts then progress to primary school, his bar mitzvah, high school, choices after school and so forth. Over the years of running this programme the issues have changed only slightly.

This last year something different happened. There was wholesale rejection of this previously successful programme by those of us planning the programme. Some of the comments:

"the programme doesn't touch on the issues that the kids are dealing with"
"the issues are much more hectic"
"life doesn't work like that, its too staid."
"the issues have to do with the disconnected frenetic-ness of life"
"boundaries seem to have disappeared"
"we're being bombarded with different, incongruent values from all over"
"and most of the time they don't even look like values"
"its technology..."

The programme about a linear lifecycle seemed to belong to the annals of nostalgia. It became a programme about how life is anything but linear with a clear cycle or path. This went a step further – to the style of presentation: instead of a fictitious presentation of the issues, we decided to take the very conversation we were having about the planning of the programme, and replay it on stage. The planning and the ideas behind the programme became the programme itself.

To me, this was an indication of something very different happening. The lines between presentation and reality were no longer clear. Our own issues as educators and values as people were not masked behind a fictitious presentation, but were laid open for inspection. The conversation, which actually took place in the
planning of the presentation, was presented as the presentation itself, and this was mixed with video, songs and slides to illustrate the issues that were raised. To me, this smacked of a postmodern flavour (Lyons, 1995).

Walter Truett Anderson (1995) writes that we are in the midst of a confusing and stressful, yet promising historical transition. This transition has to do with a change not so much in what we believe as in how we believe. Kvale (1992) says that the current age can be described as postmodern. He also accuses psychology of being a product of modernity as it stands in its current state. If this is the case, psychology will need to explore its basic assumptions in order to remain relevant in today’s landscape.

In order to contextualise the changing landscape of psychology and especially the self, I will first discuss the backdrop against which these changes appear. A brief account of modernism will provide a contrast to the emerging postmodernism. This will in turn provide a framework for understanding the changes taking place within psychology.

Note: Steven Write, a serious comedian, asks: why do there have to be right and wrong answers in math. Why can’t we just call them impressions and if we have different impressions, hey, we’re all brothers.

Talk of different eras of thought is about gaining impressions. It is difficult to define them like sets of integers.

2.1. Modernism. No, wait, just before...

As the world moved out of the Dark Ages, it appropriately entered an age called the Enlightenment. An age in which, people began to seek freedom from the ‘tyranny’ of kinship and social role, and the individual took its first breaths. As Lionel Trilling (1971, p. 24) put it:

At a certain point in history men became individuals.
Taken in isolation, the statement is absurd. How was a man different from an individual? A person born before a certain date, a man – had he not eyes? Had he not hands, organs, dimensions, senses,
affections, passions? If you pricked him he bled and if you tickled him he laughed. But certain things he did not have or do before he became an individual. He did not have an awareness of what one historian, Georges Gusdorf, calls internal space. He did not, as Delany put it, imagine himself in more than one role, standing outside or above his own personality; he did not suppose that he might be the object of interest to his fellow man not for the reason that he had achieved something notable or been witness to great events but simply because he was an individual he was of consequence.

The tools that would bring freedom from authority by divine right and social obligation would be reason and observation. These notions can be traced to the likes of Descartes, Kant and Lock who set about creating, or rather, in their minds, discovering and revealing the modern self. This paved the way for the likes of Hobbes, Rousseau and Voltaire to populate this self with the notion of rights, and thanks to Jefferson, inalienable ones at that (Sacks, 1997).

Yet, around the 19th century, the hegemony of reason was challenged with the ‘internal space’ passionately embraced in a different way:

The mind has a thousand eyes
   And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies,
   When love is done.
   - Francis William Bourdillon

The world lying hidden from the five senses, yet deeply sensed, appeared on the scene – the world of the deep interior. This is referred to as the romantic period (Gergen, 1991). It is a period which seeks out the inner depths of loyalty and commitment between friends; the underlying moral values that flow through our lives; the passion of emotion, especially attached to love – the most powerful of all forces; and the unliveable grief that accompanies the loss of love (Heath & Boreham, 1999).
As this perception of the world and human being challenged the Enlightenment, it in turn was challenged by the advent of modernism. As Western culture moved into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, a new form of consciousness began to emerge (Gergen, 1991).

\textbf{2.2. Ok, now... Modernism.}

Perhaps not entirely new, as it has echoes in the notions of the Enlightenment.

\begin{quote}
Love is a universal migraine \\
A bright stain on the vision \\
Blotting out reason.

-Robert Graves
\end{quote}

As we shall see (with postmodernism also), modernism is closely associated with the advances in science and technology of its day. This age is characterised by greater economic prosperity, a greater variety of products and an increase in the availability of jobs. Science was in the forefront of these developments. It appeared that human beings were on the brink of mastering their universe, solving the world’s ills and in so doing creating utopian societies. This has been referred to as the grand narrative of modernism – the belief that progress was leading us, in a linear fashion, to the good (Lyon, 1995).

The following are some landmarks in the modern terrain. I will mention them here in order to outline the epistemological assumptions as a backdrop and expand upon them in the following chapters especially as they apply to the notion of the self and identity.

\textbf{2.2.1. Freedom from tradition}

Along with the surge into a better future came a relinquishing of the past. Tradition, which dictated a certain tradition, living according to certain given norms, was rejected. 'Man' was placed in the centre as an individual brandishing rationality as his greatest and most constructive asset (Kvale, 1992). Shelley describes the transition beautifully:
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, wise: but man
Passionless? – no, yet free from guilt or pain

(in Sacks, 1997)

Thus people were left free to explore themselves as individuals with unrestricted possibility. Unfettered by the obligations created by kinship, religion, social position and class (Crotty, 1998).

2.2.2. Essence and Truth

Modernism is characterised by the search for enduring essences and universal truths. Isaiah Berlin (1991, p. 53) makes this clear when he says:

The view that the truth is undivided, and the same for all men everywhere at all times, whether one finds it in the pronouncements of sacred books, traditional wisdom, the authority of churches, democratic majorities, observation and experiments conducted by qualified experts, or the convictions of simple folk uncorrupted by civilisations – this view in one way or another, is central to Western thought.

This is expressed in architecture: all form was reduced to function, and in modern art: in the search for the essence of form and colour. The deep interior characteristic of Romantic thinking was receding and making way for what could be observed by the senses alone. In literature dialogue became a dispassionate reporting of facts, not the expressions of internal passions. As Gergen (1991) says, it is not surprising that Hemmingway, a reporter could turn novelist. Science also searched for a unifying and universal set of rules that governed procedure and validated the generation of knowledge. These rules could, or rather, should then be adopted by any discipline, psychology included (Murphy, 1990).
2.2.3. Knowable world

Along with the belief in an attainable utopia, and the existence of essences, is the assumption of a knowable world. This knowable world can be objectively apprehended and represented in language. The knowledge can then be used to predict and control outcomes of events. This requires clearly demarcated boundaries between disciplines as each develops knowledge independently within its own domain (Gergen, 1999).

Once the elements of the knowable world have been correctly ascertained, these principles can be universally applied and generalised across time, place and person. This assumption decontextualises events, people and knowledge. It lays claim to a neutrality which is oblivious to values and different cultures. If the rules of procedure were broadly adopted then the world would be liberated from the mystical and the erroneous. These assumptions operate to hold separate observer from the observed, which in turn operates to entrench the Western notion of an individualist as an entity separate from other observing individuals and the world (Matsumoto, 1996).

This is expressed in the pervasive belief that by using empirical methods, especially the controlled experiment, the truth could be established. These results are considered to be objective and devoid of ideology or personal bias of any kind. This method of research is supposed to shed false beliefs and progressively establish reliable, value neutral truths (Steir, 1991).

In the place where value-neutral truths can be established and are joined by issues of pluralism, the way is made for a battleground of ideology. Whether it is a conflict among religions, between religion and science or political ideologies, THE truth was out there and somebody, certainly not everybody, had it. This agreement about the nature of truth - the characteristic either/or thinking invited the reality of only one ideology dominating, through the most accurate representation of reality (Anderson, 1997). This would be achieved through reason and was supposed to provide a reliable basis for prediction and control (O'Hara & Anderson, 1991).
2.3. Postmodernism

The yarn spun by modernism seems to be fraying, as its promises of utopia remain on an unapproaching horizon. The stage becomes occupied with something other than modernism – the postmodern. A term, broad and difficult to define, yet, useful to use. This description of the term is also an apt description of the condition of postmodernity itself. One can be almost certain of one thing – the postmodern is that which happens post the modern. Modernity subsides and what follows is called postmodern.

This is so not necessarily in a chronological sense, in many ways the two exist contemporaneously in Western culture (Rosenau, 1992).

The reason why one can be only almost certain is that many writers express doubt as to whether the postmodern has transcended the modern or is an extension of it (Crotty, 1998; Kvale, 1992). Indeed Umberto Eco (1995), for one, argues that postmodernism is not a trend to be chronologically defined, but a condition that presents itself at the saturation of any era. Each period has its own postmodernism. The avant-garde (the modern in its infancy) defaces the past (the waning of Romanticism). It then goes further - destroys the past and continues to move on until it itself can go no further. The postmodern presents itself, unlike the modern in the negation of the past, but in its revisiting of the past with ironic rethinking. This allows a kaleidoscope of ideas to co-exist, both old and new. But then some would see it as an entirely new condition bringing with it an entirely new landscape (Gergen, 1991; Kvale, 1992; Rappaport, Baumgardner & Boone, 1999).

As one traverses the landscape of postmodern thought there are a few landmarks to look out for. These are just some of them (an exhaustive list would certainly not belong to this landscape): a doubt in our ability as human beings to apprehend an objective account of reality (Kvale, 1992); language as a tool of construction and not representation (Shotter, 1999); a preference for the local and the specific over the universal and the abstract (White & Epston, 1990); narrative as a framework of making meaning (Bruner, 1991); strong sense of pluralism and inclusion (as opposed to the modern pluralism and exclusion) of different ideas (Anderson, 1997); a willingness to explore the surface of things as opposed to plumbing the depths of deeper meaning (Kvale, 1992).
These ideas will be touched on in the remainder of this chapter to continue the construction of the epistemological set. It will be expounded upon in the following chapters, again with specific application to the self and identity.

2.3.1. Truth in perspective

There are many avenues that can lead us from the modern to the postmodern views of the world, each draws on ideas from the other, eroding the boundaries between subjects. One avenue is the philosophy of science. Quine and Popper began shaking the foundations of the philosophy of science, but it was Thomas Kuhn who provided the most convincing attack on foundationalist thought, by which knowledge is developed out of and in support of previous knowledge as its foundation (Crotty, 1998). He developed the notion of the paradigm shift, where viewpoints are considered to alter radically to accommodate knowledge that does not fit with the status quo paradigm (Gergen, 1999). In Against Method, Feyerabend, criticised the idea that knowledge could be derived from the systematic application of research procedures. This played a big role in the post empiricist period being ushered in, as the notion of an attainable, context neutral, objective truth was being shown the way out (Crotty, 1998).

Truth, that bedrock of universal certainty became seen as couched in perspective. Perspectives were seen as the by-product of social interchange. So, what was considered truth in science could be seen as the result of social processes within the culture of science (Gergen, 1999).

The foundations which secured the quest for a universal and objective reality seemed to be illusions, or at least the product of social construction (Kvale, 1992). An example of the way that science has traditionally made claims to value neutral truth that have, with different eyes, been identified as ideology and value laden, comes from feminist critique. This has on many occasions uncovered the androcentric biases in the accounts of science. Accounts of science that had been thought to be free from bias and objective (Gergen, 1992).
2.3.2. Knowable world

One important landmark which differentiates modern and postmodern thought is this loss of belief in an objective, knowable world. Along with this is a deconstruction of what Lyotard calls meta-narratives of legitimation (Kvale, 1992). This, particularly when applied to science and the validity of knowledge, is the exclusive subscription to a dominant narrative that lends legitimacy to a narrative that cannot maintain its own validity through its own principles.

With this, other forms of knowledge are given space to breath. Knowledges which do not need external legitimation, but derive their validity from the very fact that they exist as a result of the social context from which they arise. Knowledge is not seen as a reflection of the world as it truly is. In many ways access to objective truth becomes less relevant than the experienced knowledge of people in their context (White & Epston, 1990). This also allows for the co-existence of perspectives because they reflect the local knowledge of people and not the universal truth of an objective world (Tierney, 2000).

2.3.3. Language

Language had been seen as a tool to reflect both the inner world of the individual and the objective world as it really is. Derrida proposed that when we enter the process of description we rely on the convention of language. The conventions govern and proscribe that which can be communicated. They carry within them the assumptions that the culture makes about the world. Language conventions are a product of culture, which is a product of social process. These social processes carry with them value biases. So, all our accounts of the world and our attempts at objective scientific accounts included are value-saturated products of social agreement (Sarup, 1993).

Under the assumption that language mirrors reality, any subject, psychology included, was considered a clear, boundaried domain to be investigated. The identified domain is one which exists objectively and so can be explored and
discovered. However with the postmodern notion that our ideas about the world are embedded in discourse, which operates on the basis of social processes, such subject domains are not assumed to exist. At least they do not exist independently of ideology (Gergen, 1994). Instead of being explored and discovered, they are constructed within discourse and culture.

2.3.4. Implications for research

Modern research assumes that its findings are able to be applied universally across contexts and cultures. This hides the valuational commitments of ones fore-structures of understanding. Such assumptions objectify western ideologies. Postmodern thought encourages the development of local understandings, which take into account the historico-socio-contextual accounts of the inquiry. This encourages one of the key elements of postmodern life, and that is self-reflection (Potter, 1998).

As mentioned, in modern research, method is the way to truth. A correct application of scientific method would produce objective, unquestionable truth. Such method carries with it another hallmark of modernism, and that is the separation of researcher and the object of research. The researcher tries to remain neutral in order to gain a true account of the variables under consideration. Modern psychology has always striven to establish itself as a science. In this age it was the primary way of achieving legitimacy. And so it adopted the scientific method. However it remained slow to keep up with the changing epistemology of science. And so the notions such as Heisenberg’s uncertainty principal, according to which it is impossible to determine the position of a sub-atomic particle with accuracy, thus making predictions impossible, and that the presence of an observer affects the outcome of an experiment, only began to find its way into psychological research as postmodernism began to take centre stage (Butz, Chamberlain & McCown, 1997).

Postmodernism does not decry the technological achievements of science. But it does throw into doubt its exclusive claims on truth. The constructs developed in modernist conceptions of psychology are not to be abandoned as useless, but
rather reconceptualised within their value laden contexts. They are to be used but not reified, especially as not to trap in ideology and 'pathologise'. Psychology can still develop such ideas, but at the same time it should remain open to the social, historical and valuational implications (Gergen, 1992).

Something that the sterilised experiments of modern psychology have wished to isolate is the discourse in which the patterns of human activity occur. Shotter (1993) says that discourse is marked by chaotic and broadly diffuse alteration; patterns of human activity are forever unfolding. This means that the development of human technologies is precarious. Culture is in constant danger of reifying its understandings. Postmodernism brings with it a scholarship of critique that continually reflects on itself and guards against such reification and masking of assumptions. It tries to demonstrate the social and historical embeddedness of constructs and instead of establishing the nature of their truth, explore the implications for social life.

With the modern tacit acceptance of an objectively knowable world, people, lay and scholars, were to seek this world to elucidate it as accurately as possible. Postmodernism sees people’s participation in this world less as investigative and more as constructive. Participation is in effect creation, as maintenance of a discourse or the altering of one. Through research we contribute to the symbolic resources available to people for us to carry out our lives together (Gergen, 1999).

The postmodernist spirit has brought an overpowering loss of distinctions into play and a concomitant sense of fragmentation. Boundaries have shifted, like the boundary between elite and popular culture and the boundaries between art and life, which are no more (Crotty, 1998). Postmodernism attempts to demystify the narrative of modernism. As psychologists we are encouraged to join the development of new intelligibilities that present new options in the culture. We have the opportunity to create greater and more accessible domains of conversation.

This study is placed within a postmodern epistemology. This chapter’s purpose was to establish the epistemological zeitgeists seemingly most relevant to the context of the study and the participants. The epistemologies will be discussed further, particularly in relation to the notion of self and identity and the implications for
alienation and belonging. It is also relevant to the nature of the study, and these implications will be further elucidated in chapter 5, dealing with research methodology.

*The backdrop is painted, many props are in place. Enter the main protagonist – human being, and her booking agent, psychology. Enter, but prepare to change. Through your own eyes and the eyes of your audience.*
Chapter 3

Literature review:

Shades of the Split Self

Philosophical systems are not always about self explicitly, but the subject is always there. Your worldview and your self-concept are always connected, and when one changes so does the other. – Walter Truett Anderson, *Future of the Self*

The very notion of an individual self is at the root of our difficulties because it creates an ontology or world-view in which the knower is detached from the world, rather than implicate within it. – Peter Reason, *Human Inquiry*

Responding to a question put to me during masters selections, I remember saying: “I think that understanding what happens at the point when someone becomes mentally ill can show a lot about healthy functioning” and somewhere in there I mentioned something about not knowing whether the continuum from health to illness was discrete or continuous.

The first day of masters, going through the DSM, I asked something about personality. To which I was told that there is no such thing as personality. I was sure that the lecturer was just being provocative or playing on semantics. I was shocked at his insistence, if this was the case how was one person distinguished from the next? How are you to tell what someone’s usual response would be? Did that mean that nothing tied the moments of my life together, someone could in one moment be a cold-blooded murderer and in the next ‘genuinely’ kind and caring? I certainly felt that I had something that resembled a personality.

In this chapter and the following I will use the principles established in the previous chapter around epistemology as a backdrop to provide a context for the changing understandings of identity. Our understandings of identity and self are inextricable with epistemological assumptions (Matsumoto, 1996). As Anderson (1997, p. 11) says: “Philosophical systems are not always about self explicitly, but
the subject is always there. Your worldview and your self-concept are always connected, and when one changes so does the other.”

I would like to show the interplay between the two – self and the philosophical zeitgeist. Running through this process I will also trace a sense of alienation and belonging that is intimately related to a sense of identity (and is therefore impacted upon by epistemology). As Wood (1972) says, wherever alienation is mentioned it is inextricably connected to identity. This relationship – between identity, the epistemological zeitgeist and their creation of spaces for alienation and belonging – provides the context in which we experience our personal sense of alienation and belonging.

Michael (1996) writes that there are various textual techniques that can be used to trace the above process. The one, which I have chosen to explore, is a socio-historic narration, which will excavate some of the difficulties inherent in modern notions of self and explore how they go some way to being overcome in postmodern epistemologies and particularly the social constructionist paradigm. It seems that the realities constructed within a social constructionist paradigm may in some ways be fragmenting, but also hold the potential for greater connections as they subsume the dualism and isolation inherent in modernism and move toward a relational understanding of selves (Gergen & Gergen, 2000).

We live in a time where we dip in and out of different epistemologies, sometimes drawing on the passion of romanticism, sometimes relying on the predictable rock of modern rationality and at times venturing into the postmodern ‘fray’ to (Gergen, 1999). Each of the participants of this study does this to different extents, and each option is available to be drawn upon. Perhaps this in and of itself is a postmodern style. In the same way that the assumptions of a question sets the parameters of the answer or a metaphor contains the limits of its implications (White & Epston, 1990), an epistemology contains within it the template for understanding self. I would therefore like to trace these connections through the literature to provide a context for exploring the participants’ experience of these notions and their implications for experiences of alienation and belonging.
Michael (1996) says that such a narration of the history can reveal three important issues: political, where the question is: how can we operate within a paradigm which is usually marginalising and recognises only certain selves in its research?; epistemological, where the question is: how can we assume to have accessed the phenomena that modern psychology has reified?; and ontological, where the question is: how can we say that the self, behaviour and thought rest upon cognitive processes and not cultural and linguistic convention? If we can make these realisations then we can soften the grip on what we take for granted, free ourselves from un-useful restrictions and in that make more spaces of belonging and fewer that are alienating.

It is important to note that this study does not provide a single monolithic definition of identity or the self (these concepts are used interchangeably in this study), in the way that a ‘modern’ study would (Silverman, 2000). But rather, after exploring the recursive, entangling, labyrinth of literature on self and identity, I have decided to take Michael’s (1996, p. 7) approach that “it is difficult to find any consensual definition of identity in the relevant traditions.” It could be that it is this amorphousness itself that lends the concept of identity its resonance. Given this, it would seem important to explore the ways in which the identity emerges and influences the participant’s notions of alienation, belonging and home.

3.1. Spotlight: Alienation

As the stage has been set with the epistemological backdrops, it is time for actor – the self - to enter and show itself against them. Any narration that is told is done so with a particular punctuation, in a certain light. This particular actor will have the spotlight of alienation on it as it tells its story. As with any punctuation, it is but a slice of the whole, but as with any spotlight, it shows something important.

Embarking upon this research, I specifically did not enter into the interviews (discussed in chapter 6) with a ‘scholarly’ notion of alienation and belonging. I wanted rather to explore local meanings generated within the conversations both for the participants and for myself (Tierney, 2000). Therefore alienation for myself
at that stage was not an academic construct, but rather an ineffable sense of being uncomfortably separate, different, distant or not belonging.

Which at this stage means that I have not provided singular definitions of the main constructs used to guide the discussion: definitions of home, identity, alienation or belonging. This is consistent with the type of qualitative study that this is – not an attempt to provide the truth in a modern, essence-cum-singular definition manner, but rather to explore the issues in such a way that they reflect the research process, participants' meanings, provide resonance and further questions for the reader. It is an exploration of meanings that emerge locally, not imposed by external definitions (Silverman, 2000; Smith, Harre & Van Langenhove 1995).

3.1.1. A word about alienation anyway

There are very few words that contain within it the entire history of Western civilisation the way that 'alienation' does. Johnson (1973) says that 'alienation' has attained semantic richness and confusion that makes it impossible to define. It has been subjected to a long history of association with almost every discipline, each contributing its own meaning. It's like a building that could house the entire world that has a lean-to haphazardly attached for each community. Its meanings are "stricken with severe inconsistency and vagueness." (Johnson, 1973, p.3) Even within the social sciences, a comprehensive discussion on the definition of alienation would prove beyond the scope of this work.

Having said that I now feel that much more justified using my own and the participants' intuitive and personal notions of alienation. Also note that these notions are socially constructed and so are discursively embedded. They therefore reflect cultural ideas about alienation that are useful to the participants.

It all began in the legal arena where alienation referred to the sale or transfer of immovable property. (This indicates the centrality of land, which held a somewhat different meaning from the current economy and society). It has been adopted and adapted by many other disciplines, particularly philosophy, psychology and sociology. It has been used to refer to a number of states for example, anomie, rootlessness, apathy, meaninglessness, loneliness, isolation, separation,
powerlessness, self estrangement, a loss of beliefs and values to mention some. (Josephson & Josephson, 1962).

Common to all of these is a disconnection or a distance from that which would provide a positive sense of place or belonging. Schacht (1970) conducts an extensive survey of the various phenomena of alienation and identifies a central semantic theme – the word at its essence denotes separation. This often involves a disconnection from resources that diminish a sense of being able to belong and brings the pain of alienation (Levine & Perkins, 1997).

This rings true particularly when the term has been used to describe anyone that in some way does not belong to the ‘mainstream’ and often, too, anyone who has few resources from which to draw. Some of these people include the mentally or emotionally disturbed, addicts, the young generation, the aged, industrial workers, immigrants, and minority groups.

As from the beginning of the 20th century, there seem to be two general approaches to the phenomenon of alienation in the social sciences: from psychology and sociology. Psychologists have stressed the estrangement of individuals, an individual feeling dissociation from self, from other people or from the world (Burkitt, 1992).

Marx put alienation in a sociological frame. In a capitalist system a worker is alienated from the product of his labour and the means of production. By stressing the effects of modes of production on peoples’ thinking and feeling, Marx emphasized that social conditions can determine a person’s sense of alienation and belonging (Burkitt, 1992).

This is just a brief map, indicating perhaps the lines of longitude and latitude in the terrain of alienation. Some of these ideas will be expanded upon in this chapter. As mentioned, one thing is evident through the literature: wherever alienation is mentioned, it is inextricably linked with identity (Woods, 1972).
Enter...the self

Psst...in here...quickly...come closer...I want to tell you about my self...quickly...why quickly?...well I am not sure if I will be around to tell the story from one moment to the next. In fact I am never quite sure whether I actually exist or not, whether I am made up or not. A fiction or a figment. And when I do exist they say I probably shouldn't. Come in here...I think there are some people out to get me. Paranoid you say?...just because you are paranoid doesn't mean they aren't out to get you. Well soon it may not be me telling the story, the story may be telling itself through me.

I am trying to tell you my story, the story of the self. It is not so straightforward because one's notion of self does not exist in isolation. So, in telling you about my story, you will need to understand something about the assumptions of the day. Okay... whew, feels like I am fragmenting... I sometimes long for the days when things were simpler, you know, clearer. I felt like I was solid especially when I was in touch with my essence. Now if I am in touch with my essence it may be that I am delusional or just not very useful. Now that I have you here and I've caught my breath a bit, let me try to explain...let's see... who am I...Is...we?

Identity & epistemology: The Contexts of Alienation...and Belonging

In attempting to explore the notion of self and how it is understood within different epochs and epistemologies, one could begin as far back as the prehistoric clan; or the early Greeks where the self seemed to be less personally owned and more a plaything of the gods and consciousness was not personally bounded. Or one could look at what some consider forerunners to the modern Western self in the influence of Platonic abstract ideas, leading to notions such as democracy, justice, love and others. The Roman notion of 'persona', contributing to the idea of self as facade; with Augustine's notion of non-material mind looking through the eyes of the material and so consciousness residing inside each person (Taylor, 1989). (This begins to sound familiarly Cartesian.)

One could also explore the non-Western epistemologies that in many cases don't even acknowledge a self distinct from an ecosystem, an individual separate from a role, or a self-consciousness to reflect on this possibility (Reason, 1994). I would,
however, prefer to focus the exploration closer to 'home' with stories and epistemologies that seem, at least a priori, more closely connected to the participants and myself. Gergen (1991) also says that Romantic and Modern epistemologies form an important foil for understanding postmodernism.

3.2.1. Modernism. No, wait, just before...

Logan (1987) says that one thing is certainly apparent from the literature: that the 'self' described in different eras is fundamentally unlike the self of the modern or postmodern zeitgeists. A broad progression would look like: a group identity in early times, then at some point (Middle Ages, Renaissance or Romantic period, depending on who you read) we find the emergence of the individual, then to a self-conscious concern with self and identity to relational selves.

3.2.2. Middle Ages – Self in the Dark

Life in the Middle Ages could be considered a time where people lived with very little mobility, both geographic and social. This meant that life held a stability and predictability in terms of events and belief systems. It is often characterised as a time where people were immersed in a religious worldview. The church mediated people’s understanding of life even to the extent that Baumeister (in Anderson, 1997) says that the individual experience was ignored in the broad cosmic drama of faith and salvation (McLeod, 1997).

The self seems to have made an appearance during the Middle Ages. Yet to the extent that the self emerged, it was not considered a unique 'me', individualised. In fact the word 'individual' meant 'inseparable'. Even biographies written were descriptions of archetypical moral virtues and not of unique different individuals (Logan, 1987). Personal identity did not involve being in control of one's destiny. It was tied to the feudal system, which was slow to change and had rigid definitions of roles. There was very little flexibility and the 'individual' was not considered apart from this system (Anderson, 1997).
Interestingly, Morris (in Logan, 1987) argues that the feudal system may have been a transition vehicle aiding the emergence of the autonomous self because it involved a one-to-one relationship between master and serf. With the realisation of self becoming somewhat autonomous, the philosophers of the day wrestled with the new discovery of their individual will versus the will of God. But they used this will to arrive at a strengthened faith in their relation to God and place in community (Logan, 1987).

As political systems experienced some upheaval, like the dissolution of the feudal system, the individual began to emerge separate from her kin and role in the feudal hierarchy. Worldviews began to emerge, as did new worlds with voyages of discovery. An interesting sign of the changing consciousness of self was increasing concern for personal space – houses began to be built with spaces of privacy like private bedrooms reached via corridors and not through other bedrooms (Anderson, 1997).

As the Middle Ages 'fray' into what Umberto Eco calls its own postmodernity, the Renaissance, the self comes into sharper focus. The 'I' began to try to experiment with affecting the world. The individual of the Renaissance was remarkably active in asserting himself, yet was, by today's standards non-reflective. Lyons (1978) says that many historians place the emphasis on the Renaissance individual but there is still lacking an inner life and reflection.

**3.2.2.1. Reflecting the Dark**

I have often wondered why freedom is such an important, spoken about, sought after concept. Where did this come from? It seems that the only reason one would obsess about it is if one did not have it. One would need to be oppressed or restrained first in order to desire freedom; otherwise one would just have it.

It seems to me that in some way alienation is similar. There needs to be a certain awareness of self and circumstances. To my current understanding, a sense of alienation is absent in the Middle Ages, one belongs to a community and there is no question about that. One has a certain set of beliefs and there is very little question about that. One is connected to certain people with specific roles. Even if one may not
necessarily like one's lot, I don't think that is the same as alienation, particularly not at that time. The lens of alienation was absent. There are no real options for it to be different nor enough self-reflexivity to experience this as alienation. Still one belonged there.

When the Jewish people were enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt, they were silent for many years. Only when God heard them cry out did He 'remember them'. One would assume that God doesn't need a reminder note in order to remember. Rabbi Soloveichik says that the move from silent to vocal is a move to self-awareness. This move is also one from experiencing only physical pain in a circumstance to experiencing existential suffering. The move to vocal is the move from the periphery to the centre of history - to becoming a story telling nation.

This seems to me like a metaphor that holds similarities for the process of humankind emerging from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance period. Where a fait accompli fate can start to be questioned, an unconscious automatic belonging slips away and alienation can start to become an issue.

[I find it interesting to note that in separating the categories for describing different selves, the choice is to describe umbrella epistemologies - Romantic, Modern, postmodern, somehow trying to avoid a focus on chronological time. But the category Middle Ages is a time period, unashamedly not avoided. Perhaps this is because it is quicker and easier, or perhaps because there is less diversity within it and also it is that much further away from today both in time and nature.]

3.2.3. Romanticism - Love is in the ... soul

I am going to speak out of chronological turn here. Romantic epistemologies emerged between the Enlightenment and modernism. In many ways modernism is a continuation of the Enlightenment and so I will leave mention of the latter as an adjunct to a discussion on the modern self. Romanticism is actually often spoken about as a response to the Enlightenment (Anderson, 1997; Gergen, 2000). Gergen (1992) says that the Enlightenment brought an emphasis of the individual’s powers of observation. Such emphasis on the individual’s abilities freed him from divine authority as he brandished his own powers of reason. The individual had the
capacity to discern truth and use that to choose an appropriate course of action (Logan, 1987).

Reason was such a successful tool that it gained tyranny status. It was to this that Romanticism objected as reductionist and ignoring the depth and well-spring of the human being. They drew on religious language and referred to these depths as being housed in the soul. The soul, however could be secularised as it no longer had to belong to God alone (although it still could), but belonged to the passionate centre interior of the human being. This force was driven by nature and was so powerful that held the potential for danger. For some the soul was passion of human emotion and energy. This soul was so powerful that it was beyond conscious knowledge and control (Anderson, 1997).

Nothing worth indulging in was devoid of passion, and passionate things were those worth indulging. So love was the fabric of life that transformed the mundane and brought real purpose. Friendship too was a matter of soul mate connection and demanded loyalty and deep understanding at all costs. The passion of love could be highlighted in the tragedy of death, a connection still remaining through the veil of the eternal world where souls will one day join. And grief through love lost could be ennobled through suicide (Heath & Boreham, 1999).

Imagination submerged Enlightenment reason and became the vehicle for experiencing life to the full. It was a way of connecting mundane experience to the colours of what real experience should be. A combination of imagination and genius that conquered reason was the ultimate. Gergen (1992) says that Nietzsche's Ubermensch – superman- the ultimate liver in creativity, contains these Romantic notions.

The Romantic self creates a sense of reality beyond the senses. What is real are the hidden inner depths. The arts flourished in such an environment, always finding ways to express inner passion. The connection to the soul as a reality also made spiritual activities such as visiting mediums common occurrences.

The language of rationalism had guided notions of morality in Enlightenment debate. But it came to be replaced by terms of ‘moral feeling’. And feeling was not
enough when it came to morality, but a commitment to good action was essential. We can see much of our language around the self that we use today hails from this colourful epistemology. It especially has echoes in existential and humanist vocabulary. It brings us the richness of passion, purpose, authenticity and honour. They are words that create heroes and inspire hope. It calls for deep bonds of love, family, friendship and lifetime commitment. Between human beings must flow trust, loyalty and good morality. Life is an endeavour to find meaning and is coloured by love (Gergen, 1992).

3.2.3.1. Deep Reflections

To me it seems as if the language and activity of Romanticism is a driven attempt to belong. They perceive the language of rationalism as distancing and alienating (not that it necessarily has to be). They see the world as something to plug into in as many ways as possible to immerse themselves in the depths of what is real and to really be a part of the world instead of skim the surface.

One would imagine that such passion also brings with it the depths of despair and the extremes of loneliness. The sense that I get though is that these are part of the drama of the day and even or especially through suicidal grief, one is part of the culture. And so there may be pain, but it is the right kind and so no concomitant alienation.

What of those though that are dull witted, unable to access their inner genius, have “the imagination of a caravan park” (Monty Python)? Those that lack the intensity of emotion and loyalty of good friends (which would be different to having it and then losing it)? Perhaps here, as the inner depths are opened in this age, the uncolourful and less resourceful would experience the anguish of alienation.

3.2.4. Ok, now... Modernism

We are reaching the penultimate climax in the story. Prepare, self, to walk the stage again with a changing backdrop of epistemology. Look carefully at the props set up in the previous chapter. Pay particular attention to the reversion to a rational language, a knowable and discoverable essence as long as the
method of observation is correct. You may see yourself resembling a machine. The spotlight of alienation will shine clearer. And remember...a stable identity.

3.2.4.1. Picture of the person

Central to Western modern epistemology is the notion of the individual as monad, a self-contained being whose social relationships form the background, while the separate individual is seen in relief. This notion carries with it much of the way Western twentieth century life has been constructed: what underlies determinations of agency and has implications for political, legal and social institutions (Gergen, 1999). It contains the idea of the independent self-made protagonist of the modern narrative, where inside each of us lies a unique individual waiting to be uncovered. This individual is divided from other human beings, self-contained, whose social bonds and interactions are secondary to his essence in the constitution of his identity (Burkitt, 1992).

With this notion providing the point of departure, the big question is contained within the assumptions: what is the relationship between person and society? The solutions then revolve around conceptualising the links and relationship between the two distinct entities of individual and society (Burkitt, 1992).

If this were not enough – the separation from the people around us – our modern friend is also divided within, structured to experience internal alienation. Riven between her identity that she presents and her inside self, deep down in some obscure, yet far more substantial reality, lies her real identity. This has been reflected in various descriptive constructs: she is rent asunder by mind (soul) and body, intellect and emotions, rational thoughts and instinctual drives, conscious and subconscious and many others. In each of these the individual is pulled by different parts that constitute the self, always in search of the true identity (Lifton, 1993; Burkitt, 1992).

3.2.4.2. Let us begin at the ‘?’ a very good place to start

There are many different trails that can be walked to trace the creation of our modern friend the way she looks today. And there are a few different ideas about
when exactly the idea of the self emerged (Bloch, 1961; Berman, 1970; Foucault, 1970; Logan, 1987). I would like to begin back in the Enlightenment with the Cartesian Dualism man himself – Rene Descartes. In his famous and defining *cogito ergo sum*, a truly modern project was embarked upon as he systematically doubted everything in order to find the single certain basis for everything. The premodern person, contained within a predictable social order, had no need to search for certainty or doubt the wisdom of tradition (Anderson, 1997). Yet, Descartes lived in a time of great religious, political and philosophical upheaval. The Zeitgeist was ripe to offer a rational integrated self, upon which he was prepared to question all things. Tarnas (1991, p. 280) describes it:

> the prototypical declaration of the modern self, established as a fully separate self-defining entity, for whom its own rational self-awareness was absolutely primary – doubting everything except itself, setting itself in opposition not only to traditional authorities but to the world as subject against object, as a thinking, observing, measuring, manipulating being, fully distinct from an objective God and an external nature.

So, the essence of the individual is considered the mind, residing within the body, which is of a different order. Burkitt (1992) quotes Kenny, 1958, saying that the problem is that Descartes could not bring these two modes of existence together to create a unity, both in their being and in their experience of the world. They remained separate and fundamentally different.

The underlying premise that informed accounts of identity, the self and personality from about the Enlightenment onward, is one that has stressed the essentialist nature of identity informing the view that the individual is prior to society and constitutes the building blocks of social relations (Shotter, 1993). This view of human being as monad was consolidated within the work of rationalist philosophers in the Enlightenment period (Burkitt, 1992).

The vision of a human being embedded in a social system that determined her identity and social role was anachronistic. The security of predictable social bonds
lending her place to belong had eroded. Identity had little to do with your friend or
neighbour, it must be sought and established as a personal project.

For Norbert Elias (in Burkitt, 1992), the events that made the ground fertile for the
seeds of the monad to be sewn, was in the changing system of government in the
transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. These changes effected a
change in social relations. The increasing centralisation of the state led to a
predominance of more regular and abstract rules that govern behaviour. This
caused a gradual shift from reliance on external rules and punishments that
governed conduct to internalising self-controls within individuals. The social
controls became built into the self and strengthened the ability of one to control
one's actions, laying open the way for an individual psychology of the bounded
individual (Burkitt, 1992).

One of the clearly expressed Renaissance views that has influenced thinking until
today is that of Leibniz (1646 – 1716). He developed a doctrine of monadology. It
states that because the individual is one indivisible entity capable of perceiving
objects, therefore the existence of all things depend on this perception. This
includes one monad perceiving another. The main point being that the individual is
the primary reality and the relationships between them depend on the individual's
perception. So these relationships are a secondary phenomenon and dependant on
the individual. Each monad is a separate, perceiving monad – a world in itself.
Leibniz himself struggled with a theory of interaction. He developed the doctrine of
pre-established harmonies. This says that because each individual has the same
origin, created by God, their internal states are inclined to one another. Yet each
individual remains fundamentally separate from the other (Burkitt, 1992).

Immanuel Kant takes this further in suggesting that if the individual were left to
perceive the world directly from experiences, the individual would be unable to
order them. He suggests a screen between humans and the world. This screen
takes the form of a priori categories that are present in humans prior to experience.
These categories help to sort experience, yet at the same time separate the world
itself from human experience of it. Humans are isolated inside their own shell and
are separated from anything outside (Brennan, 1998).
For the philosophers of the Renaissance the notion of 'self-in-a case' was considered the reality of the nature of man. For sociologists of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the problem of the bounded individual was dealt with sociologically more than philosophically. This was not a view that necessarily saw this to be the nature of a person, but a function of the changing nature of relations between people in the age of industrial capitalism. It is also not a view that moves toward seeing an individual emerging from a social network, but still a look at the bounded individual in relation to her society. The notion of alienation has been a central concept to these sociologists.

### 3.2.4.3. Sociological Perspectives – Oh the times they are a’ alienating

#### 1. Marx

For Karl Marx alienation between the individual and society occurred when property ownership began to rest in the hands of one class of people – the bourgeois. Previously, labourers owned their own means of production, land or tools. But, under a capitalist system the working class does not, and must sell its labour power in order to survive. Marx also saw the state as regulating the social relations that support the system of private property ownership. In feudal systems, where power was identified with individuals and each individual formed part of a hierarchy, each person belonged to a greater whole (Vorhics, 1991). With capitalism, social connectedness becomes a means to a private end, and not an inherent social reality.

This is the feeling that Marx calls alienation: a condition that arises from the fact that people are estranged from the means of production, from social relations that connect them to others and also from their own nature as human beings, who must produce their means of subsistence in order to survive. Marx says that in societies where there are the most advanced divisions of labour, there is greater division of social relations. People are more interdependent, but feel themselves to be independent of all others. Where people are ruled by abstractions, they no longer feel dependent on each other. This perpetuates the illusion of the self-sufficient individual (Burkitt, 1992).
2. Durkheim

Emile Durkheim says that in simpler forms of society a person will embody the beliefs and values of a group, taking their identity from the immediate culture. In modern societies, people are dependent on one another due to the functions they fulfil within the divisions of labour. People begin to see the world only from the role that they play, and in a dehumanised sense. The values and beliefs, which unite a population, break down. People thus come to experience themselves as separate entities.

Alienation from each other’s way of thinking, Durkheim calls anomie. This is a lack of moral regulation to structure individual actions. Viktor Frankl (1967) cites this as the cause of what he refers to as the sickness of the day – noogenic neurosis. Individuals are not only isolated, but without collective values and in a condition of moral uncertainty. The doctrine of individualism follows from this, which places priority on individual freedom of thought and action. Durkheim saw this as positive because it was a type of social organisation that guaranteed individual rights. But it also threatened to destroy social solidarity if people consistently place individual rights before society. Sacks (1997) refers to this as preferring a libertarian political order to a liberal one. The former facilitating the separation of people and a focus on rights above obligations.

3. Weber

Max Weber, like Marx, saw modern society bringing with it the isolated individual due to the change of personal relations of dependence to relations of impersonality and calculation. However for Weber, the main cause of this process was the development of rational, ethical action strengthened in Protestantism. This advocated a work ethic of living a life of good works bound into one overall rational plan. This system of rationalisation permeated every aspect of life, eventually pervading rational systems of government, giving rise to bureaucratic styles of administration (Burkitt, 1992).

Political power is then embodied in the apparatus of government and in the abstract system of rules. People must order their lives accordingly, and come to
embody the rules as part of their personality rather than as aspects of behaviour. These rules, though, detach people from concrete social contexts in which their actions are shaped and place barriers between individuals. Identity is then structured as much by discipline as by their place in community of other individuals. The result of this is existential loneliness of the individual divorced from the roots of social life.

In Weber's writings he perpetuates the dichotomy between body and mind and the dualism of rationality and emotions that steer different activity. For him, personal identity is not developed in connections with others, but is held to be an ethical ideal attained only when a person becomes fully responsible for her own actions.

I introduced this section by saying that for many of these sociologists, people are alienated from society due to societal structures. Burkitt (1992) says that despite this, in their theoretical work, many fell into the trap of seeing the division as essential to human nature. The dichotomous relationship between society and the individual is set up. Durkheim saw a clear division between sociological and psychological study. There are aspects of the individual which are not social and need not be studied in context. Accordingly, sociologists should be concerned with phenomena arising from group life and psychologists should be concerned with individual and individual consciousness.

The world seemed to agree...

3.2.4.4. The psychological monad

This monadic image of the individual is one which comes even easier to psychology. Psychology’s automatic assumption has often been that the individual is a separate entity and that’s the way to study an individual. Context should not interfere. The isolated individual is not an historical or social product and more an essential given, whose individuality and identity is contained within (Burkitt, 1992). This understanding fits with the assumptions held in Western modern society.
1. Three faces of the Modern Self

The psychological terrain is populated with many theorists who have made important contributions to our understanding of the modern self. Modernity is often quickly associated with the mechanistic, experimental and observable. Anderson (1997) broadens this somewhat by delineating three broad communities of modern belief that could serve as landmarks for negotiating the terrain of modern psychology. He calls them: the neo-Romantic, the social-traditional, and the scientific rational. All three are distinctly modern in that they believe in an absolute truth, a unified self and a discoverable essence. They just disagree on how that truth is found and the constitution of the self. Each continues the monadic tradition.

The neo-Romantic finds truth in seeking harmony with nature and exploring the inner self through spiritual practices. As with their Romantic roots, heirs of the Enlightenment, they are deeply alienated from urbanisation and mechanisation. Sceptical of the direction of this progress, they are powerfully nostalgic. They seek nature deep within themselves mirroring nature in the wild, because they see it as the source of truth. The true self is the inner self, natural and inherently good. They are internally guided by the wisdom of this self (Anderson, 1997).

The social-traditionalist in many ways seems to hearken back to an era that precedes modernity because its members are immersed in community life and draw a sense of identity from this milieu. Yet for them, different to pre-modern times, this is not the only self that could possibly exist, but it is within the norms and roles of that community that the true self is best found. The true self is not justified only in relation to tradition, but through recognising that this is the healthiest of lifestyles that allows that true self to be nurtured (Anderson, 1997).

"Facts, Facts, Facts" begins Charles Dickens’s Hard Times as Gradgrind beats out the scientific-rationalist’s war cry. He finds truth through methodical enquiry. Only that which is objective is knowable; and the self must be scrutinised according to correct scientific method. Anderson (1997) says that to find the true self, the scientific-rationalist would go in the opposite direction to the neo-Romantic. Instead of looking within, he would look to the experts and their
measuring instruments to tell him about his true self. Each person has measurable behaviour, understanding that, will be knowing their true self.

2. Psychological Terrain

The psychological theories of personality that were developed in the 20th century are rich and diverse. They seem to portray vast differences in their notions of the self. Yet a common thread runs through them: a reflection of the modern zeitgeist. Whichever of the above faces they portray, the notion of the modern epistemology and bounded monad speaks through them.

A purview of the psychological landscape will show that an in-depth understanding of each theorist is beyond the scope of this study. I have chosen to select broad schools of theories that portray divergent notions of the self in order to cover the terrain. This terrain can be punctuated and categorised in many different ways. The broad perspectives that I have chosen are depth psychology, learning theory, trait theory and existentialist/humanist approaches (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1990; Peterson, 1992). These can also be broadly categorised into the three forces – psychoanalysis, behaviourism and the third force, existentialism and humanism (Brennan, 1998). It would be facile to enter into an in depth explanation of each. I intend to show how they reflect modern epistemology, and in so doing carry with them the possibilities of alienation.

2.1. Depth psychology – psychoanalytic approach

Certainly the progenitor of this approach was Sigmund Freud. Freud’s idea of the self shouts out the split between individual and society and the individual divided within. Freud describes and reifies internal structures, parts of which are always at odds with civilisation and society and the different structures of the psyche are always at odds with each other (Brennan, 1998).

The basic principle driving the human being is the pleasure principle, whereby a person needs to find an outlet for energy. These impulses are blind, the discharge of which needs to be mediated to ensure safe enactment in the environment. The structure which houses this is the id. In order to mediate the energy and impulses
of the id, the reality principle is developed. The reality principle often needs to contain the id. It must seek socially acceptable ways to satisfy it. This principle is housed in the structure called the ego.

Another aspect of the personality is the superego. This is the locus of an internalised conscious drawn from cultural values and rules that are internalised from people. The superego often is in direct conflict with the id. The ego must mediate the urges of the id, the demands of the superego and the reality of society and the environment. This difficult juggling act will result in the repression of many drives and wishes, continuing to exist as unconscious impulses (Brennan, 1998).

Burkitt, 1992, says that Freud begins to understand culture as a repressive superstructure which operates to stifle a person's basic tendencies in order to survive. Although many drives can be successfully sublimated, Freud was afraid that these drives would eventually overturn civilisation.

Freud and Durkheim have a similar problem: “the basic needs and energies of the individual are not assimilated to the moral and rational impulses rooted in the social bonds between people.” (Burkitt, 1992, pg 21). Freud’s ideas perpetuate the concept of the monad, the separation between mind and body, the splits within the mind, conscious and unconscious, rational and impulses and the division between individual and society.

Gergen (1992) claims that Freud straddles the transition from romantic to modern. The passions within the psyche run deep, yet they must be tamed and contained in order to survive in rational society. There is also the clash between the naturally good human being and corrupting society. Yet, Freud, together with many of his psychodynamic contemporaries like Jung, saw themselves as rationalists and scientists. They described their work as science searching to reveal the truth about the self. And it was their theories that represented the truth (Anderson, 1997).

For Carl Jung, there exists a collective unconscious that connects all people, especially to previous generations. It does not though concern itself with identity influenced through social interaction. The goal of the self is to achieve a personal
process of personal individuation and is not an interpersonal process (Carvalho, 1990).

When Tyson (1987) writes about Karen Horney's idea of self he labels it the alienated self. Horney does say that emotional disturbance arose in a social context, however this is to the extent that it takes a person away from her real self. An alternate self may be developed in its place and this self is alienated from the real self (Horney, 1950). Erich Fromm, also referred to by Meyer et al (1990) as a socially oriented psychoanalytic theorist, perceives a person as inherently dualistic – with an animal and a human nature. It is her human nature that causes her to feel alienated from the world and not just a part of nature. A person lives in a dialectic – wanting to be an individual, free from the bonds of society, yet wants to be a part of society to escape isolation (Fromm, 1956).

A person who operates within these narratives and uses this type of language, lives within these constructs. Where living not in the ideal way results in an experience of alienation of one sort or another. The alienation becomes a palpable reality.

2.2. Trait theory

Trait theory, first associated with Allport, claims that traits which make up a personality are part of a genetic inheritance. They are unique combinations which are differently constituted to produce individuals. For Allport, the individual is a stable self-contained system at the centre of nature. Each system is separated from the next; each person exists within her own body. Each person is made up of a psycho-physical system such as inherited intelligence and physical characteristics which combine to determine character.

Eysenck's work was similar to Allport. He emphasized personality types, each made up of traits. Each personality can be plotted on his three basic dimensions: introversion – extroversion; neuroticism; psychoticism. Eysenck also believed that genetic factors play a major role in determining personality type. Cattell developed these theories and also made allowance for the learning of some traits. (Burkitt, 1992)
Each of these theories, even Cattell's, is firmly rooted in a modern epistemology. There is no mention of social contexts. Trait theory assumes a separation between the person inside and the outside world, and that the personality is primarily shaped by internal forces. As well as this Allport himself describes his definition as essentialist in that personality resides inside the individual and is the determinant of behaviour and thought. Even in his later works, he prefers an idiographic approach to a nomothetic approach, suggesting an underlying unity in personality that determines consciousness (Brennan, 1998).

These theorists would wear the face of Anderson's scientific-rationalist as they systematically and scientifically plot maps of human personality. Another one which would be so in the extreme is George Kelly. Even though he doesn't fall squarely into the categories I chose to use, he brings an interesting angle, because in some ways he avoids the modern idea of absolute essence in the content of the self, but on the level of process, the Kelly self behaves like a modern scientist in the extreme. In fact Kelly refers to everyman as 'man-the-scientist', and not just those particular few who consider themselves such.

2.3. Personal construct theory

George Kelly was the progenitor of personal construct theory. In many ways his ideas embody much of what modernism is about. He sees the human being as the ultimate scientist, constantly constructing theories about the world. People are constantly interpreting their environment, building mental pictures of the world to understand it, constructing and changing it through knowledge. People are therefore constantly constructing the world and themselves (Burkitt, 1992).

Personal construct theorists do not believe that there is a reality independent of our representation of it. There is no independent truth, just different interpretations which construct the world differently. The personality of individuals are seen as the sum of their construct systems.

This notion of truth being constructed seems to be a break with the traditional modern sense of a universal objective truth and places it within the subjectivity of the individual. Kelly sees this process as a purely mental phenomenon, ignoring
other human faculties. This is still an internal division inside the self. The extreme subjectivity seems to separate the constructs from the world that they represent (Burkitt, 1992).

2.4. Behaviourism

The pioneers of Behaviourism are Pavlov and Watson. They claimed that behaviour should be understood as responses that have been conditioned by stimuli in the environment. Skinner argued that conditioning happens in a number of ways, primarily through reinforcers. Reinforcers can be positive so that they encourage behaviour or negative so that they discourage behaviour. The removal of negative reinforcement can also encourage behaviour. So human beings’ behaviour is structured by the environment (Peterson, 1992).

In this the environment is a focus, but not the social fabric, unless it operates mechanically like a reinforcer. The human being is perceived as being entirely passive. It also smacks of a modern characteristic of research where observer and observed are completely isolated and separated. The observers are able to generate a theory while the observed are merely responding passively to stimuli.

This passivity was somewhat altered with the more cognitive approaches and social learning theory. Bandura and Mischel placed emphasis on the cognitive locus of control alongside conditioning. Using cognition, a person is able to transcend the influence of the stimuli, and choose a response. What becomes important is the interaction between the person and the environment and the way the two reciprocally determine each other. While this does make a move toward situating a person socially, Burkitt (1992) says that there is very little analysis of the social relations in which people learn. An element of monadology remains in the isolation of the conscious self from other aspects of personality and other people. Individual and society, mind and emotions are not sufficiently connected to overcome this.

Also, falling into the category of scientist-rationalist, the cognitive approach emphasises another element of the modernist view of human being – her essence is rational.
2.5. Existentialism – with all this focus on the human being...where's the human being?!

The psychological terrain was dominated by psychoanalytic theories on one side and behaviourism on the other. Dissatisfaction with hegemony of these ideas lead to the emergence of the third force – a small renegade band of highly trained professionals, with a mission...to revive the whole, active, actualising person always in the process of becoming. They go by the name of Existentialism and a bit later in America, perhaps slightly better known, Humanism. Brennan (1998) says that these ideas coalesced after World War Two in an attempt to find something that was lacking. Theirs was a call for the restructuring of human values and respect for human dignity.

The movements recognise the importance of personal freedom and its concomitant responsibility in the decisions that will fulfil potential. It considers the mind an active entity. It refuses to accept the reductionism of behaviourism and the pessimism and passivity of much of psychoanalysis. The individual is an integrated and active whole. There is an emphasis on the self, which tries to foster the development of individually defined, uniquely human personality fulfilment. A person is always in the process of becoming, setting life's direction through choices made (Brennan, 1998; Meyer et al, 1990).

Existentialism has its roots in philosophical existentialism championed by people such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. For them truth came from being, living passionately with commitment from inward depths. Following from them were Sartre, Camus and Buber. Sartre insisted that existence precedes essence, we are what we do, we become what we decide. We live in the grip of anxiety because the guidelines of life are ours to create, the responsibility is immense but it brings the potential for incredible dignity. There are many differences between existentialists, but the one thing in common is the individual's quest for existence and identity (van Deurzin-smith, 1990).

(Without even turning to the phenomenologists in detail, it would be important to mention Husserl who tried to overcome subject-object dualism in investigation.)
People who applied these ideas to psychology were Rollo May, Laing and Viktor Frankl. Without mentioning specifics of the differences in their theories, which do vary in many ways, a basic idea is that there are 4 dimensions of existence: physical, social, psychological and spiritual. Existentialists consider it important to live with authenticity, to avoid existential guilt and to find meaning (van Deurzin-Smith, 1990).

2.6. Humanism – what happens when you jump ship to America

Much of the philosophical underpinnings and motivations for development are similar to the existential approach. Its emphasis is on a positive nature inherent in human beings and a focus on attaining psychological health, enhancing life and actualising potential.

Maslow, often considered the father of humanist psychology writes that each of us has an essential biologically based inner nature that is to some extent unchanging. This inner nature is neutral or good. An evil nature is a frustration of the good inner nature. The possessor of such a self has a true inner self that should be discovered and encouraged to flourish and guide the person. A person has a drive to make herself into the best that she can be – to self-actualise. Society as a whole is organised in such a way as to repress this self (Anderson, 1997).

For Carl Rogers, the purpose of life is to become ‘that self which one truly is’ (in Meyer et al, 1990). Each person has an intrinsic drive to strive toward her potential. Each person develops an impression of herself, this is the self-concept. The self that an individual would like to have is the ideal self; this self should give positive guide lines to bridge the gap between the two. A fully functioning person should have: openness to experience, a sense of freedom, creativity, trust in one’s own organism and existential living, living fully in each moment as it brings new experiences (Schultz, 1977).

Anderson (1997) would classify the humanists and existentialists as neo-Romantics as they posses a true inner self (except for Sartre), that can be discovered and must be encouraged to bloom. Peterson (1992) says that a key concept in existential and humanist thinking is alienation – estrangement from one’s true inner self.
Reflecting the rational

I certainly and humbly do not intend in one fell swoop to disregard all of the incredible work done by the theorists informed by modernity. It would be puerile to offhandedly disregard them. In most cases they are the works of insightful people attempting to find a way to better humanity and our negotiating of the world. I merely wanted to show their embeddedness in modernity and the implications for an alienated self.

In setting out to explore the landmark theorists that populate the terrain of psychology, I wondered if it were possible to do so looking through the constructs of alienation and belonging. Having these two notions as broad lenses through which to read.

If one were to remove layers of concepts surrounding alienation and belonging, we would experience two forces. One that draws you closer and one that repels, like a magnet, feeling the attraction and repulsion of the different poles. As well as that if one were to see life on a basic level, is it not a search for fit, to be in and experience life in such a way that it feels right, that it is working. Is this not belonging? And the places that don’t fit, is that not alienation? It seems to me that this dialectic is the process of the search for home, to make the world, to make life, home. The cybernetic complementarity is the dialectic of alienation and belonging on one side and home on the other.

And so, with these lenses the struggles in the theories are a sense of being alienated from life. The goals are in some way the spaces of belonging. Perhaps this language fits best with the existential/humanists. So for Rogers, not achieving the ideal self is being alienated, but achieving it, one has arrived, one has a sense of fitting with the world.

Having been through the exploration, I realise that modern epistemology has an inherent alienation in its separation of self and social matrix. Now as I am journeying through these ideas, I keep wondering something – if I can bring a reflection within a reflection:
a question keeps ringing through my mind as I am writing this: Am I not confusing the is and the ought? I don’t fully understand the question, but I think what has been bothering me is the level of description when describing the way the self is understood in different epistemologies. To clarify for myself - it is not that the actual constitution of the self suddenly becomes different in a concrete sense. Rather the understanding of the way that the self is constructed is different. This is because of the assumptions in the zeitgeist shared by people. People then have different experiences of self and ask different questions of self. So the description is a description of epistemological understanding, not actually what is going on on an absolute level.

I could feel a sense of identity diffusion. A modern therapist would help me to find a way to pull myself together. A postmodern therapist may help me to see the opportunities in it.

3.2.4.5. Essential thread of truth

The above glimpses of psychology theorists reveal a common thread reflecting the modern zeitgeist that informs these theorists:

A person is an owner of a self or identity that is inextricable from her, it is in fact her. This self is a unique individual, separate from other people. The self has a mind and consciousness contained within it. Each individual has a single personality that is that person’s true nature. This nature can be described. Each person’s thoughts are private and generated within the inner self. Thoughts and feelings can be expressed in language which will reflect as close as possible the internal state. Individuals are the centre of their worlds; they try to uncover their true essence in order to express that in the world (Elliot, 2001; Wetherell and Maybin, 1996). Implications of this for research purposes is that behaviour can be predictable and controllable. The findings can be generalised to the ‘universal individual’ (Harre, 1989).
Logan (1987) traces our changing awareness of 'I' from subject through to object. He concludes his article by saying that for a modern self "we simply cannot escape the fact that our selves are objects in and of our awareness, and therefore also objects in and of (or alienated from) the world." (pg. 24)

*The modern project was an incredible achievement freeing people from the tyranny of kin and kings. But was it just delivering us into the equally constraining hands of rational science?*

*We began by asking what the relationship between individual and society is. We said that this dichotomous relationship is a context of alienation. How can we conceptualise differently, can this remove or change the nature of alienation?*
Chapter 4

Literature Review:
If the self fits, wear is it

Underneath our experience of separation is a mysterious participation. We are in endless open communication with all that is around us - Peter Reason, Human Inquiry

What we call the self - one’s inclusive sense [or symbolization] of one’s being - is enormously sensitive to the flow of history. – Robert Jay Lifton, The Protean Self

The technologies, language forms, values, and other representational systems delimiting the range of meanings through which persons come to understand themselves and others are all rooted in culture. – Rappaport, Baumgardner and Boone, The Plural Self

In the beginning G-d created... and on the sixth day He created man and the man was called Adam. Adam was to be the generic name of the species of man. And G-d brought all the animals and birds before Adam and he named each according to their essence. He found none among them to whom he could relate and he remained lonely. G-d said it is not good for Adam to be alone. And so G-d created woman. Adam turned to her and called her, not Adam, the generic name of the species but ‘Ishah’ (woman) and for the first time he is referred to as ‘Ish’ (man). And he gains his identity, but only through the recognition of another - he exists in relationship. He is no longer lonely and finds his sense of belonging through the connectedness to another person (Sachs, 1997).

It seemed, for much of the 20th century, as if the Western world was in the grip of modernism and the notion of the modern self was the best way forward. It has been the foundation upon which much of society and its institutions are edified: legal intent, democracy, education systems, moral responsibility and many more. A plethora of diverse psychology theories abound, yet common notions of the monadic self are built into each of their assumptions. Erik Erikson’s notion of identity had a profound effect on perceptions of healthy functioning. Accordingly,
person must avoid the pitfalls of identity diffusion by achieving an integrated self with a thread of continuity running through his life (Erikson, 1968). And this must be achieved at a specific juncture in a person's development.

Yet, with the advent of postmodern epistemologies this understanding has been challenged. Contrast the above notion of identity with the title of Gergen's article (in Anderson, 1995) article: "Multiple Identity: The Healthy, Happy Human Being Wears Many Masks". This does not represent a mere difference of opinion, but signals a fundamental shift in understandings of the self. These shifts, among other things, go a long way to freeing our perceptions of the self as bounded and separate. I would like to explore the implications of these shifts for a postmodern conception of self and identity with a particular focus on social constructionism.

I have to reflect at this point: I have been the most stuck here during the writing of this dissertation. This feels like being at the heart of an Escher labyrinth. I have a list of names connected to postmodernism and a cacophony of nuances in my head and am uncertain who is central and who peripheral. I am trying to distinguish postmodern epistemology and social constructionism, but the overlaps are confusing to my linear mind and linear flow of this discussion. It seems that everything is inter-related and everything has implications for or refers to everything else. So excuse me while I go about the business of punctuating so that I can proceed.

Enter the self

Okay that was all very well; you are probably wondering what I was panicking about. Everything seems intact, especially me, so stable and real. Well you know what it is like when you are going up the first part of a roller coaster? That was it. And now we have just reached the tooooopp...

Paul Kugler (in Anderson, 1997, p. 43) writes a (one) perspective on the postmodern self:

Today it is the speaking subject who declared God dead one hundred years ago whose very existence is now being called into question. No longer is the speaking subject unquestionably assumed to be the source of language and speech, existence and truth, autonomy and
freedom, unity and wholeness, identity and individuality. The 
transcendence of Descartes' 'cogito' is no longer so certain.

From travelling so definitely in a certain direction with the assumptions of self in 
the previous chapter, it seems jarring to be confronted with this quote. What has 
happened to radically alter the epistemological assumptions on which the idea of 
identity and self are predicated?

I have chosen to explore an approach to the development and implications of 
postmodernism which merges directly with the constructing of identity. Cooper and 
Rowan (1999) write that the late twentieth century has witnessed a mass socio-
cultural fragmentation, due to a proliferation of technology. This has the effect of 
fragmenting the social world. With the notion of multi-fragmented social 
positionings and a deconstruction of absolute truth, "the notion of a unified self 
begins to stand out like a relic from a bygone era." (p. 1).

That is what Gergen (1991) calls social saturation via technologies. It describes the 
way in which technology has populated the self with numerous disparate identities. 
In so doing it has brought a postmodern culture into our everyday lives that 
profoundly impacts identity. Its central idea is based on the social constructionist 
notion of identity: that identity is not an internal given, but is created in 
relationship. As technology, especially technologies of communication, suffuses our 
atmosphere with ever more complex webs of connection, so too the potential for 
more varied and complex identities is created (Rappaport, Baumgardner & Boone, 
1999).

At the core of a postmodern understanding of identity is the notion of relational 
selves. Selves, which are not seen as having a defining essence, but rather arise in 
relationship. Through the following account one can see the transition in 
assumptions from a modern to a postmodern epistemology, and the influential 
effects of a proliferation of technologies. And at the same time it will convey a 
shifting identity and the spaces of alienation and belonging that shift with it.

I remember walking into my grandmother's dining room and watching over her 
shoulder as she was doing her books, punching away at her adding machine.
Fascinated at the monstrosity, I wondered how she was even able to carry it. I asked her if she would like a calculator, a what? a calculator. She seemed a bit suspicious of it and at best would use it, still having to use the adding machine to check if it was correct. She was 90 years old at the time and it struck me the changes she had lived through. Besides the obvious 2 world wars, when her parents left Lithuania to come to South Africa they could maybe receive a biennial letter from home. Now I can expect to receive a reply to my e-mail within a matter of seconds. Condense 6 months into a few seconds. How frenetic must that make life and anything stable connected to it?

4.1. Shifting self as the culture is suffused with technology

Gergen (1991) describes a process would someone experience a transition from the modern essential self to a postmodern relational self. In this process one can clearly hear the voices of alienation struggling to belong as identity and notions of identity shift.

The premise of this account is one which is in stark contrast to that of a modern epistemology. One’s identity is not a given, nor is it personally and a-contextually achieved. Rather it is created within the social fabric of intersubjective activity. This account paints the postmodern backdrop against which the relational self emerges and provides an experiential contact with social constructionism.

Gergen punctuates three phases in this process: from the strategic manipulator through the pastiche personality to the relational self. He depicts it in this way for the purpose of bringing the relevant issues to the fore; it is not as systematic or chronological as this, nor is it necessarily experienced by a person in its entirety. This process begins within a modernist epistemology, where the individual looks like an isolated machine, propelled by a core mechanism. It is the picture of the monad, a bounded individual, ontologically separate from society. Many voices attempt to find and reveal the real self, each competing for warrant as pluralism is seen in an either/or context (Rosenau, 1992). The process culminates in a perception that one’s identity is continuously emergent, re-formed as one moves through a sea of ever-changing relationships. The concept of individual persons is no longer a reflection of what there is, but a communal creation, derived from
discourse. The self is not defined as essence but as relational. Selves become a manifestation of relationship instead of only progenitors of them. But that is where the story ends...

The story begins in a sleepy hollow-type town, in a traditional community. Here one’s identity is continuously supported because the people with whom one interacts hold similar values. These people form a stable and predictable community, both in the consistency of their physical presence and in their ideas. There is little question of ‘being’ in any other way. However this type of community, bounded by geography, is fast disappearing. As travel increases and technology erodes the restriction of distance, the amount of people with whom one can communicate multiplies, the speed at which this is done accelerates and the different types of people with whom one can connect abounds (Gergen, 1991).

And then the traditional pattern is disrupted; one begins to get a sense of a shifting and a shiftable identity. The traditional pattern of relating to similar, and consistently similar types of people, begins to break down as our network of associations and relationships expand. This is the beginning of the process of social saturation (Gergen, 1991). This is catalysed through advancing technology unrelentingly bringing different people and value systems into our lives, both via media and travel, shrinking the spaces between different people. This immersion in a greater variety of relational networks brings the notion of fixed and stable identity into question. The self becomes increasingly ‘populated’ with varieties of disparate others. With so much difference and newness, identity is more likely to be continuously questioned than consistently confirmed (Gergen, 1991; Rowan & Cooper, 1999).

With the proliferating options of value systems and ways of being, the voice of one’s true self becomes doubted and clouded. This can create in one the sense of ‘playing a role’ and managing impressions. Rooted in modernist assumptions, one can be left with a sense that one’s ‘true’ emotions are manipulable for particular ends, and are therefore being lost in a charade. If emotions are mine personally and they reflect who I am through what I feel, then this can be an emotionally and personally estranging experience (Harre, 1986).
As one interacts with people from diverse backgrounds and value-systems, the range of self-evaluative criteria is increased. It is not just from one's geographically local community that one draws standards of good, bad, right and wrong, but from almost any visible or contactable community. With tools like the internet and the dimension of cyberspace, the amount of varied communities is prolific. Again there is not one voice of affirmation. One senses the strategic marketing of one's personality and a concomitant loss of deep connections to one's value system.

Enter the **strategic manipulator** (Gergen, 1991).

Erving Goffman (1959; in Elliot, 2001) describes the nagging sense of guilt pervading modernist consciousness struggling toward integrity. With each action a person is aware of the social implications of that act. It then takes on the shady possibility that the act is not infused with integrity of the actor, but rather performed for the effect it has on its audience.

The sense of self as strategic manipulator or as playing a role depends on the contrasting understanding of the real self. It also requires responding to a range of invitations to act in ways not traditional. This is an illustration of how the way that one perceives one's identity is intimately related to the alienation that one will sense vis-à-vis one's self. If my notion of myself is the hardy, no-nonsense, self-reliant-type characteristic of modernism, I will feel a pervading sense of guilt as my authenticity is eroded. The intrusion of others in my identity formation could be interpreted as weakness or dependence.

What Gergen (1991) calls the **pastiche personality** (meaning ‘takeoff’ or parody) emerges as it becomes increasingly difficult to recall to which core essence one must remain true. The existential ideal of authenticity frays and the meaning of sincerity becomes difficult to determine. This personality borrows bits of identity from the various sources that are available, deciding what will be useful in a given situation. If one looks back to locate a true and enduring self, the sense of superficiality and guilt of not measuring up to multiple criteria will be pervasive. However, if one avoids the call to that perceived essence, the guilt can give way to a sense of optimistic possibility. Again this depends on one's understanding of identity.
The idea of self-monitoring, of being constantly mindful of the impression that one is creating, smacks of diminished integrity to the modernist mind. Yet as one moves out of the modernist way of thinking, Snyder’s research (in Gergen, 1991) shows people high in self-monitoring as being more positive toward others, less shy, less upset by inconsistencies, more emotionally expressive and more influential. He says that this gives an individual the flexibility to cope with the shifting situational demands in a diversity of social demands. This research shows merit in multiplicity. One could comment on the very ability to make such conclusions being facilitated only within a postmodern zeitgeist using the culturally available resources.

Rappaport, Baumgardner and Boone (1999) write that at the level of everyday experience, postmodernity is a condition of flux, multiplicity and transformation. There is an increasing priority given to imagery over material substance and of non-linear over linear narratives in the media. This is apparent in ever-changing stars like Madonna, films like *Pulp Fiction* and music videos, which no longer tell a linear story, but are a collection of frenetic images. Cyberspace has created a new realm in which time and stability barely exist (Turkle, 1995). These values of change and transformation are celebrated as admirable qualities, and have a profound effect on destroying the stable self.

These changes are also supported in the academic realm and the theoretical perspectives of postmodernism. To mention but some corresponding notions: Gergen’s (1994) multiphrenia; Lifton’s (1993) Protean Self; Baudrillard’s (in Rappaport et al, 1999) notion that reality is becoming hyperreality, and is increasingly apprehended through ‘simulacra’ – simulations and visual images; Priogine and Stengers (1984), introduce quantum physics notions of dissipative structures and randomness into biology; French deconstructionists de-centring the self and slaying rationality (Rosenau, 1992).

The honourable tradition of ‘the stable self’ becomes replaced with the self as process - open and able to change. A telling example of this is the world of fashion, where for women the focus for most used to be economy, durability and normalcy and for men the enduring entity of the self was reflected in the pride taken in a suit lasting many seasons. As postmodern consciousness expands, the ideas around
fashion do too. For the pastiche personality, there is no self outside that which is communicated and constructed in a social context. For women the standard department store is replaced by the individualizing boutique. And for men the lifetime identity is challenged by the array of designer apparel that changes frequently (Gergen, 1991).

As social relationships become opportunities for enactment, the boundary between the real and presented self, between substance and style becomes blurred and then erased. As this process occurs notions of the essence within lose their descriptive relevance. This makes way for the self to be replaced by relationship and so the relational self emerges. Relationships are no longer by-products of individuals who relate. Rather, the invisible spaces between people come to the fore and are the context in which identity is constructed.

The implications for this are that the autonomous individual fades from view, and the plural self is constructed in relationship and in what Shotter (1993) calls dialogical moments. This means living life and constructing ourselves within the flow of continuous interaction between human beings. This allows for a multiplicity of identities without the nagging question of validity and essence.

What one expects one's identity to look like and how one expects it to be constituted will impact on the way in which it is experienced within the social zeitgeist. This will colour the sense of alienation and belonging experienced. For example, if one's expectation is for the self to be unitary, autonomous and enduring, yet one is in the midst of society undergoing a frenetic turn to the postmodern, one could experience a sense of alienation in the fragmentation. One could feel the stress of multiphrenia, guilt at being insincere and lacking coherence, and a disengagement with one's life as authenticity seems to slip from the pedestal of relevance.

If one can see identity, not as essential, but rather relational, the same set of social circumstances can open new vistas and opportunities. This could allow one to fluidly belong as one experiences shifting identities in different contexts - allowing the multiphrenia to give way to the plural self where multiplicity is useful and not alienating. Where the focus on consequence and the dissolution of essence allows one to experience more useful identities and less oppressive forms of life.
4.2. Traces of History

The above traces the development of the intrusion of the postmodern world through Gergen’s (1991) notions of the Saturated Self. It is his contention that the erosion of confidence in that which we know can be traced to the growing awareness of other voices and perspectives. This awareness is a direct result of the technologies of social saturation. Both social constructionism and postmodern ideas of the self have rich and varied roots, all which are in some way connected to the cross-pollination of ideas that have resulted from this.

The following are some traces of the ideas that developed concurrently and drew nurturance from the above mentioned shifting zeitgeist. These made contributions to social constructionist notions of identity. They are merely traces of history and not full accounts.

4.2.1. Chalice and the Blade (feminine and masculine consciousness)

One could look at Peter Reason’s (1994) notions of the evolution of consciousness, in which he looks at rhythms of the world bigger and older than these epistemological considerations. He divides the history of the world into three phases of consciousness: undifferentiated consciousness where people live in deep unconscious communion with their surroundings; alienated consciousness, where participation is denied, akin to modern epistemologies; and participative consciousness. The first two phases are compared with feminine and masculine consciousness respectively. The third phase of future participation moves beyond the polarity of original participation and alienated consciousness to a dialectical dance between the two. Reason says that this is akin to ‘constructive’ postmodernism (as opposed to fragmenting and deconstructive), and facilitates views of relational selves (Reason, 1994). This is a view of postmodernism that focuses on the possibilities for constructing differently and connection.
4.2.2. Extended Family therapy connections

One could trace these changes through the eyes of family therapists like Lynn Hoffman (1993), Anderson and Goolishian (1988) and other family therapists. This would take one on a journey from viewing pathology residing inside an individual echoing a Newtonian view of science, to looking at the system of which the individual is a part, echoing a quantum physics view of science.

One would then look at cybernetic models of systems and homeostasis involving notions of feedback. The system was observable and considered separate from the observer. This then evolved into second order cybernetics. Second order cybernetics transcended the inherent dualism of cybernetics as it saw the observer as part of the system. Accompanying this was von Foerster’s (1984) questioning of the prevailing attitude toward science and its claims on objectivity. As well as this, they presented a position in which ontological primacy is granted to relationships and not bounded individuals (Sampson, 1989). Yet, these theories were wrought with issues of control and seen as too referent to mechanical metaphors.

Constructivism then became the preferred paradigm. It draws on a Kantian model of knowledge, whereby an organism does not have direct access to the world ‘as it is’, but rather knowledge is actively invented within the structure of an organism as it encounters its environment (Efrans, Lukens & Lukens, 1988). Biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, cybernetician Heinz von Foerster and linguist Ernst von Glasersfeld began to introduce constructivism into the field of family therapy. This focuses on individuals as autopoietic (self-organising) or autonomous systems generating theories inside the individual’s mind within the context of its environment.

A constructivist therapist must acknowledge that her ideas in a therapeutic context (or a research context or anywhere) are interpretations that reflect the way that she interprets and makes meaning in the world. She, therefore, is not an objective observer and refers to the domain of therapy as an ‘observing system’ and not an ‘observed system’. Therapy thus becomes a co-construction between therapist and client as they participate in the system and perturb each others meanings. At the
same time both must take responsibility for their own constructions (Hoffman, 1993; von Glasersfeld, 1984).

Objective reality is eschewed and the focus is on context and meaning generated within that context. Hoffman (1993) contends that the goal of therapy becomes to shift meanings, not necessarily behaviour. Language therefore becomes an important focus as a means of organisms connecting with each other. Yet Hoffman (1992) still criticises constructivism for stressing the operations of the nervous system over the inter-subjective influence of language and culture:

However, the beliefs represented by constructivism tend to promote an image of the nervous system as a closed machine. According to this view, precepts and constructs take shape as the organism bumps against its environment. By contrast, the social construction theorists see ideas, concepts and memories arising from social interchange and mediated through language (p.8).

4.2.3. A Prophetic voice

In the works of James (1890), Baldwin (1897) and Cooley (1902), can be seen fledgling traces of the social self. Yet their work still contained that dualism inherent in modern thought. From the midst of a modernist epoch came the voice of George Herbert Mead, whose approach aimed at breaking down the dualism between the individual and the collective. His influence on modern psychology was limited, because in the true modern style of separate disciplines, it was in the department of philosophy that he worked and so his ideas remained for much time out of the realm of psychology (Burkitt, 1992; Scheibe, 1995).

Mead's theories went some way in breaking down the divisions of mind and behaviour, empirical and introspective psychology, and social and individual. He was one of the first theorists to propound the view that the self develops within discourse. Mind and self are formed within the social, communicative activity of the group. For Mead there is a human nature, but this nature is social. It is not fixed, but determined by the social group as a whole (Burkitt, 1992).
People continually shape their actions to adjust to one-another. Central to this process of mutual adjustment is the system of social communication. It is within this process of adjustment that a person develops self-consciousness through the necessity of self-reflecting. Vital to this process is communication, first by gesture and later by language. The gestures and language become signs in the social process, carrying meanings for all members of the social group. The signs or 'significant symbols' do not reflect internal states, but gain meaning from the parts they play in social interaction. The signs first gain meaning from being a part of the social and then become part of individual attitude. Language as a communal activity is therefore crucial in the development of the self (Burkitt, 1992).

For Mead the self only develops in social activity. Society and self do not influence each other, but evolve together. There is no aspect of the self that is asocial, and at the same time the self is not a transparent node of society. There is a unique 'I' that develops, but does so only in a network of social interactions and meanings (Burkitt, 1992).

Mead's work was the precursor to a movement called symbolic interactionism. An important concept in symbolic interactionism is the social role. Social life is played out in roles that we acquire and envisage for ourselves for the future. From this perspective our identity has its origins in social interchange (Gergen, 1999).

Gergen (1999) claims that the work of Mead and symbolic interactionism is not an adequate replacement for individualism. He says that despite the relational emphasis, it retains a strong element of individualism. Private subjectivity is never abandoned; one comes to experience others as a private subject and then one takes on the role of others in order to develop thought processes. How we think about the world and ourselves is determined by others. This and the notion of playing roles laid out for us, smacks of determinism. Gergen questions whether this notion of cause and effect in human relations is not dividing and alienating. If one causes another's behaviour does that not indicate both a separation and a power relationship? He suggests a quest for a formulation that would dispense with the free will versus determinism dichotomy.
Yet it was Mead’s work that had a significant effect on theorists such as Harry Stack Sullivan, whose social psychology considered the self to be essentially social in origin. He also had influence on the work of sociologists like Erving Goffman, who concentrated on the self in interaction as it was observable on the surface. He was concerned with the management of impressions and he received much acclaim for his book *The presentation of the self in everyday life*. Goffman makes no distinction between presented selves and true internal selves. Rom Harre has tried to advance the work begun by Mead, bringing together elements from different social disciplines around the ethogenic social sciences. This tries to explore the belief systems people employ in their everyday lives to give meaning to their actions and by which they construct their identities (Scheibe, 1995; Burkitt, 1992).

4.2.4. French deconstructionists – if the self fits, wear is it?

*Warning: speaking French can jeopardise your very existence.*

Postmodernism has heralded relational selves, plural selves, multiphrenia, protean selves (Lifton, 1993), and constructed selves to name a few names. It also, in some instances, has attempted to erase the notion of the self altogether. Perhaps the most radical version of the postmodern self, the de-centred self or the non-existent self has its roots in the French philosophers, particularly the deconstructionists and poststructuralists. Michael (1996, p. 11) writes:

> A de-centred self refers to the fact that we can no longer assume that the self is some coherent, unitary and discrete entity. Rather it is constituted through and from various linguistic resources and mobilized according to the exigencies of particular times and places.

These French intellectuals seem to be intent on revealing certain processes, especially oppressive processes, inherent in modernist forms of life. Each of their projects is one of deconstruction, in which there is an attempt to construct, or at least make room for other constructions through destruction. That is through revealing and laying bare the implications of ideas and practices (Lovlie, 1992).

Much of these theorists draw their ideas from the realms of literary criticism. Connected to this is structuralism and poststructuralism, which are centred
around the search for structures and processes that underlie the constitution of the human being. Essential to this search has been the analysis of language and symbolic practices (Crotty, 1998).

Very influential in this field has been de Saussure. He makes a distinction between a word (or a gesture or other signifier) and that to which the word is referring (the signified). The relationship between the two is not one which denotes an essential connection, but rather an arbitrary connection. It is an acknowledgement of this arbitrary relationship that places importance on local conventions. This in turn reframes an objective fact as a perspective.

Another important contribution of de Saussure is that sign systems are governed by their own internal logic. Language can be studied as its own system and when we communicate linguistically we must approximate the rules of this system. It follows that words gain their meaning in relation to other words without accounting for the way the world ‘really is’. We communicate with others and ourselves using this system of words. What we know and understand therefore exists within the sea of language and interrelating words (Gergen, 1999; Sampson, 1989).

Jacques Derrida drew on these ideas in the development of his theory on language deconstruction. He views language, and indeed all communication, as a system of differences. Forms in language are discernable only in their distinction from other forms in the system. Differences point to relationships and not essences in the evolving of meanings. As the meaning of one term depends on the meaning of other terms, difference is enough to distinguish the term from others, but not enough to gain an awareness of what the term itself refers to. In order to do that we must defer to other terms. This is the process of difference and deferral, Derrida calls differance. From this process there is no exit, because in order to understand the terms that explain, they themselves must be distinguished and must defer to still more terms. Our meanings are caught in a web of self-referring terms. We do not encounter the concept outside of this system of language (Gergen, 1999; Sampson, 1989).

One of Derrida’s central methodological devices in achieving deconstruction is placing a term under erasure. In his attempt to deconstruct language, he needs to
make use of language. The very thing that he wants to deconstruct, he needs to use. To place a term under erasure is to both use it and negate it simultaneously. It is necessary to use, yet must carry with it its inaccuracy and unrevealed implications. He also seeks to discover within the meaning of a term its opposite. For example, to speak of belonging can only be understood by distinguishing it from its binary opposite, alienation. Therefore the one term carries within it the absence of the other term. One understands the fullness of a concept by seeing that which is absent or suppressed. This goes a way to freeing us from the hegemony of the term (Gergen, 1999, Sampson, 1989).

These ideas are used to deconstruct much of what Western tradition is about. To perceive the absent is to reveal the privileged side and the suppressed side. In so doing the oppressive elements in our talk and practices can be deconstructed. The purpose of this is not necessarily to then replace it with another tradition, but rather to continually be in the process of deconstructing and revealing.

These ways of thinking leads to the deconstruction of ideas central to modern epistemology. Rationality collapses and affects those institutions that have it as their base: government, legal systems, science, morality and others.

**Interruption - enter self**

*here comes trouble...or freedom...or trouble...or free...*

The notions at the core of the modern self are thrown into doubt: notions of the self are constituted in language and it is therefore not apprehended as an entity with an essence. Self as the centre of awareness does not hold, it has been de-centred by the system of signs in which it is constituted. The Western self is therefore seen as a socio-historic and ideological construct. The self is not an integrated whole, Derrida gives us a view of the self as multi-dimensional and without a centre. The self is a process continually being formed within the system of signs. The modern notion of the self is based on an either/or identity, which separates people from each other. Derrida envisages the self that can never be set apart from other selves.
These are some of the ideas that have contributed to the notion of the 'death of the self' or the de-centred self. In no ways of less significance, it would be important to make mention of the work of Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard. Both working in a similar vein of deconstructing oppressive practices inherent in modernism. One can barely mention Lyotard without quoting “postmodern as incredulity towards meta-narratives.” (in Kvale, 1992). He is critical of legitimising forms of knowledge, especially science, through grand-narratives. He argues for an acknowledgement of local knowledge that does not have to legitimate itself with reference to meta-discourse. This focus subsumes the modern polarity of universal-individual. The local community is a point of departure and the universal self is an abstraction from the world (Kvale, 1989).

Foucault, in his early work focused on language and the constitution of the subject in discourse. The self was an empty entity, an intersection of discourses. In his later work, he shifted to explore dynamics of power and control inherent in practices and language (Sarup, 1993). These dynamics are often subtle but operate powerfully to circumscribe the behaviour of people participating in that discourse. The relation between power and knowledge is inextricable. This is exploited within systems of expert knowledge that subtly prescribe meanings and dictate behaviour (Richter, 1992). Power, though, is not merely to be perceived as a tool of repression. Power produces reality itself, there is no standing outside of power and the domain of knowledge it produces. Rather an attempt must be made to disrupt and demystify it by revealing it, and by so doing, the possibilities it has to offer (Crotty, 1998).

Referring to the self, Rowan and Cooper (1999, p. 2) say, “what began as a master of its domain has been reduced to a little more than a website in cyberspace, a momentary resting place for multiple narratives as they weave their way through the fabric of social relationships.”

4.2.5. Stepping out of monologue

One important voice that heralds the entrance of the relational being is that of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin’s ideas evolved form his work in literary criticism where
an outstanding idea is his concern for the oppressive quality of the monologue. He relates this to certain cultures making claims to only one valid voice of authority. He focuses on the context of dialogue through which the self emerges implying that the self cannot be separated from other (Gardiner & Mayerfeld Bell, 1998).

He says that dialogue carries the influence of the history of the culture and that each participation in dialogue shifts that influence and adds to it within the context of that conversation. Meaning is only derived in relationship and does not exist apart from communication with another. Gergen (1999) claims that the richness of Bakhtin's account moves us close to understanding being as relational, yet still carries traces of individualism. It is the individual that carries the meaning from the past into dialogue in the present.

4.3. Shifts of the tectonic plates

The above traces of history were related developments to the story of social saturation. Both are part of the development of social constructionist thinking within a postmodern epistemology. The notions of self have changed radically in a postmodern zeitgeist. Between the account of postmodernism in chapter 2 and the above account of social saturation a picture of postmodern epistemology has been painted. I would like to highlight the landmarks in this picture in order to summarise some of the fundamental changes that form the backdrop for understanding the socially constructed self. These shifts that characterise postmodern and social constructionist thinking can be seen as tantamount to the shifting of the tectonic plates that underlie the earth's structure, and in that way they facilitate a different landscape in which identity is understood.

Once again these notions are enmeshed with each other and refer to each other, making it difficult to put into discrete categories alone. It is nevertheless important to tease them out to reveal the issues and nuances involved.
4.3.1. The quest: the one vs. many/none

Modernism is characterised by the search for that stabilising factor that will underlie or explain all of life. It operates on the assumption that this is possible and has implications for and is informed by notions of truth, knowledge and language. In a postmodern zeitgeist this assumption breaks down and invites multiplicity, which has an effect on and is affected by the notions of truth, knowledge and language.

4.3.2. Either/or - Both/and

In modernism's quest to determine real truth, it encouraged pluralism. This pluralism encouraged competing voices, yet the different voices were just that—competing. Only one version of the truth could stand, the others had to be incorrect. It was this either/or commitment that was in align with the quest for one truth (Giddens, 1990).

Postmodernism's encouragement of different voices does not require them to compete for warrant, nor to legitimate themselves according to a meta-narrative. This allows for the both/and perspective to flourish, and creates space for a multiplicity of realities (Gergen, 2000).

4.3.3. Knowledge

With a postmodern epistemology there is a shift away from seeing knowledge as inhering within the individual to being constructed as a communal creation. In a modernist epistemology, knowledge is a direct description of the real world as it is. It is gained via valid methods of observing the world and once determined is considered truth. However, for postmodernists, knowledge is constructed through social process and within language. There is a focus on local, contextualised knowledge (Shotter, 1993).

Modernism has a tendency to view knowledge and our categories as abstractions that should be universally relevant. Postmodernism re-views these categories in
context of their history and culture that gave rise to them. They are dependent on the social and economic arrangements of that culture. Knowledge should be seen as products of that particular culture within its historical context. An implication of this is a tendency to avoid privileging one way of knowing over others (Gergen, 2000).

Knowledge in a postmodern understanding does not need to validate itself according to meta systems of knowledge such as grand narratives of scientific method. Rather there is an acknowledgement of local knowledge as being valid by the mere fact that it has been constructed within that context. Thus a multiplicity of different knowledges can co-exist (Kvale, 1992).

4.3.4. Truth...s

The understanding of truth in modernism is tied closely to the notion that there is an objective world that can be accurately apprehended. If truth can be ascertained, then the future can be predicted and controlled. This is also akin to the privileging of the rational mind. The context does not impinge on the search for truth and truth can be universally applied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

In a postmodern perspective, truth is just that – a perspective. It is a product of local knowledge not grand narratives and is constructed in contextualised discourse, a product of social interaction. This allows multiple truths to be generated and to co-exist. Truth does not exist outside of linguistic construction, and so is created in the intersubjective space between people (Gergen, 1999).

4.3.5. Language - A word can paint a thousand pictures

For modernist thinkers the issue of language is one of those givens to which they have rarely turned a reflexive eye. John Locke’s notion of language holds centre stage in modernism: words are signs of internal conception. They describe the world within so that others may understand that world as it is conveyed by words. The individual apprehends knowledge of the world as it is and language conveys
the content of the mind. In this conception, language reflects reality (Shotter, 1993).

For postmodernists language does not reflect an absolute reality, but is a cultural process. According to Wittgenstein (1953) language gains its meanings not from its essence, reflective accuracy or mental underpinnings, but rather from its use in action. Language gains its meaning from ongoing forms of interaction – in 'language games'. To use certain terms is to participate within a set of social conventions or 'forms of life'. Language generates forms of cultural practice, it creates the reality in which we live. Therefore the knowledge that we establish is not a mirror of nature, but is actively constructed through language (Richardson, 2000).

4.3.6. Critical Reflexivity

Postmodernism invites us to question the assumptions that we hold as automatic and taken for granted. In that way we reveal much that is implicit in our living that could hold the potential for other ways of living. The categories that we use to understand the world can be seen as punctuations and not reified realities. This enables us to see the potential in courting more useful categories and realities (Potter, 1998).

4.4. Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is embedded in and informed by the postmodern zeitgeist with which it fits. It banishes the notion of objective knowable truth. Instead it argues for an acknowledgement of local truth as a set of evolving meanings that emerge continuously in interaction. In so doing it emphasises the intersubjective influence of language in the construction of reality. This prioritises the social, previously invisible, space in between people as the generator of identity, instead of it being a by-product of identity (Burr, 1995).

With the social constructionist perspective on knowledge, neither objective nor subjective knowledge is sought. This dichotomy becomes irrelevant as does the realist - relativist debate. Knowledge does not exist 'out there' or 'in here'; rather it
is constructed in the social context. It ‘exists’ or rather is constructed in discourse. Ontology therefore also becomes less relevant as the implications of real or relative become a moot point. What is considered to exist will only do so as a social construction. The contextual construction of knowledge in the social arena, infused with its own history eradicates the necessity for that distinction (Burr, 1998).

Fish (in Crotty, 1998) says that all objects are made and not found, meaning that they are constructed. They are constructed within the social arena. The social arena is one which precedes us, one in which we are already embedded. When we know, we do so suffused with the resources of the culture and as participants in its convention.

We are born into a social milieu with a system of intelligibility. In this world of meaning we inherit a system of significant symbols that bestow upon us lenses of our culture. These symbols, language and meaning systems are all historically and socially constructed. The context in which they arise is one in which its history is significant. Thus reality is referred to as a social artefact (Gergen, 1994).

The meaning system, the context in which we construct, is not static. It is a dynamic system that is constantly recreated in the intersubjective realm of social interaction. Meanings are continuously evolving from the interaction between people. People, while they may be embedded in a discourse, are not constrained by its meaning system; they are able to actively engage in constructing their context (Rorty, 1989).

What follows from this is that the nature of things is not constituted by fixed, given essences. In the same vein social constructionist thought does not pursue internal or underlying structures to personality or society. An attractive (to some and scary to others) assumption therefore is that things do not have to be the way they are. The ability to view forms of life and our practices as constructions brings with it the hope of constructing differently. There is flexibility to reconstruct a reality so that it is more useful. Along with this, comes not a concern for what is true, but rather what the consequences are of constructing in certain ways (Gergen, 1999).
Social Constructionism focuses on the discursive means by which we determine what is true and good, their aim being emancipatory. Instead of attempting to determine universal principles they attempt to deconstruct our habits of constructing ourselves and our worlds. The aim is to demonstrate the ways in which we get stuck in constructions that are not useful and open up the possibilities for constructing in more useful ways (Gergen, 2000).

This is not to imply, as it would seem that constructivism does, that the responsibility is on each individual to construct her reality independent of other people. Nor that a person has a 'tabula rasa' on which to construct themselves and their meanings as if painting on blank canvas. The constructions are 'joint actions' that occur in dialogue together with other people (Shotter, 1993) within the discourse of the culture, using the culturally available resources.

Critical to this process is reflexive deliberation, which calls attention to the taken for granted assumptions within our knowing. This is to reveal the potential for suppression and open a domain for other voices to emerge. Gergen (1997) writes that an example of this is explicating the assumptions is modern and romantic epistemologies in such a way that makes room for other ways of knowing to emerge.

A crucial part of this is allowing for the co-existence of multiplicity. In that accounts of reality are socially constructed the privileging of one account over others is avoided. Local knowledge is considered local truth for that context and does not need to fight for its place as the only truth (Potter, 1998).

Postmodernism is often considered to be a state of fragmentation bringing with it disconnection and anxiety in the uncertainty of it (Elliot, 2001). However Gergen strongly believes in the possibilities that abound for connection and the making of a better world with social constructionism. Gergen (2000, p. 8) says: "constructionism is an invitation to possibilities, to exploration, to creation, and possibly to material conditions in which there is greater tolerance, and the coordination of peoples toward what they may see as a more humane and life sustaining world."
4.4.1. The constructed web - social construction of identity

As we move into a postmodern milieu the question is no longer about how we integrate social and individual, about what the relationship between bounded self and society is, but rather how are we to conceptualise the social production of the individual (Michael, 1996)?

In the same way that knowledge of anything is a social artefact, so too is identity. Identity does not inhere within an individual as a biological given or a personal achievement. Rather it is constructed within the relational matrix in which we are embedded and in which we participate. This matrix carries with it the cultural, social and historical knowledge with which we are suffused as we interact with each other. It is within this context that identity is constructed (Burr, 1995).

In modern epistemologies the progenitor of relationships is the individual. The individual enters these relationships brandishing her identity. The space between people is invisible until such time that the individual creates it by acting out of herself. Social constructionism sees the space between people in relief, as preceding the individual. This space constitutes an ongoing cultural conversation. It precedes the individual, is shaped through interaction, and is the space that constructs identity (Shotter, 1999).

One of the cultural resources through which identity is constructed is language. As language is not seen as a reflection of the world as it is, so to it is not a reflection of identity inside. Language is an activity that gains its meaning in interaction and negotiating of shared understanding. It is therefore in interaction that our sense of identity is co-constructed (Shotter, 1999).

The self does not have a singular essence which must be discovered and then lived according to in true authenticity. Rather any ‘essence’ is a constructed notion of identity. As described above this perspective allows room for multiple identities. As technologies of communication bring us into contact with more varied communities and value systems, the resources available from which to construct identity
proliferate. This invites a multiplicity of co-existing identities. If one can negotiate this multiplicity it can open vistas of opportunity for living (Gergen, 1991).

Burr (1998) acknowledges that one of the initially exciting things about social constructionism is that it gives us options to reconstruct the world in such a way that it is more useful. However she expresses concern over the questioning of agency. The ideas of the self being a carrier of culture and culture speaking through the empty self could bear the same danger as behaviourism – diminishing the agency of the self. She suggests that we find ways not to allow the carpet to once again be pulled from under us by ensuring that we retain the perspective of participating actively in the construction within our contexts.

The entire story of the changing epistemologies seems to me to be in and of itself a dialectic of alienation and belonging. Humankind's search to make earth and life home, to know and understand the world in an endeavour to make it home, now relying on reason, now turning to passion, sometimes seeking control and sometimes placing herself in the mysterium magnum of life. Always moving into something and then in search for what is missing moving out of that into something else, only to be immersed for a while but then needing to move again. Is the search toward something or is the process in and of itself useful?

This type of history that we are considering is linked to what Michael (1996) refers to as big identities – “the historically huge selves that have cast a mighty shadow across time-space – epochal selves like the self-contained responsible Westener or the fragmented, decentred spectacle consuming the postmodern” (pg 19). It is the living of everyday life, the moments of small choice, and the multiple 'little' identities that both reflect and constitute the 'big' identities.

Enter participants, you and yourselves, and bring with the echoes of the big identities embedded in the shadows of epistemologies. Let's explore the negotiating of this territory in our search for home...
Chapter 5

Research Methodology

I see this as an approach to living based on experience and engagement, on love and respect for the integrity of persons; and on a willingness to rise above presupposition, to look and to look again, to risk security in the search for understanding and action that open up creative living. — Peter Reason, Participation in Human Inquiry

Truth is not to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction. — Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics

5.1. Introduction

In this study I intend to explore notions of home, identity, alienation and belonging and the relationships between these ideas. My sense as I enter this study is that our sense of home is inextricably related to our sense of identity. Our identities carry within them those markers that will help us resonate with a situation or feel alienation. At the same time our experience of belonging and alienation will play a role in the construction of our identities. One could envisage a type of cybernetic complimentarity existing with identity on one side and the dialectic of alienation and belonging on the other.

The study will look at the participants’ experiences of alienation and belonging. It will explore the way that they negotiate these experiences and consider the role that these feelings play in the way that they make meaning in any situation. I will explore the way that these feelings both shift and shift along with the identities we construct. And whether our identities in turn operate to shift our experiences of alienation and belonging. The study will explore the participants’ notions of home and how alienation and belonging function on our journey to find it. I will explore my own ideas of alienation and belonging and how these ideas influence my understanding of the participants’ ideas.
5.2. Research itself: an alienating or a connecting process

The research process itself is one which is intimately connected to notions of alienation and belonging, separation and connection. These notions are embedded within the epistemology from which they arise. Research in the social sciences has traditionally been performed within a modern epistemology and part of a positivist world-view. The dualist notions inherent in this way of knowing serve to see research and everyday experience as separate. The researcher and subjects of inquiry are also separate and held apart by a hierarchy of knowledge. The quest is for the Truth which will then exclude other ways of knowing and silence competing voices. This knowledge will then be used to generalise, apply universally and predict future outcomes (Vidich & Lyman, 2000).

Reason (1994) says that fundamental to the ecological, political, social and personal crises of our time is our way of thinking and how it separates us from each other, ourselves, our experiences and the world. He claims that the root of the problem is epistemological and this requires new ways of thinking and forms of practice. As we have seen our notion of the individual self is at the root of this dualist world-view; the knower is detached from the world and not implicate within it. Watts (in Reason, 1994) says that the fragmentation of modern epistemology can be seen as starting from the establishment of the self.

Concomitant to this way of knowing is the necessity to remain objective and value neutral. Reality must be experienced as it really is, therefore all biases must be avoided and the researcher should remain dispassionate, so as not to 'contaminate' the data. The way of ensuring this is through rigorous method and controlling the conditions. In step with dualist world view of bounded entities is the notion of cause and effect. In controlling conditions the researcher can isolate the antecedent conditions that give rise to the controllable consequences. This is the basis of an experimental method of research (Gergen, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

As the bounded monad implies the separation of self from other, so the research process separates knower from known and researcher from subject. The researcher is somehow considered of a different order to her subjects, only the former being
able to exercise free will and choose to act creatively or differently. Those being studied will behave according to deterministic laws almost unaware that they are a part of a research process (Steir, 1991). Along with this is the division of wholes into their constituent parts. The assumption being that, just as with a machine, if one understands each part, one will gain a clearer picture of the whole. Subjects will therefore be seen as one of their isolated parts chosen as a construct to study (Reason, 1994).

The tool for achieving this way of knowing the world is the intellect. This enables certain ways of knowing to be valued above others. Rational knowledge, clearly articulated in propositional form is listened to, while intuitive, emotional, experiential or practical knowledge is silenced. This creates concepts that operate to form concrete lenses that separate experience and understanding (Reason, 1994). With these concepts in place, they form forestructures of understanding that perpetuate these concepts. Other understanding can be somewhat precluded or excluded as knowledge. This is akin to Gadamer's (in Gergen, 1997) notion of horizons of understanding, which refers to a reader approaching a text with a range of interpretive tendencies that will dominate the way the text is understood.

With these notions in place, research could be experienced by the participants, or subjects as they are in a modern epistemology, as an alienating experience, separate from the researcher, under the gaze and not a partner in the process to which they are actually integral.

An attempt was made in this study to overcome these separations and for the process to be one that is participatory, inclusive and healing. It is therefore situated within a paradigm that attempts to achieve this and fundamentally sees the world as one of connection and participation. As one of the participants in this study concluded the interview by describing his experience:

Trevor: Very much getting in touch. This was part of the journey home, definitely. It was a very positive experience because especially after what I've gone through I haven't necessarily looked at the other issues and I think I have looked at them but now I can see them in a different light.
5.3. Social Constructionist Research

At the outset it is important to say that from a social constructionist perspective there is not one truth which will stand so that all others will fall. It embraces pluralism in a postmodern sense allowing different perspectives to co-exist. It therefore does not abandon empirical research, but views it in a different light and revises its goals. It deconstructs its assumptions and claims to truth, and contextualises its findings (Gergen, 1997).

At the heart of social constructionist research are the assumptions that immediately obviate the duality, separation and resultant alienation inherent in modern thinking. All things, knowledge and the self included, are ‘social artefacts’ constructed within relationship. The invisible spaces in between people become replete with colour as they are no longer empty, separating divisions. It is in these spaces that entities are seen as relational and connected, their identities constructed within the nature of the spaces – the culture, the discourse, the history and the relationships (Burr, 1995).

With this in mind (a relational, constructed mind), the aims and the process of research shift dramatically. The aim is not to reveal an objective reality that will be described by the participants. Nor is the aim to reveal the subjective reality that the participants carry within them. Both of these speak to the dualist notion that separates self and society. The researcher and participants are not seen as separate, but participants in the same process. From Heisenberg’s uncertainty principal to systems thinking and relational understanding of social constructionism, the two are inseparable (Crotty, 1998).

Social constructionism eschews the notion of a decontextualised objectivity that holds true across situations. Therefore the search is not one for empirical, objective fact conducted by a value-neutral observer. The researcher enters into the research process with an agenda, a meaning system and value system. This is made explicit and part of the research process. Revealing the notions of the researcher is an important part of explicating the context (Crabtree & Miller, 1992).
The findings of the research are not intended to be universally applied and generalised across all situations. Nor is it intended to serve as a predictor of events. It is to mine the conversation for the meanings and worlds of the participants to gain an understanding of their experiences. The assumption is that this is locally generated knowledge and not universal. Its role is to open a domain of conversation. The reader can enter the domain and use the ideas to negotiate experiences in her reality if she finds it useful. In the writing of the study, an attempt is made to create what Bathes calls a ‘readerly’ as opposed to a ‘writerly’ text. This is a text that speaks in the voice of dialogue and not authoritative monologue. It incites the reader to participate in meaning making as she reads (Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 2003).

There is not an attempt to reveal the cause-effect relationship between events with an aim to explain and control. These are considered punctuations imposing a frame on the context. Especially if it is done in a way that is not reflexive and holds itself up as absolute truth. Rather the researcher explores the complex interrelationships touching on the study. Instead of uniqueness being an unwanted glitch, it is assumed and encouraged to proliferate within the study (Stake, 1995).

The research process is in itself a creative one. There is a move away from experimental method to discursive-centred practices. It does not seek to map the truth of an objective social reality. It becomes a context in which meanings around the issues are co-constructed. The participants are seen as themselves bringing meanings, that they have constructed within their contexts or discourses, to the research context, where through dialogue and the process of the conversations, both the meanings of the researcher-as-participant and the participants are reconstructed and developed (Gergen, 1999).

Language once again is considered a constitutive activity and not a reflection of essential reality. Hoffman (1993) says that knowledge is constructed in social interaction between people and it is mediated through language in an ongoing conversation between intimates. Research is therefore a process that discovers meaning through conversation. The researcher will attempt to explore the realities that the participants bring to the research process, contextualised and explicating her own lens through which it is seen (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).
Gergen (1997) says that there has been a tendency among constructionist scholars to develop theories that favour communalism over individualism, interdependence over independence, participatory over hierarchical decision making, and societal integration over traditional segmentation. These views, while not demanded, are derived from the nature of the social constructionist world view.

This study is conducted from social constructionist perspective. Kuzel (in Crabtree & Miller, 1992) says about qualitative research that it is driven by the desire to illuminate the questions and to uncover multiple realities. It allows for the development of local meanings. It concerns itself not with proof, but with information richness. Although there is space within social constructionist research to use contextualised quantitative methods, it seems fitting for this study to make use of qualitative research methods.

5.4. Contexts

Important to social constructionist research is the recognition of context. Whatever one does occurs within a context, which is essential to understanding the issues that arise from it. Concomitant to the recognition of the context is that a context is not value-free and objective but rather values are made explicit, including and especially the values of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

5.4.1. Role of the researcher

As the researcher, I too form part of the context. Particularly, in two important ways: the process of interviewing will be affected by my presence – both in terms of the questions asked and also my responses – the nature of the conversation will be coloured by my participation in it. I come to the research process embedded in a history and a social context. The other influence is that the conversations will be analysed by me. "Knowledge emerges as an on-going self-referential construction" (Fruggeri, 1992, p. 40) and so any themes and ideas that I punctuate will in some way reflect something about my relationship to the issues. I need to be aware of my own assumptions that I bring to the research process, as the search for reality is informed by epistemology (Keeney, 1983).
My assumptions are therefore an integral part of process. I have tried to construct these assumptions in chapter one and summarise them at the beginning of the next chapter. The first chapter shows my experiences and many of my ideas around home, belonging and alienation. This chapter was written after I had conducted the interviews with the participants, but before the process of analysis. The ideas are therefore those which I bring to the research process from my own context, possibly having been influenced by the conversations with the participants. These ideas stand as the lens through which the data will be analysed, and in making this explicit, the reader can see that the analysis does not stand as objective fact, but rather as a construction and co-construction with the participants. At no point do I attempt to corroborate my ideas as correct by reference to the participants. Rather, I search for a resonance with and dissonance from the ideas, and allow them space to breathe on their own (Morse, 1994).

There is an attempt to flatten the hierarchical relationship germane to modernist research context. It is the researcher that initiates the research and invites the participant to join. It is also the researcher that initially determines the issue to be considered. Yet through the process the researcher makes space for the voice of the participants, giving it equal validity. I will attempt to facilitate the emergence of the meanings through a co-constructing process. The aim is not to prove the ideas of the researcher, but allow for different notions around the issue at hand to emerge (Burr, 1995).

Language is central to the process of social construction. As the researcher, I am aware that the language I use determines some of the direction that the conversations with the participants take. At the same time these words, for example, 'home', which is an emotively powerful word, are not reflections of an objective reality. Instead, I attempt to allow the participants meanings around the language used to emerge (Steir, 1991).

To follow these ideas into the realm of writing, I will write with the notion of what Tierney (2000) calls 'embodied construction'. Having spoken about the active and constructive role that the researcher plays in the research process, I will own these constructions in the writing process. Tierney goes on to say that there has been a change concerning the use of the first person pronoun in texts. Researchers have moved beyond the assumption that the tenable way to present research is by
authorial absence or through the third person. This study has therefore been written clearly from the position of the first person, using the pronoun 'I'. Tierney also suggests that what must accompany this voice is a reflection of the author's own vulnerability, identity and an engagement in the process.

5.4.2. Academic

Another context that comes to bear on this study is the fact that it is an academic study. In fact its very purpose is an academic one. As much as the topic and process is one in which I have personally involved myself and have chosen to explore an issue important to me, it needs to satisfy the requirements of an academic work and the people involved in its evaluation.

5.4.3. Zeitgeist

Pertinent to the topic of this study are ideas around the larger context in which all of this happens. This is referring to the epistemologies and narratives surrounding the study. Reason, 1994, discusses the stories in which Western thought has been embedded – that the predominant worldview has been positivist and modern. He points out that this has a separating and an alienating effect; even the emergence of postmodernism can tend to be an extension of the alienation of modernism. He speaks about a move toward a participative world-view and how research itself can be a part of healing alienation.

The participants and their meaning systems are informed by the larger zeitgeist. These ideas have been explained in the previous three chapters. As mentioned before (Ch 3) we live in a time where people subscribe to and speak the languages of different epistemologies at the same time. I will listen for the implicit and explicit echoes of these epistemologies.

5.4.4. Participants

Qualitative sampling is driven by the desire to illuminate the questions and to uncover multiple realities. It concerns itself with information richness. Participants are selected who the researcher thinks would bring richness to the study (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). The participants will therefore be selected, not randomly, but specifically. I will make
explicit the ideas around the choices. This explication broadens the context in two ways: it develops the meanings that the researcher has around the issues, and it clarifies the relationship the participants have to the issues in the mind of the researcher. This is also relevant to the process of inquiry and analysis.

In setting out to select the participants I was not too concerned with finding the right people. My assumption was that experiences of alienation and belonging is likely, in some way, to be a part of any person’s experience. At least any person who experiences life within a Western context or world view. I therefore sought people whom I had a sense would provide information richness. This could be presented in the story they had to tell, the sense that I had of them as to their relationship with these concepts, their ability to express these ideas, either through eloquence or simply that the richness will speak through their story (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

For this reason 3 of the 5 participants are people that I know and for me had particular resonance with these issues. This is also perhaps why 4 of the 5 participants are Jewish. The 3 mentioned above, Natalie, Trevor and Rabbi Kahn, have some community connection with me on some level. The 4th, Lisa, was recommended to me by a friend to help me transcribe the interviews. The fact that they are Jewish was not of particular significance to me in my selecting them. It turns out that for each of them being Jewish does play a significant role in their narratives and are closely connected to the issues under discussion. I enter the process with a certain understanding around their experiences of Jewishness that they bring and will therefore relate to them from this standpoint. However, as mentioned it was not my particular intention that the majority of the participants be Jewish.

The people who are involved in the study are considered participants and not objectified as subjects. They, together with the researcher participate in a meaning generating conversation. This conversation is around the issues which both parties feel relate to the research. It therefore allows for newness to emerge from either side and is not unilaterally determined by the researcher. Also, it does not just uncover and discover but recognises that the process itself can create meanings. Questions are also interventions which may perturb and the conversation could do so for both parties (Neuman, 1997; Tierney, 2000).
5.4.5. Co-constructions

Identity is developed and expressed in relationship, therefore the ideas that the participants speak should be considered as expressing the 'I' they come to know within the matrix of their relationships. It should also be considered that this expression is one which is performed within the relationship of the researcher – participant relationship and does not necessarily represent views that would emerge in the context of another relationship. Neither the researcher nor the participants are expected to leave the research context unchanged. It is a space in which both are invited to develop their ideas through the engagement in conversation.

5.5. Process of inquiry

The inquiry takes the form of a semi-structured interview. Fontana and Fey (2000) say that this type of interviewing style provides a greater breadth of data than structured interviews. A semi-structured interview enables an exploration of the participants' meanings around the issues. It takes the form of a conversation that meanders around the issues of home, alienation, identity and other relevant issues that emerge. The process allows for the participants' ideas, beliefs, perceptions and meanings to emerge. New ideas are also be pursued and explored as my assumptions are a guide and not a set of necessary questions (Harre, Smith and Van Langenhove, 1995).

The context of the interview is one in which there is a sense of participation in a conversation by both the researcher and the participant. The researcher is not deemed the expert. Indeed the interview is an active process of participation leading to a co-created set of meanings (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

The conversations are tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions then become a text that is analysed in the context of my memories of the conversations. The transcriptions of the conversations are available on a 3.5” diskette that accompanies the study.
5.6. Process of analysis

The aim of the analysis is for the researcher to become immersed in the texts of the interviews and to engage the texts in a process of analysis (Flick, 1988). Through the engagement of the text themes emerge that are relevant and that add richness to the study. Other themes may emerge, but only those most relevant, as the researcher sees it, are a focus. There is therefore much knowledge dormant in the text. The process of analysis is done through the lenses of the researcher together with the texts and memories of the research conversations. The themes that emerge are therefore considered to be constructions and not the true interpretation of the text (Janesick, 2000).

The analysis does not see the themes as reified constructs that are necessarily a part of each narrative. Rather they are themes that emerge as social constructions in the researcher’s engagement with the process. Therefore there is a focus on the local meanings generated within the conversations and the process around this generation. They are not then considered to be concrete categories that exist for the participants. They are categories that for the conversation and research are useful. Hopefully they can continue to be useful beyond the study for researcher, participants and readers (Gergen, 1999).

The conversations which become transcribed and take the shape of written text do not stand to represent the truth of the reality presented, but rather it is constructed by the participants and stages of interaction. It is a text developed through different stages: the conversation, thought about by me and begun with the ideas of a semi-structured interview, then a conversation co-created by me and the participant, a tape-recorded copy of the conversation, a transcription of the tape recording and my reading into the text with my memory of the experience as I make punctuations, interpretations and express them in writing. These memories and interpretations are carried out with the goal in mind of the emerging ideas serving the dissertation. This is like the choice of scenes selected to further a plot in a movie described in chapter 1 (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The process of analysis is not considered separate to the discussion of the data. The rich discussion around this process is in and of itself a constructing, analysing and interpreting process. The process of writing is also considered an interpreting
process through which the researcher constructs new meanings around the texts (Gergen, 2003).

5.7. Process of writing – the movie metaphor

Richardson (2000) writes that writing itself is a method of inquiry. As with language, it is not a reflection of the reality researched, but rather itself is a creative process of thinking, analysing and constructing. A postmodern text is able to speak with different voices that reveal, or rather, construct multiple facets of the issues and the author (Gergen, 2003). A text tells a story, and the telling of a story inevitably involves a choice of what will be amplified and what silenced, what will enrich the discussion and what detract from it (Tierney, 2000).

I have therefore chosen the metaphor of a movie for the writing of this study. A movie automatically is an acknowledgement that the viewer will engage with that which the camera presents. The director makes a choice as to which will be shot and together with the editor, which scenes will survive to tell the tale. The director also constructs the scene, acknowledging the constructed nature of knowledge and not the essential truth. It allows for many different actors to bring different voices and to be transformed through their interaction with each other. It seems a fitting way to construct a postmodern text.

I would like use the voice of my personal reflections to indulge in the presentation of two quotes that highlight important elements that connects this chapter to the next:

*Its strange... very strange properties emerge from the simple fact that one's 'reply' is always to possibilities 'shown' or indicated in the 'call' or 'gesture' of an other... thus one's reply is never wholly one's own... it is always, to an extent, 'shaped' by the others who have 'called' it out... Let me explore this further:* - John Shotter, The Social Construction Our Inner Lives.

*If we see knowing not as having an essence, to be described by scientists or philosophers, but rather as a right, by current standards, to believe, then we are well on the way to seeing conversation as the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood.* - Richard Rorty, Contingency, Irony and Solidarity.
Chapter 6

The search for home:
A dialectic of alienation and belonging

My wound is geography, it is also my anchorage, my port of call. – Pat Conroy

My assumptions as I enter this research process are that each person inhabiting this world would like to find home on some level and in some way; that he or she would like to experience life from within that space as opposed to a space that carries a sense of being displaced, uncomfortable or alienated. My sense is that alienation and belonging are intimately related, are different sides of the same coin and hence have a dialectical relationship. As one moves out of the experience of one side, one moves into an experience of the other. As one searches for their way of being in the world, for home, at the heart of this search is the process of negotiating alienating and belonging.

My epistemological assumptions have been outlined in the previous chapters. Particular note should be taken of the social construction of identity and the other concepts mentioned. They should not be reified as reflections of essential truth, but seen as artefacts of social context, dialogue and discourse. These conversations and the analysis of them are themselves activities that construct.

I also enter the research process with certain questions. The first is to be aware of these assumptions through the process and to see how they colour the formulation of my questions, the dialogue and construction process. Could it be that people are not concerned with finding home in any way? Are home and belonging one and the same? Is alienation an exclusively negative state? Is home simple, as the word seems to beg, or is it complex? How does our experiencing of alienation and belonging affect the way we make meaning in that situation? What is the connection between this process and identity?
These broad assumptions and questions should be read together with and arising out of the description in chapter one of the themes of alienation and belonging as they have run through my own life. Together they provide the context from which the study arises.

6.1. Introducing the participants

It was with these assumptions that I set about selecting participants for the study. I would like to introduce the participants, what drew them to me and as part of the introduction, highlight one strand in their narrative that connects them to the idea of the search for home. This is not the only theme in their narrative but one which will serve to broaden the participant’s introduction. This will still be echoed in other themes that emerged from the interviews. I will discuss these themes after each participant has been introduced.

6.1.1. Natalie – playing off key: the struggle to be...long

Natalie is 27 years old. I have known Natalie for many years, always slightly from a distance; never as my own friend, but as a friend’s sister and my wife’s cousin. She came to mind quickly when I began to consider the issues of alienation and belonging. I was looking for someone who did not have a particularly extraordinary story of alienation, yet for whom the issues were pervasive. Natalie had always struck me as someone who struggled overtly with these issues in her everyday life. Even though the purpose of this study is not to generalise findings to other people, and the knowledge constructed is considered local to this context, Natalie had for me represented an amplification of the struggle that any person could experience.

One of the dominant themes that runs through Natalie’s talking is that for her a constant struggle is to have her voice heard. Hearing her voice gives her a sense of her existence. This for her is struggling to belong. The way that Natalie gets her voice heard is by taking a position contrary to the dominant voice in the group. This very process of trying to belong has the effect of separating her.

...maybe what is different becomes your fundamental you because you need to separate yourself from home ...I don’t know. I’ve always
had this thing of I've always had this need, and I don't know if I have created it or not, but I have always needed to be a little bit different. Or it's just the way it's gone. So if I'm in a crowd of very religious people, I'll be a little less religious. Or if I'm in a crowd of very anti-religious, I'd be very religious!

She lives in a paradox: the very process of trying to achieve belonging is intimately tied to alienation. The way of making her voice heard and hence getting a sense of being and belonging is by standing separate.

Natalie: You know what, I think it's an independence thing. I think it connects me to myself. You are not part of this, you are your own person. So if you are kind of the other side you are you. Even if you are not. Even if I am the same side, it allows me to feel like I am myself.

Darren: What do you mean? Even if you are the same side as everybody else?

Natalie: So say I am as religious as everyone else, but by being as religious as everyone else I feel like I am being generalised, I feel like I am in a grouping. And just to allow me not to be in a grouping I do it differently. And it might not be truly who I am, but it allows me to separate myself.

Darren: You feel like engulfed in a sense, lost in a group if you ...

Natalie: Possibly. I don't know if I have thought of it so consciously. But I am just thinking subconsciously that's possibly what I am doing because I don't like groupings. I've never actually. I remember even when I was young saying “I'm not going to be in that group; I'm not going to have a best friend; I'm not going to do...I'm going to be the same to everyone”.

Part of her quest to belong is to live in a world where everyone can belong. She constantly tries to make place for people and ideas that are marginalised. She puts herself into this process by herself taking on the standpoint of the marginalised
voices in order to show it. This often has the effect of Natalie sensing herself as alienated in that context.

But in a group I don’t like to be quiet, I like to be heard. And often, taking the opposite view allows it. Definitely. Then, the other thing is that I naturally want to kind of even the playing field. I always want to do that! If people are saying one thing I don’t like for that to be standard because I know there are always people on the other side.

To get her voice heard she sometimes plays a dissonant note in the orchestra, it can be off key even for herself. But in that way she is sure to be audible, to get a sense of her being and belonging.

6.1.2. Trevor – the Greek hero: bearing the seeds of his own alienation

Trevor is 31 years old and was the first person whom I interviewed. He volunteered to participate. I had thought of speaking to him because he stood out for me in a similar way to Natalie. But I had not yet decided to ask him to participate. We were talking about the ideas of the study, when he said that they are central to his life and would like to participate. (I thought that such a willing participant was a good place for me to start).

Trevor had recently broken off an engagement and was being very introspective and reflective. He was looking for ways to make meaning of his situation and for what he considered a healing context in which to do this. Much of Trevor’s talking is refracted through the light of his recent heartbreak.

It seems that a theme which has coloured much of Trevor’s living is this word davka. It is a Yiddish word and is one of those that loses its nuance in the translation. An attempt would be to say that it means acting contrary or otherwise just for the sake of it. Trevor describes making many of his decisions, which have had real consequences, from the space of being davka. It has operated to keep him, much to his own surprise, separate from many things that he believes he is close to.
In a sense, and whether this is true or not, again it's what I perceive, in one way or another I have always felt myself to be at a greater or lesser extent, alienated from number one, my family. Number two, my friends and social group, my youth movement that I attend, ja, like I'd be a part of it and I'd be a part of everyone but I would be separate.

Trevor identifies this struggle from as far back to being at school to the way it could have played a role in his break up with his fiancé:

School:
Ja. And I mean I'm best when I give of myself voluntarily and not when I'm asked to be given. And that definitely is me also because I have a tendency of wanting to be davka - definitely I went through my high school career like that.

Break up:
So there was that and I think this is where the – and I'm not sure whether this is my tapestry, which is what was foremost in my mind the whole time, was that am I doing this because I'm like self-mutilating and self-destructing like I want to get there but I won't allow myself to get there and everyone loves her and she's the greatest but I'm not going to go with what everyone else says, I'm going to be opposite to that...

When Trevor speaks about what home would look like for him, he longs for a space in which he can relate to people unfettered by this dynamic, from a space of clarity from which to communicate and make decisions. That is without the element of being davka.

6.2.3. Rabbi Kahn – the hearth of the matter

I was drawn to Rabbi Kahn (45 years old) for two reasons: the first is that the sense I have had of him is that he has always struggled with the notion of belonging, with finding a place for himself in the world where he can live passionately according to
his beliefs and do so with the people that he loves and are important to him. Also to find a space in the world where he can embrace his beliefs without too much dissonance from competing contexts that impinge on his preferred context. This space of belonging is one in which people live with a deep sense of respect for one another.

The second reason that I was drawn to Rabbi Kahn is that I have experienced the complexity of his thinking and incredible eloquence and I thought this would add to the richness of ideas with which to work.

For Rabbi Kahn the hearth of the matter is indeed the family. He begins speaking by saying that everything for him is connected to God, both at the centre, and all things are contained within God. The practical manifestation of this seems for him to be family. He speaks about family being the place of home on two levels: what he believes the ideal should be and his personal experience.

When he speaks in the ideal sense, he says that one's goal should be for family to be home. He says that it should be the place from where one gains one's identity, shelter from alienating relationships, unconditional love and learning about interaction. Yet at the same time, it is not only and always these things, but a process of learning to achieve them:

Peace emerges. Peace emerges out of friction. Peace emerges out of differences. And a family doesn't have to be homogenous to be peaceful. In fact I think the opposite. The more varied and different the people in that family are, the greater the kaleidoscope of different colours and that. So you don't have to have that initial harmony. There has to be harmony at the end...that it has to be all sort of harmonised.

On the second level, when he speaks personally about the alienation he feels because he is a rabbi, he speaks about the only real space where he can find a sense of home is with his family, because it is not plagued with the issues inextricable with his role. It is important for him to be able to grow the space in which he is able to experience his family as home. He speaks about learning to
filter the fragmenting elements that disrupt the sense of belonging out of the sphere of family.

6.2.4. Lisa – normalcy: the tyranny and the stability

I met Lisa (28 years old) because I was looking for someone to transcribe my interviews. We immediately struck up a relationship in which we could speak comfortably with each other. She did not tell me until part way through the interview, although I had a suspicion, that she was gay. She told me how she related strongly to the ideas that she had heard while transcribing the interviews. She, like Trevor, volunteered to participate. She said to me that she felt she had a lot to offer because the search for home and identity was the central theme in her life.

Lisa describes the place where she begins life, her family, as being replete with images of home as simplicity, love, consistency and normalcy. Her experiences of alienation are all a departure from this, are all a journey out of this into difference. The ultimate experience of alienation, when she realises that she is gay, turns her notions of home on their head and challenges all her connections to those things that bring her belonging – friends, family and a life that she expected to be normal. Her quest is to remake home around her difference.

This particular leg of the journey begins like this:

Lisa: I cried for three days solidly... at the realisation that this could move forward into a relationship, I cried for three days.

Darren: Are you serious? What was the crying about?

Lisa: The crying was about I wanted a “normal” life with the husband and children and I didn’t want to give that up. As I said, I have come from an amazing marriage, an exceptional love, like a real love and I have always seen what my mother and father have had and I always wanted that. My mom and dad are a complete fairy tale – they met when my mom was 13, my dad was 15, they got married at 21 and 23
and they are now 56 and 54 or something and have been married ever since. I mean that is a lifetime of love and I always wanted that.

Lisa struggled with the idea that she might be gay. She was afraid that she had always lived within a 'normal' life, and now all that marked home for her would be lost. She and her girlfriend struggled within this secret that they shared, both afraid of the alienating consequences of 'coming out', afraid that they would be rejected by everyone close to them. Her girlfriend was Greek Orthodox and her family would not be understanding. Lisa was not afraid of outright rejection from her family, but was afraid of disappointing them. She was afraid of rejection from friends and struggling with integrating a gay identity into the rest of her life for people to see.

At one point Lisa tried to emigrate with her family to Australia to get away from her girlfriend. She thought that that perhaps would free her from this potentially alienating identity she had acquired together with her. The emigration only fed the space of alienation and coloured the entire experience of being in Australia in hues of despair and loneliness.

Lisa eventually came back to South Africa to tend to the reality she could not escape. This began a journey from being afraid of difference to enjoying and celebrating being different.

But I think that what it is is that people who have a story to tell are more interesting than people who don't I suppose. And it is just nice to identify with a group of people who are different, prepared to go out on a limb, who are prepared to stand on the outside of society which takes guts, and now that sense of alienation that was so threatening to me has been completely embraced. But it is also because I have realised that I can exist within the world and be gay. I am not alienated. My entire family knows, my grandmother knows, all my friends know. I have lost maybe one friend.

Lisa reinforces this when she says:
But anyway I am very...it’s amazing what a sense of...it was such a sense of shame, it really was shame, and a fear of shame, of who I had become and it has turned into such a sense of pride. Gay pride is something I never understood and even to this day, even gay male pride which is in your face and loud and proud, and that kind of thing, I still balk at and find offensive. **But I am very proud to be gay. I am very proud of being different** (emphasis mine).

6.2.5. Carl – red rover red rover...home is always over

Carl (40 years old) was in political exile for many years during the Apartheid years. What drew me to finding someone who could speak about experiences of political exile was the particular complexity that I perceived to exist around the relationship to home. While doing my internship, I encountered two people who had these experiences. That is where it struck me as to how complex these issues could be.

The story of meeting Carl

I had just about abandoned the search (which had only actually begun safely in my head) for someone to talk to who had experienced some form of political exile.

The university was empty and I took a slow walk to the bookshop to see if there were any new books in that would help me write this study. On the way back I passed this person walking on crutches. I was playing with the idea of whether I felt bad or not walking quickly passed someone who was hobbling along, when he stopped me to ask me for some help. He noticed that I was Jewish and asked me what I felt about Germans. Before I could answer him (by asking a question) he stopped me again and said that he would take the answer to be instructive. He had just lived in Germany for 10 years and now, back in South Africa, he was having trouble relating to white people especially the “Boer” at the gate. Some sentences down the line he mentioned being in Norway for 4 years and also some things the ANC had done. The chime in my head became a psychedelic cacophony of bells.
I asked, and he said he had been. I asked, and he said that he would. I was standing in front of Carl, who had been in political exile. He said that he would be prepared to tell me his story as a participant in this study.

Carl called me later that day to say how grateful he was that I had stopped when he asked, had walked slowly along with him and that he had already begun thinking because it would be the first time that he would have the chance to tell his story. It made me think of the connecting effects of simple gestures.

Two Fridays later I went to his house and listened to his story, which in some way and in some distant dimension completed a silent side of the story of my home as a white South African.

Carl was 15 years old on June 16 1976, and he was in the right place at the right time. He joined the struggle to make his home home. He left home to make his home home and now he struggles over what home is. I learned from Carl how our experiences inform our notion of home.

After my discussion with Carl I was walking around in a daze, trying to comprehend as much as possible of the story I had just heard and understand all the implications it was generating for me about the world we live in, how different the experience of it for each of us is, what people are capable of doing to each other, what the implications for home, alienation and belonging could be...

The following is something which happened the next day. It serves to broaden an explanation of the way in which the theme has crossed my path and entered my life.

[A completing interjection - weekend with a theme

Between that Friday and the next day, it became for me a weekend with a theme:

Still a bit overwhelmed I walked into shul (synagogue) the next morning to find two black guys sitting in my seat. There is a yeshiva (academy of Jewish learning) in Cape Town that imports young men from Israel to study there. I looked twice, but assumed that they were from there and in Johannesburg for a holiday. After shul they were standing around, not speaking to anyone.
and looking very unsure. So, I went up to them to introduce myself, invite them for lunch and generally see if I could help them with their lost looks.

Their English was very broken and to my complete surprise they could not speak Hebrew – evidently they were not from Israel. They weren't from Cape Town and they had only been in South Africa for 3 weeks. Now, I was curious and a little nervous. They were not here on holiday. It took me a few moments to realise what was going on and who they were. I'm not sure exactly how to say this but standing in front of me were two Jewish Ethiopian refugees.

As we walked back to my parent's house for lunch, still reeling from surprise, I was asking questions, desperately trying to understand. By the time we were sitting together around the table we had begun to piece together this incredible story. First their names – thinking that we would not be able to pronounce their Aramit names , one gave his Hebrew name, Ya'acov and the other an abbreviation of his own name: Mula. Ya'acov and Mula, about seven months ago were drafted into the Ethiopian army to join a war that no one feels too passionate about.

For three thousand years there have lived an isolated community of Jews in Ethiopia. They knew not that there were other Jews anywhere. They thought they were alone in the world and they had but one real hope...dream...neither of these words are strong enough – to return to the land of Israel. In so doing to transform fate into destiny and to come home.

In the past half a century Israel made contact with these Jews and started bringing them home. 5000 Jews remain, as economic ransoms. The hope continues...

How could these boys fight and die in a tired war, which was not really anyone's war. Denied their freedom to make aliyah (going up to Israel), they decided to try and escape from military school before they were sent to the front line. Which they did, and made it across the border into Kenya. There is one shul in Nairobi. The rabbi there gave them some money and told them to get out of Kenya because if they were caught they would have everything taken away from them. So they crossed the border into Tanzania. They didn't know their way around and, running scared, they were caught and imprisoned. In jail they were tortured because they were Jewish.
Ya'acov had been carrying with him a small Torah that had been his father's. In prison it was taken from him and burned.

_If you think burning a flag is bad. The Torah carries the soul and the survival of the Jewish people. It was his father's. It was gone. He was standing in front of me and telling me this. I felt that it was impossible for me to exist at the same time as this. Their story belongs in the annals of heroic history or in fantasy. Where was the separating wall of time or TV?_

After 20 days they escaped from the prison and made their way south. Not really knowing where they were going, only looking for some refuge and ultimately a way to Israel. They travelled sometimes hiding in cattle trucks, sometimes disguising themselves as Muslims and not sitting next to each other so as to give away their accents, sometimes on foot, dodging wild animals.

They eventually ended up in Mozambique. Someone said to them: there are Jews in South Africa. They had no idea of where other Jewish communities around the world were. So they made their way to Johannesburg.

It took them 47 days from Ethiopia to reach Johannesburg. In Johannesburg they seem to have slept the first couple nights on the streets of Hillbrow. On one of these days they came across a building. On the outside of this building there was a Magen David (Star of David). I think that it is the Lion's shul in Doornfontein. They went into the building and found no one there at first and then it sounds like they came across a caretaker. He tried to direct them to some of the Jews from that shul. But they weren't successful.

That Friday night they returned to the building with the Magen David. It was a Friday night Shul service. They got talking to someone that they referred to as Mr Alan. Mr Alan wanted to get them a place to sleep and so offered to put them up in a Formula 1 Hotel. This was too much for them: they come from rural Ethiopia, where high-rise grass huts are not yet in vogue. So, Alan has a friend who owns some unused houses in Yeoville. He opened one of the houses for them and that's where they are staying now. Alan brought them to West St shul the next day. This is the shul that I attend, but I was away that week. The next week Ya'acov and Mula came back to the shul, Alan was away and that is where we walked into each other's lives.
Their hope was to get to Israel. For now they were stuck in South Africa, far away from their family and anyone who could speak Aramit. They had no legal documentation. Alan had taken them to the Zionist Federation which may be able to help them. They embarked on a process, which is likely to take a long time: they have to find witnesses who can testify to their being Jewish in order for Israel to take them in automatically.

Sitting around the lunch table, something touched me deeply, possibly because it drove home to me the distance that these two had come. I asked them about the food that they are used to. They said that when they eat at home, everybody sits around a large piece of malawach type bread. Everybody pulls pieces off and dips it into what is in the middle. Here they were eating with knives and forks, each person eating her own portion at a separate place. They were still not used to the knives and forks. For me, this contrast of styles was a metaphor for their isolation.

Between meeting Carl on Friday and Ya'acov and Mula on Saturday, it certainly was a weekend with a theme: the search for home.

Carl was born in South Africa in 1961, the midst of the Apartheid era. He was born into a home, a country, that he could not call home because, being black, it would not allow him to make it such.

And then there was no thinking about going to Wits, because Wits was for Whites. And so I had to go to the University of the Western Cape. Wits was 10kms away from me, but I had to go 1600kms away. Such things had also started...

He decided to leave South Africa to fight for its transformation into a place he could call home.

Darren: So did you know that getting involved meant leaving the country?

Carl: Definitely. It definitely meant that, and it also definitely meant coming back.
Darren: So you left with the idea that your focus was always to come back in some way.

Carl’s description of exile was of an experience where he found incredible growth, education and belonging, yet he had his focus always on returning home to South Africa with the dream of being integrally involved in contributing and making it a better place.

Basically also, you discover that even if you do not go back to South Africa you will never be happy there (in Europe), because everything has been achieved.

When it is time for him to return home, he loses the connections and context that has sustained his identity for 18 years. In the moment when his dream of returning home is achieved, he loses that sense of home. Carl feels that he has been unable to contribute to the process of building South Africa. There has been little opportunity for him to share the expertise that he has gained while in exile. His dream of contributing does not have an automatic place to breathe in South Africa.

For Carl South Africa will always be home, but his experiences here have been frustrating. He finds that he is considered uneducated and looked down upon. On a social level, he finds the conversations in the bars inane. This makes him long to marry someone from Norway, someone he feels will understand him and relate to him while living in South Africa and contributing.

For Carl, home has always been and remains where he is not, he is able to touch elements but to reach it, it remains elusive.

6.2. Construction of the emerging themes

The research conversation is, like any dialogical exchange, a co-created meaning making context or as Shotter (1993) would call it, ‘joint action’. Rorty (1989, p. 389) says, “If we see knowing not as having an essence, to be described by scientists or philosophers, but rather as a right, by current standards, to believe, then we are
well on the way to seeing conversation as the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood (emphasis mine).

The themes are not categories that inhere in the text waiting to be revealed, but rather are constructed through the joint conversation and my subsequent rereading of the text. The themes are therefore not exhaustive as there is much other knowledge that could be constructed, were the analysis done by a different person, with different assumptions or for a different purpose (Gergen, 2003). The purpose of discussing these themes that are constructed is not to reduce the conversations to discrete categories. The themes are all interrelated and do overlap. The purpose is to create a richer understanding of the issues at hand and provide a greater domain of conversation (Janesick, 2000).

I will also not necessarily describe each theme with reference to each of the participants. Not each participant touched on each theme and even if they did, I will present that which adds richness to the discussion.

6.2.1. Close to home – centrality of the notion

In each of the participants’ conversations they indicated that the notion of finding home has been important and a central theme for them. Each person’s notion of home is unique. At the same time they each relate to something that they refer to as home. The use of the word home resonates for them as a description for an important space in their lives.

I made an attempt not to impose this idea, but rather wanted to see to what extent it emerged as important for each person, or each person saw it as something central to their living. However the participants knew what the topic of the study was and this may have contributed to their prioritizing the ideas, or at least framing their ideas within this language. This framing then is also a constructive process for the participants as they come to re-language their experiences and construct meaning in this way. For Lisa the language was not in any way new and she speaks about the words ‘home’, ‘alienation’, ‘belonging’ and ‘identity’ as being a familiar way for her to make meaning of her experiences.
The language and categories resonated strongly with each person. They found it useful to speak in those terms and allow other unstoried experiences to find a voice. It also seems to me that moving forward they will find this way of speaking useful to negotiate experiences of alienation and belonging.

**Trevor**

I had previously discussed the ideas of the study with Trevor and from that conversation he enthusiastically volunteered to participate. He immediately gives an explanation for this:

> Because I think for me that's been a theme of my adulthood, searching for home. The question is what is home, how do you define home. Is it something physical, is it something spiritual, is it an incorporation of both of them...I think looking back now the theme for my adulthood has been the search for that place.

Exploring further, Trevor says that the theme has actually been central to his life even before adulthood. It has always been characterised by a pervasive sense of being alienated from the spaces where feels he should belong:

**Darren:** Trev, looking back you say your adult years have a theme of alienation, is this the pinnacle of that in a sense, or is it part of that?

**Trevor:** Um, I think – I don’t know, I think it’s probably both. In a sense, and whether this is true or not, again it’s what I perceive, in one way or another I have always felt myself to be at a greater or lesser extent, alienated from number one, my family. Number two, my friends and social group, my youth movement that I attend, ja, like I’d be a part of it and I’d be a part of everyone but I would be separate.

**Lisa**

Lisa also explicitly sees this as a theme that has pervaded her life. She speaks about coming from a family that provides a sense of being ‘normal’ and conventional. Everything is set up in her life for her to continue in that vein – from her family, to her school, to her friends and the places that she lives. She lived in
the same suburb as her school and when they moved house it was only to the neighbouring suburb. Yet her experiences do not seem to have followed that path—from anti-Semitism in primary school, to dressing differently and enjoying different things from her friends to realising that she is gay.

Lisa: Well that's interesting that you raise it. Because the other reason why all of this spoke to me so much is I can so clearly identify with a sense of belonging. My whole life has been about wanting to fit in. And it hasn't just... I thought in some ways that that was just an adolescent phase and you're a teenager, you wanna belong, you wanna fit in, you wanna look cool. You know. But I learned subsequently that it really wasn't. So I do, I agree with that completely. I think...

Darren: Do you think...would you say that that's like a theme in your life?

Lisa: Definitely! Okay, let me stop hedging...the biggest thing in my life...I'm just laughing at you nodding your head...it's a huge thing in my life. It started when I was very young. The first example I have – I am going to digress and we can come back to the Sydney thing and the belonging and all of that...

Rabbi Kahn

For Rabbi Kahn the search for home is centred around his family and his efforts to make his home into a home for himself and his family. This is a central feature of his life and the struggle to do what is best for his family within the context of community and the demands of the world outside of family.

It's also a matter of like creating that balance. To realise that whatever you are doing is ultimately finding a way to come home. So you might need to leave the home but you're always circling the home, trying to find your way back.
Carl

The theme from Carl's narrative above highlights the centrality of the notion of home for Carl. It is something that he is continually chasing, it is a continual struggle. For Carl the level of the search keeps shifting. As he loses home on a physical level and leaves South Africa he is able to find it among people, in the interaction and education. However, when he finds home again on a physical level and also on the level of his aspirations, he loses home in the identity that he leaves in Europe. He doesn't have the same experience with people in South Africa. He lives in the space between the two, making it a dream to bring the homes together. But sensing the impossibility of doing that he develops strategies to try and live with both even though they seem so far apart.

Natalie

For Natalie the centrality of the notion of home for her is expressed in her constant struggle. As the above description of her narrative shows, she lives in the eye of the paradox, always wanting to find a sense of home, but sabotaging it in the fear of losing herself by being too similar. And so she pushes herself to the side of being different, standing away from home only in order to try and achieve it.

6.2.2. Notions of home

For each person the notion of home resonated strongly, yet the construction of what home is, is unique. I will show what each participant considers home to be for him or her. Understanding our ideas and what informs them is a complex analysis. I would like to touch on this by highlighting how certain experiences, life histories and expectations of the participants have informed their notions of home.

It is important to note again that these notions of home are constructed within the context of the conversation, and do not necessarily point to fixed ideas that the participants would hold across any situation.
Trevor begins the conversation with a definite idea of what home is for him. Then throughout the conversation he comes back to the notion of home and adds elements or nuances to his understanding. His first description seems to be the core element for him around which he builds. He says that home comes within a special relationship that for him would be served by having a happy marriage:

Trevor

I think it was a matter of saying well I can either continue in this situation, this situation of – I knew this conversation had to get to there because ultimately that’s what I believe home is, home is that heavenly place of contentment and tranquility where one can only get it within a certain framework. I believe many other people would have different visions of that.

Darren

With that framework you mean being married?

Trevor

Ja, within that sort of a framework with one person, and one can truly say that they are at home when they are happy in a relationship, when they are comfortable and there is no...

That for Trevor is the ideal condition, but in and of itself it is not enough. He describes how a factor contributing to breaking off his engagement is that he was not where he would like to have been in other spheres of his life which would allow him to nurture the relationship:

I think a lot of it had to do with the timing issue, again because I wasn’t home, I wasn’t settled at all in my career and I think that for me that’s a very important part of my life, is that I have to know that I am settled, that I can give to someone.

Another important element that Trevor adds is a sense that his life is on-track, particularly his career, and where he could have been had he made different choices. This feeds another important element and that is his sense of control. Control over his destiny and over the direction that his life is taking instead of being at the mercy of destiny:
100%, absolutely, because when I'm in control I don't have to worry about destiny, because subconsciously I'm there.

Looking at the picture that Trevor paints, home is about being in a place where he feels that his life is going right and according to plan. He makes allowances for hiccups, but ultimately he must feel that his life is going according to plan, that he is in control of his decisions and the way that he interacts with people and all this must be in the context of one special relationship. This will all be expressed in a sense of unity he would like to pervade his life:

Darren: How -- right now, like having been through this conversation, what do you -- like you asked questions in the beginning of how you see stuff, emotional, psychological. What would you say home is?

Trevor: Home is physical, it definitely is, but the physical represents independence, it represents space, it represents character, it represents personality.

Darren: The fact that you didn't have all those, you want them.

Trevor: Ja, and that manifested itself in a physical way because one's surrounds, one's common surrounds generally in some sense are manifestations of one's character or personality so you have then got a physical space which contains one's spiritual essence.

Rabbi Kahn

Similar to Trevor, Rabbi Kahn begins talking about home as the achievement of a sense of spiritual unity that carries with it a sense of completeness:

Well. I think everything is sort of Hashem (God) you know what I'm saying? I think Hashem is like the container of family, and everything. So even when you are relating to your family at a level, you are connecting to Hashem at the same time. It's not like you know, there's different compartments. It's all intertwined. Not even
intertwined...it's all part of the same thing. It's a reflection of the same thing.

When he continues to speak about home in the practical sense of achieving this, he focuses on the family:

And at the end of the day, one's ultimate source of nachas (joy and pride) and one's ultimate source of belonging in the human arena is within the context of one's family.

In describing the way that family does this, he speaks about family as being the source of identity and strength and that it should be a “shelter from the outside storm”. Yet he says that the achieving of this is a process that involves allowing for clashes and dealing with differences. People can often still feel a sense of alienation through this process. Part of this process of 'harmonising' the family is one of allowing complexity and difference to breathe.

And shalom bayit (peace in the home) is not only that everybody is at peace with each other, and at one with each other and not fighting. But that you see that as the source of your identity and that you see that as your source of strength and achievement or whatever.

But I think that one has to be careful that one doesn't develop too much of a fortress mentality about the home. You know you have some people that you know the home, and the family, the family, you know everything is like the family. And there's no extension beyond the family. You know I think the walls have to be very porous.

[parents] have to create a family that is not controlling. And where compliance is through wanting to do things. And you know it is not always easy for the parents. And the love that a parent shows is the ability to individuate.
He describes his own struggle with helping his children to individuate. He would like to keep them close, but realises that home is a balance between responsibility to the family and developing an identity outside the family.

Lisa

Darren: Now that you have said all of this, what do you...what is home for you?

Lisa: That is such a hard question Darren. This is why this whole thing appealed to me because it made me think. I have come to the conclusion that you know that old adage slash song that “Wherever I lay my hat that’s my home?” I very much feel like that. That wherever my family is, that’s my home. And right now J (girlfriend) is my family and she is my home and therefore this is my home. I would rather live in Sydney (where my family are), but my home is with J and this is where we have to be at the moment for visa reasons etc. But we wont get into that. I don’t feel that Sydney is home to me more than Joburg, but I feel that I belong more in Sydney at the moment.

This is the conclusion that Lisa comes to be arising out of where she is in her life at the moment. When she tells her story it also begins with family being the place of home. She describes her family as warm and accepting. A context in which she is able to be herself and feel a deep sense of connection at the same time.

Yet the journey from the home as she describes it in the beginning - her family of origin, a place of normalcy - is one which involved anguished soul-searching and alienation. Having journeyed through a riveting change of identity, where her sense of belonging and home was challenged, her expectations of the content of home may have altered, but the experience within the relational matrix has not:

Darren: Is home and belonging the same thing?

Lisa: Yes. I do quite think so. I think home is a space where you belong. That is quite a nice realisation. I hadn’t really crystallised that at all. But yes, home is a space where you belong.
Natalie

Darren: If I had to say a word to you what comes to mind? If I had to say the word “home” to you, what comes to mind?


These words show the again the struggle that Natalie engages in. That place of rest in home keeps eluding her. She speaks about her family being very important to her, yet she feels labeled and categorized, unable to develop new identities in a familiar context. A connection to people is very important, yet she will always be challenging in order to bring the marginalized voice. This she then experiences as having a distancing effect.

Natalie’s sense is that for her to have a sense of belonging she must be able to hear her own voice as distinct from the voices around her. She must experience herself solidly and connect deeply with herself as a prerequisite to immersing herself in relationships.

Well I don’t think you can connect without yourself. You know. Because you can connect with a lot of people but not as yourself. And if you are not connecting as who you are then it’s not a very deep connection. So I think you’ve got to keep defining yourself to yourself. And that’s the independence the whole time.

Through the process of the conversation she verbalized this dynamic and began to question it:

Darren: Of the things that like we’ve spoken about, would you call any of them giving you a sense of home?

Natalie: The things that touch me?

Darren: The things that touch you; the areas that are important to you.

Natalie: I think the people thing and the contact with people is definitely “home” because with “home” the emphasis is on people for sure. I’m
just trying to think if individuality is "home". Maybe it is "home" but a rebellion to "home".

Darren: That's interesting hey. Say something about that.

Natalie: I think it's really, it comes out of being at "home". It's an awareness of being part of "home" and wanting to change that, or ... I'm not saying what I want to say. I can't express this, but it's very significant. It's like a connection to "home" as me, rather than a connection to "home" as "home", as a group.

Darren: Is that when you were talking about having your own voice? Standing apart so you can have your own voice? Is that what you mean by individuality?

Carl

Carl's notion of home is one of multiplicity and diversity.

But I would love for my children to be going to their home simply because their mother would be coming from there. And simply because the diversity is so empowering. Simply alone, the language, alone the fact that my children...the fact that I can speak German and become equal.

He has lived in South Africa and has lived in Europe. He has experienced the two contexts in very different ways, developing a different identity in each. His notion of home needs to provide for this complexity in order to sustain the various identities that he has constructed.

Carl: I can never ... I am simply looking for a Norwegian girlfriend. I am not even looking at anyone else. I can not imagine me being with anyone else than a Norwegian. Because of the Norwegians having experienced having the German experience in them as well. Because I want somebody to think...you know because there is a way of communication, of non-verbal communication....of looking at things...
And the German goes with force...the South African goes with violence, the German goes with force, the Norwegian goes with intelligence.

Darren: K, so you would rather look for a Norwegian girlfriend than a South African girlfriend?

Carl: Absolutely. Because I find them...I need that part of where I have been.

When Carl speaks about home, he speaks about the importance of creating a space for his children that they can experience as home. This home must retain the elements of diversity because in Carl’s experience it has been this that has given him the ability to find spaces of belonging in a difficult life.

6.2.3. Not home alone

Each participant spoke about home for themselves in a different way. I in no way want to privilege some information over others. The themes in their fullness remain as the local experience of each participant. But I would like to punctuate the constructions by drawing together some similarities that emerged from each participant. The purpose of this is not then to generalize these ideas to other people, but to enrich the discussion that emerges.

The first is the important role that people played in achieving a sense of home. Our identities are constructed in relationship. Each person spoke about the way that their notions of home are intimately tied to close relationships. Their sense of home must resonate with the identities that they prefer.

Another theme that runs through the accounts was the central role that family plays. For each person family provides an experience of this close network of relationships. Connected to this is the importance that is placed on a significant other being the closest connection to home. For none of the participants are any of these notions unitary or simplistic, providing only spaces of belonging. But the space is one in which home is most readily experienced.
6.2.4. Histories inform the notion of home

Our ideas are constructed within the context of our lives, history, discourse and relationships. Therefore our ideas of home are intimately related to these processes as are our identities. They do not arise in a vacuum, nor can one necessarily trace a linear causal connection, however, I would like to show how some experiences have informed the notions of home.

For some of the participants, most clearly in Trevor and Rabbi Kahn, the notion of home has a tendency toward being unitary, the journey toward one all-encompassing space. For Carl, though, the very idea of only one space called home carries the potential to be constraining and trapping. For Carl, he speaks about home needing to be fluid, diverse and multiple, allowing him the ability to move from one to the other so as not to get trapped or isolated at home.

This sense can be seen to have been informed by his life story. While in South Africa in his youth, he was constrained by the system of Apartheid and prevented from achieving a sense of home in his birth land. While in Europe, he was always an exile. While this often conferred on him “celebrity status”, it was only because he was an exile. At the same time, however good life was, he knew that he did not belong in Europe. His focus was always to return to South Africa, and he could not live in comfort while there was suffering in the land of his birth. Yet on his return to South Africa, he was not welcomed, hailed as a hero nor even given the space to try and contribute. His dream of home had become an alienated reality. To add to that the identities he had constructed in Europe could not be sustained on his return and he felt that he had lost a part of himself. He therefore felt that he belonged simultaneously in different places, and he needs them both to be whole.

Darren: C, while you are talking it strikes me so much how your idea is informed...how a person's idea of home is informed so much by their experience. Because for you it is so important to have that diversity because that diversity helps you to find a space where you can belong and get rid of a space where you feel alienated.

Carl: Exactly! That’s in a nutshell. And ja, I can tolerate sitting here and having a beer with someone who is talking absolute nonsense, and
then knowing I am going home to sit on the internet. I can go there in a squatter camp and talk to people and no-one can relate to what I want to talk about.

Contrast Carl’s notion of home and Lisa’s. Lisa describes incredible experiences of alienation as she struggles with emigration under difficult and lonely circumstances and in her struggle to live within her gay identity. Yet for her, she journeys through the turmoil to a description of home that is informed by her history of home experiences. Through her struggle, she was launched for the first time into uncertainty around her understanding of home:

Okay, over the last five years I have really had to question what is home for me because I emigrated. And that was a big catalyst. And before that it had never occurred to me – home was very secure.

She describes her understanding of home from coming from her family of origin as a child:

Well I had an exceptionally stable home life...my parents have been married for 30 something years, I have moved from Parkhurst to Greenside, which is one suburb away, and that was traumatic for me because I don’t deal with change very well, but nevertheless it was a very small move. And I have just always had a very, very firm base. So if you had asked me then what home was I would have said very much family and very much that comfort zone that family provides, you know that physical home, bricks and mortar kind of home.

Lisa found that through her times of turmoil these notions were challenged:

Darren: Fear?

Lisa: Fear. Absolute fear.

Darren: Fear for yourself? Was it something you didn’t want?
Lisa: It was something that I really didn't want because I had been brought up to believe that you want a husband and kids and marriage and a white picket fence. So it freaked me out completely. The day I realised that this was heading for a relationship and the day I could articulate that "Oh my G-d I might be a lesbian" ... it's funny when I articulate it like that but anyway.

The questioning process was a trying and alienating period. For Lisa the content of what constitutes family has changed, yet she still draws on the quality of family experience from her youth to provide a template for family today.

6.2.5. Echoes of the double helix – A b L e I E n A g T i N O

The road home is paved with the experiences of alienation and belonging. Our experiences of alienation and belonging form a template in identity construction. As Lisa says:

Ja. The move was very, very big for me, it was emotionally huge because it made me question my entire identity. And I think that's what alienation and belonging ... I haven't worked out how, but I think that identity has everything to do with alienation and belonging.

I have just had experiences in my life of belonging or feeling alienated and I think it has shaped me a lot.

If one can visualise alienation and belonging as forces: one of repulsion and one of attraction, they are the experiences that connect and disconnect, help us find our places in the world and identities in life. I am going to discuss these themes, the spaces of alienation and belonging and the constraining and freeing narratives, as they arise in the conversations with the participants together with the way that the participants make meaning within their experiences of alienation and belonging.

Natalie

Natalie begins by talking about a place that she experiences as one of belonging and that is her work. She works in the training department of a large medical aid company. She speaks about this experience with what seems to me as a tone of
relief and surprise. She does this because there is so much about this work experience that is different to what she imagined the direction of her life would take - both the style of work and the experience of belonging.

I'm helping myself in the world and at the same time I'm helping people in the environment that is a profit organisation, cause I always thought I wanted to be in a non-profit organisation. The truth is, I haven't felt like it's reality. I think this is much more real.

One of the notions to which Natalie has subscribed is that of living as altruistically as possible, always helping other people especially those that are in some way marginalised. Her two previous jobs were an attempt to fulfil this: working in a school as a teacher and working in an employment agency trying to place people in jobs. She found both experiences very unsatisfying. The one reason for this was that even though she was in an environment designed to help people, the people she was trying to give to were not interested in taking from her.

Natalie: Ja, I've worked in a school in London, various schools in London, and I think that's the most incredible job, idealistically, but I hated it.

Darren: Why did you hate it?

Natalie: I didn't relate to the children. I think. I didn't relate to people not taking what I was giving them and doing something with it. Cause there were very few who did.

The experiences she had as a teacher and in the employment agency were in contexts that did not construct Natalie as someone with something worthwhile to share. In her present work, the context is one that allows her to construct an identity she enjoys as useful.

Many times in the conversation Natalie expresses her desire for independence in the way that it gives her a sense of herself. That she is not subsumed within a group and a culture. This is important enough to her to the extent that she will alienate herself in order to avoid this. This need for independence is also supported within the context of her current work. Being in a group, it also another reason for that tone of surprise.
So I'm in a situation where I'm helping people but at the same time, it's not totally out of the goodness of my heart. It's a money-making thing as well, which I actually believe is very important, in helping with the bigger world, with the world out there.

This gives Natalie the both/and of the sense of independence that her 'altruistic' jobs did not and the sense of contributing by helping people who want to be helped and contributing to a useful organisation.

As has already been mentioned about Natalie, she often feels alienated in social situations. In order to belong she feels that she needs to get a sense of herself and to do this she separates her voice from the group. She many times mentions her aversion to groups for this reason. In a social situation she feels that she is always trying to reveal the unsaid, marginalised voice. Especially when people are ignoring it. An example is arguing political issues at a very young age.

Added to this dynamic, part of her aversion to groups, especially familiar groups, is the ease with which they impose labels. This she experiences as a constraint on her identity and is frustrated by the difficulty to change under these constraining constructions. The unfortunate thing is that it is often the groups closest and dearest, such as family and close friends, that carry these lenses.

I've been actually thinking about it a long time. And trying to work out what it is. Part of it is that people here, people at home have defined me. So knowing me...and they've defined me according to them. Which everyone really does, except that they've defined me for 25, 26 years according to who I am so then now, I know who I am but you have got to erase a whole lot before you can start redefining yourself.

Another situation that Natalie finds particularly alienating is around people that she calls arrogant. These people take up more space than is theirs to occupy and insist on defining reality in the situation. In this context she is squeezed out, unable to bring her voice and get that sense of herself that she feels is crucial to her interacting and existing.
When Natalie is in an alienated space, she is unable to look at people through positive lenses and says that she doesn't see the good in people. She is also unable to tolerate people whom she perceives as arrogant or power hungry.

To both the above scenarios, Natalie's response tends toward silence.

I keep quiet cause I don't know what to do. I don't think I react well to it at all. I think I...it's kind of just like a cop-out. Because I don't try and make it better.

Natalie experiences this passive alienation as worse than when she separates herself by bringing a different voice just to be different. In the context of being labelled especially by her family, she feels that she is not able to get across what she would like to. Her eloquence is inhibited because she can anticipate how what she says will be received. In light of those responses she is unable to communicate what she would like to and therefore unable to explore a fuller repertoire of identity.

The one time in her life when she felt free of this was when she spent time living in London. Away from the relational network that knew her and in which she had constructed her identity her entire life, Natalie enjoyed the freedom to take active part in constructing herself instead of feeling a passive receptor of labelling.

Darren: Can you remember a time when you were part of a group entirely and totally and you felt comfortable with that?

Natalie: Can I say in London again?

Darren: Ja, say London again.

Natalie: Definitely. I was very much a part of the same social group and we all went out together all the time. And I loved it. But I think I was kind of part of the creation of the group.

Darren: So you weren't just joining the group or you were lost in the group, you created it.
Natalie: I mean we all created it together at the same time because we were all new in London at the same time. And there were a few Londoners, there were a few South Africans, and ... 

Another space in which Natalie feels that she has a voice is at work. She speaks about being able to not only tolerate, but connect with people that she finds arrogant, materialistic and power hungry. This is a markedly different response to when she is in an alienated space.

They're power vultures, they're disgusting to other people sometimes, you know these people. There's lots of politics going on. And yet because I'm so at ease at work and because I love it so much I can say take it with a pinch of salt and I don't need to talk about them to anyone else, and it doesn't bother me and I still see their good side. And I still think "Geez, but it was really clever what they did".

Through the conversation Natalie decided that she is experiencing this space far more and because of that is beginning to feel less alienated.

So I think you've got to keep defining yourself to yourself. And that's the independence the whole time. And maybe also I don't need it so much anymore and so maybe that's why I am fitting more into the group you know.

Lisa

I have just had experiences in my life of belonging or feeling alienated and I think it has shaped me a lot.

For Lisa, her experiences of alienation have been related to her fear of being different. In most cases it was not just being different that was scary but the possible consequences. The worst of these consequences seems to have been the fear of being rejected because of the differences.

Her first experience of this was in primary school when she had to face anti-Semitism.
But the first time I experienced a sense of belonging, or a sense of alienation was when I was at primary school. I told you I was at ... Primary and my brother and I were the only two Jews in the school. So it's part of my identity, but I call myself traditional, not religious. So there you go. But having said all that it definitely is part of my identity. And when I was in Std 3 I was very persecuted for being Jewish. And I don't actually think it was for being Jewish at all. I think it was for being clever. ... But I think that me being Jewish was what made me different so that's what they had to pick on. And I really...I was horribly persecuted...I was told that I was a smelly Arab and I had left my camel outside, and you know I was a bloody Jew and a bloody this and a bloody that, and when you are 12 or 11, or 10 or whatever Std 3 is...

As mentioned above, Lisa comes from a home which she paints as being suffused with stability and normalcy. For her this created expectations of what life was to hold: not too much change, not being too different from the norm as she understood it, good family relationships and connections with people and achieving well within this context.

Despite these expectations (or maybe in some way because of them?), Lisa describes her entire life as a struggle to fit in. In social situations she dressed differently, was very sporty and had many friends that were male. She speaks about trying hard to dress according to the fashion, but always being uncomfortable with it. I wondered during the conversation if the focus on these experiences of being different were a build-up to telling me that she was gay?

Lisa’s struggle with her sexual identity is the pinnacle of her alienating experiences as she tells it. She began to develop a close friendship with a girl who was gay. It was within the context of this friendship that Lisa began to construct her identity as gay. Many pieces of her story about not fitting in began to make sense to her. In some ways this was the ultimate in being different. With the stigma surrounding homosexuality this also held the ultimate potential for rejection and losing connection with people that were close to her.
We met and just struck up this unbelievable connection, this most incredible friendship and it just grew from there, and that freaked me out completely because I wasn't expecting it. I knew I was tom-boyish and I knew I was sporty, but I always just put it down to that. Never at high school or anything else, did it occur to me that I might be gay. And so this is a complete mind-blow for me. And therein lies the whole sense of a threat of alienation. All of a sudden, the minute I realised I was gay...

Even in the conversation with me, being a religious Jew, Lisa was concerned about the consequences of telling me that she was gay. She began by speaking about other alienating experiences particularly emigrating to Australia first. She described intense alienation in this experience, only later letting on that her struggling with her sexual identity was central to emigration being an alienating experience.

Connected to the stability with which Lisa describes her family, there seems for her to be concomitant expectations.

My parents are really open-minded people and I knew that they would deal with this. I knew that I would always be their daughter, but I did feel that I would disappoint them or fall short of their expectations. So that was where my fear was wrapped up.

Lisa was unsure how to negotiate falling short of these expectations. She was fearful of losing close friends which are important to her. She was uncertain how to take this different identity into the open arena and so she and J (girlfriend) kept their identities away from the eyes of the world. To add to this, Lisa being Jewish was certain that there would be some rejection to go along with trying to maintain a gay and Jewish identity simultaneously. J is Greek Orthodox and was certain of rejection from her family.

In Lisa's struggle with being gay, she tried in many ways to rid herself of this identity. The most extreme was to emigrate with her family and make a life away from J, hoping to reconstruct herself in a different context. This entire experience was wrought with alienation. She was leaving behind the girl that she was in love
with. To compound the pain no-one understood why she was so upset because no-one knew about her relationship. She felt isolated in her pain. In Australia she could not speak to anyone about it and this coloured her entire experience. She was lonely and could not make any connections with people.

It is bizarre...totally, it is a very odd place. And I hated it at first. I really did. But then that was all wound up with a sense of alienation.

With the loneliness and alienation she felt in Australia, Lisa says that she became depressed and even suicidal. She says that this is a pattern that she has noticed. When she is alienated she becomes depressed and begins to spiral out of any connection with people.

Lisa only began to regain her sense of belonging when she came back to South Africa to be together with J. The secretive nature of the relationship intensified the connection that they felt. However, the sense of belonging grew when they decided to ‘come out’ and live their identities in the open. In this space they began to reconstruct their lives together with their friends and family, learning how to negotiate this space with their gay identities.

It was in this contest that Lisa confronted the fear of being different and losing friends. Her experience has been positive. Through it she decided that it was worth estranging one or two people to live honestly amongst friends and family.

I suddenly thought that for me being gay has meant so many examples of alienation, and it meant finding an identity that I could belong with and it meant like really searching for a space that I could belong and a space that I could come home to.

On revisiting the conversations I noticed something that I found interesting. In some way Lisa’s response to the incident of anti-Semitism is similar, on a smaller scale, to her response to becoming gay. First a dread and wishing that she was not different and then developing a sense of pride and coming home within the difference.

I just felt so different for being Jewish. And eventually that built...that kind of bred a pride in me. Jews have been persecuted all my life...all
their lives, and I am no different and I am proud to belong to that. But at the time, as a little 10 year old, it just made me feel really like I didn't want to be Jewish and I didn't want to be different and that sort of thing.

I wondered about the similarity and the pattern. Perhaps it is born out of the dual nature of her family experience: the stability that can be both constraining and strengthening.

**Trevor**

**Darren:** As you said, it like touches a chord deep inside of you and I'm not 100% sure why that it should, you say wherever the place is that you belong, that that's where you feel alienated.

**Trevor:** Ja, it's like why try to be alienated from the places that offer you the most comfort and the most.

**Darren:** Why?

**Trevor:** I don't know, I don't know. You know – maybe it's a – I don't know, maybe it's something in me that I just hold a distance somehow, I just keep a distance.

Trevor defines his quest in life as one of trying to find home and yet managing to thwart his own efforts. He speaks about being alienated from family, friends, his youth movement, religion and God. All of these constitute those things to which he should be closest. The mystery for Trevor is that he is not riven from these things due to some incontrollable calamity or even some overwhelming existential crisis. He says that he just stands separate from them.

Trevor struggles to find an explanation for his alienation. At one point he mentions an idea similar to Natalie’s, that standing apart is a way of maintaining his independence. The explanation he keeps coming back to is the inconsistency in his personality.
Ja, I mean – I don’t know, my personality – I don’t know it’s a very – I think I have a weird personality. I don’t know why I think that but I just think it is not a consistent personality, I don’t find myself being consistent in the way I view life or whatever the case may be. I mean there are times when – I’m not exactly sure how to give practical examples.

When Trevor talks about the process of being alienated, through the conversation he is less concerned with the content of spaces from which he feels alienated and more concerned with what he considers to be uncontrollable personality dynamics. Above I discussed his struggle with being davka. When he is in this space of being contrary he generally feels that he does not have control of his responses and decisions. He seems to feel alienated within the dynamics of his own behaviour.

Together with this he is concerned with the extent to which he responds positively or negatively being contingent on how he feels about himself.

No, ja, but another aspect is that when I feel positive, I feel very positive, and when I feel negative, I feel very negative. I don’t remember being in a position where I just felt balanced, except when I’m in court and then there is nothing else to feel but that.

At another time he says:

But to a large extent my opinions and my responses depend on the circumstances in which it happens so if I’m feeling unsettled and depressed or whatever the case may be, I’m going to respond more than likely in not a very negative way...

Together with this concern for not being in control of his personality and responses, Trevor is concerned that when things are not going well, he is unable to control his destiny, but is in a process that is out of his hands. When things are going well he does not need to be concerned about those processes and is able to be in control.
Ja. Definitely, I think that’s the analysis because I only – I only really think of those issues when things are not in control. But when things are positive and things are happening and I’m working and doing and whatever the case may be, then obviously it’s right, but when it’s not then what the hell is going on.

One of Trevor’s greatest alienating spaces is feeling that he feels that he is not where he should be in his life particularly with regard to his career. He speaks about not taking a year off after school in order to try and get ahead. He then expresses regret at having done that. He is also uncertain as to whether he should have spent time in London because that too may have hampered his career. Through the conversation he says that he struggles with these mistakes but knows that he needs to learn to see them as not throwing him off his path. At the moment his sense is that they contribute to his feeling of alienation because he is not where he could be in his life and career.

Trevor sees the breaking up of his engagement as a step toward him finding a sense of belonging. In his relationship he feels that he gave control of his identity over to his fiancé and began to feel constrained.

I felt that the view that she was trying to push on me was taking away the essence of who I was and that for me was a big issue,...It would have to be something that we would just disagree on but at the end of the day I would have to act according to what she wanted because – ja.

Even though Trevor spoke a lot about his difficulty with his personality, he seems to be reaching a state where he is learning to recognise and control this. Part of the process, he says, is developing close and deep friendships that he struggled to form before. The friendships seem to be providing for him relationships in which to develop his identity in a way that he is more comfortable with himself.

Darren: Do you think you are journeying out of the years of alienation into the years of connection?
Trevor: Ja, I am. The connections are – whereas before my connections might have been many but shallow, superficial, relatively superficial now my connections – the connections that I want to work on are much more deeper, but fewer.

Rabbi Kahn

Darren: If you look back at yourself over the experiences you've had, through your entire life, what have been the biggest obstacles to finding a sense of belonging?

Rabbi: Being a rabbi!

For Rabbi Kahn the primary way that he defines himself and that he is defined in almost any context is the very source of his greatest alienation. It is the role that he chose for himself at a stage of his life and continues to choose. 'Rabbi' is the appellation and role with which all people that he encounters associate him. It is the guise under which he negotiates the fabric of his existence, almost inseparable from his person. And yet it is this which carries for him the greatest space of alienation.

Being a rabbi places him automatically in the lives of many people and often into their most personal spaces. Yet it is always as the rabbi that he occupies these spaces and develops these relationships. Very rarely as the human being behind the role.

But I think on a deeper level, you know what I am saying that with many of the relationships that one forms that you know it's not you. I can say to people "You only want me for my mind". So they think the opposite is your body and it's not that. It's you or me or who I am. And so I think what all rabbis struggle with is developing a network of friends who on the one hand give him the respect of being a rabbi. But on the other hand can allow him to relax and be a person.
Rabbi Kahn would very much like to be able to interact with some people as the person and not as the rabbi. However built into the role is a pervasiveness that makes this difficult. Even if he would like to relax and develop more personal relationships, in that space he feels an obligation to maintain his identity as a rabbi. Even though he may not necessarily want it and would actually prefer to let his hair down, he still feels necessary to monitor the process.

When he enters peoples' most personal moments, often the happiest or saddest, he does so as a vessel or a tool to lend that event meaning. There is an element of belonging in this space yet it is often not personal and can be fraught with sensitivities that make it difficult to negotiate.

Even in everyday mundane living the space is difficult to negotiate. Different people have different expectations which make it hard to know what they will deem appropriate.

I would see somebody in the Hypermarket and I would stop and talk... “How are you doing” whatever...but I didn't realise that there are other people seeing me doing that and for whatever reason are not liking it, either because they would like it to be happening to them, or because when I went past them I just said “Hello how are you”. But I stopped at a lady whose husband had just had treatment for cancer and I thought it would be an opportune time to you know, to talk to her...so I think I am doing a big mitzvah (kindness in this sense) and but on the other hand there is another person saying: “Gee he just passed me. That lady is young and pretty...”

The way that Rabbi Kahn has chosen to deal with the difficulty is by erecting barriers in these contexts. Although this sounds like a further measure that creates alienation, these barriers operate to simplify the space and protect him. It makes the space more defined and in some ways more comfortable.

...and to the point that I have said to people “If I meet you in a public place don't be offended, I will say hello, how are you, and I am going to walk on.”
Rabbi Kahn's second strategy for dealing with this is to make the space at home with his family into one of belonging as mush as possible. He finds that this is the place where he can remove his title rabbi and be a person with a family. At the same time he speaks about the importance of nurturing this space with a balance between drawing identity from home and from outside. Also important to realise is that there is room for differences and disputes.

Another cause of alienation for him within his role is what he refers to as the inverse relationship of power and expectations. Along with many other positions the rabbi has enormous expectations put on him to lead and bring about changes and very little practical power in order to do this. He says that he is always answerable to a system that is constraining and has its own agendas at the same time as inviting him to bring his agenda.

Rabbi Kahn does say that alienation does provide some good. He feels it is a space in which one can be more creative because "part of you is not submerged" when you are together with other people. But this state of alienation is only useful if a person has a degree of choice to move themselves into it for a reason of their choice and then back into the space of belonging.

There are some people who have no choice but to be alienated. And you know, that's all they've got. That's all they've got in their lives. And they don't have a choice to be able to say, "Alright I'm coming back", because they don't have anything to come back to. Those are the people who I think are in a lot of trouble. For us you know we have the luxury of saying "I'm here, but I can take myself out, and I can come back when I have finished".

Although his position of rabbi brings with it alienation, he feels that in some way it is useful for the job.

Darren: In a way the alienation is part of what keeps you connected in a way that you need to be connected.
Rabbi: That’s right. And it draws out that creativity and makes you maybe a little bit more insightful, because it makes you like a fly on the wall. And you not like immersed in the situation. And also it pushes you back onto the family environment... I think the rabbis who have difficulty are the rabbis who are so busy and so involved that they are alienated from both their environments.

Carl

The first place of alienation for Carl was home. From the moment which he became politically aware, which he traces to the 1976 Soweto riot/ shootings, he had a growing sense of alienation. It was not a sense that he could ignore, neither for himself nor for the oppressed people of South Africa. His response was to go into political exile in order to find a way to fight for his home to become a space of belonging.

The word exile in many ways belies his experience of it. Ironically, it was one in which he found many spaces of belonging. In fact he describes his experience as enriching and educational. He was more often than not given the status of a celebrity.

First of all South Africa was portrayed overseas, and in the circles I was moving in, it was the Anti-Apartheid Movement, it was in the churches, churches were very much anti-apartheid, because, exactly because of this abundance. They want something to do, so at university, you get a lot of third world groups or third world organisations. The churches... I was invited... I mean I spoke at churches, full with thousands of people. And because I am from South Africa.

Later on he says:

You are going to be the speaker... you come to a big meeting and you are going to be the speaker and you are going to speak on South Africa, you are the one that is the VIP...
Carl also describes his social interaction as rich and diverse. He found that because he was an exile and had a story that appealed to people he found it easy to make friends and girlfriends. He was also able to study and gain an incredible education, both academic and worldly.

Within this he describes moments of isolation, where the people of Europe did not really understand him and his plight. He describes them as living with incredible abundance and the way that would make him long to make a difference at home when he saw it squandered.

The entire time that he was in Europe his focus was to return to South Africa. He has been hailed a hero for being an exile. But in the moment of his return, he loses that status. In the moment that he can return home he is no longer a celebrity, his plight is over.

Darren: I'll tell the one place that I am trying to get to also...I have in my mind that as a political exile as you say, wherever you go you were a celebrity in some way, the second you come back to South Africa...

Carl: You are nothing. Exactly. You are nothing here. And also you are told, there you were a celebrity, here you are told, you are the one that ran away. I am very often told that. But those are my people that are jealous. The other thing that really surprised me the most, is that people expect you to have come back here with a lot of money. You must be rich! When we came back now, you must be very rich. A lot of exiles experience tremendous problems.

Yet South Africa has and always will be home. In his living here, Carl is trying to make it into a place of belonging for himself, yet experiences many pockets of alienation. He describes the experience of going through a gate where there is a white, Afrikaans guard:

Carl: The tone of the language, body language..."Wat wil jy hé?" A black guard would ask you the same thing, the body language and tone is simply different. Yesterday in hospital...
Darren: What do the body language and tone say to you?

Carl: The body language and tone says he's superior and I'm inferior.

Carl feels that his mission is to find a way of helping to build South Africa, but he struggles to find a way of doing it. He says that it is a difficult context to negotiate. Being black and unemployed in South Africa there is an immediate assumption that he is uneducated that belies his sophistication that he has learned while in exile.

Carl describes the loneliness that he feels sitting in a bar and talking to people. He says the conversation will only focus on the lotto or soccer. He longs to interact in the way that he used to in Europe where he felt the interaction to be far more meaningful.

As described above, Carl would like to find a way of bringing his contexts of belonging together. Living and contributing in South Africa with a wife from Norway so that the person who sustains his identity most intimately will relate to him with the complexity and respect that he craves.

6.2.6. The dialectic of alienation and belonging

From the above discussion of the participants searching for home it seems that the search is not a linear process, a journey in a straight line, it is a dialectic, constantly moving in and out of alienation and belonging. Alienation and belonging are not held separate in our experience. As one is experienced, the trace of the other is always there. As we stop experiencing one, we oscillate into experiencing the other. In the experience of alienation we search for a way into belonging. In our experience of belonging we recall the space of alienation and try to avoid it. Circumstances, our meaning making and identity seem often to operate in such a way as to move us out of the space of belonging. Or our sense of identity no longer fits in that space and we move ourselves into alienation.

For each person, something different pushes a side of the dialectic. It would be more than one thing and those things are likely to change over time and between
contexts as identity shifts. For Natalie, one element of the process is tied to her fear of losing her voice or being labelled. This would tend to push her out of a space of belonging, separating her from the group she is with. People at the same time, respectful connections with strangers and deep connections with friends are important to her. The process for her is often around balancing independence and connection in order to be comfortable with the connection.

For Lisa, the process is often pushed when she confronts difference within herself and the fear of being rejected or losing important connections because of the difference. When experience is different from her expectations it threatens to challenge her sense of home. She seems to learn how to be comfortable within that difference and find her space of belonging within it.

One of the issues that pushes the process for Trevor is around his sense of being in control. This is related to his tendency to distance those things which are important to him. When he is feeling bad about himself or not in control he becomes davka and moves into an alienated space. As he learns to be more comfortable within his relationships and through that with himself, he feels more in control and in a greater space of belonging.

For Carl the identities he has constructed in the different contexts pushes the oscillation from alienation to belonging and back. He finds belonging and connection in one context as that supports his identity he has constructed there, only to be confronted with what he feels he is missing, which gives him a sense of alienation in that very context. In some ways it seems like a clash of dreams or ideals and experience. For example in South Africa he dreams of creating home and remains consistent to his ideals, but longs for his identity he enjoyed in Europe.

For Rabbi Kahn the process is tied to the way he sees the nature of being a rabbi, managing his role as rabbi and trying find spaces of belonging within that as his personal self. Connected to that is learning to fulfil the expectations that people have in a way that is comfortable for them and without feeling reduced to a vessel.

It is useful to become aware of the processes involved in one's negotiating of the dialectic of alienation and belonging. This can help one to become aware of one's
meaning making process in such a way that allows one to free oneself from constraining meanings, constructions and reactions. Rabbi Kahn speaks about the usefulness of being able to move in and out of spaces of alienation almost at will.

6.2.7. Identity

Each of the participants speaks about their quest for identity. There is a reflexive self consciousness about this process. Each of their searches is connected to the way that they experience a sense of alienation and belonging. This gives them clues as to what works for them and what does not, where they feel they are able to join and with whom and where they would prefer to remain separate, where the spaces are that they feel comfortable to be and where uncomfortable, which values they resonate with and which are jarring.

The descriptions and experiences of the above dialectics will shift as identity shifts. As Lisa was able to story her gay identity together with the outside world, so the spaces of alienation shrunk. She finds her confrontation with difference, that process that pushes the dialectic, easier to negotiate and her spaces of belonging grew.

Natalie mentions how she enjoys her identity at work and feels less of a need to push her independence and bring a different voice. She is able to be far more tolerant of people who she would usually struggle to be around. This enables her to take part in the meaning making process of the group and feel more a part of it.

Carl, on his return to South Africa felt his identity constrict as he lost the 'celebrity status' of being in exile and encountered people such as the guard at the gate that sees him as an uneducated interferer. This has grown the spaces in which he experiences alienation as his identity has shifted in a way that he does not enjoy.

The relationship between alienation and belonging and identity is a recursive one. Our experience of alienation and belonging also operates to shift our sense of our identity. Trevor describes his constricting identity as he feels more alienated within the relationship with his fiancé. Natalie describes being silenced in the context of alienating group experiences. Being silent is a perception she does not have of herself and is not used to.
This relationship is one that continually plays off each other. One can experience the relationship operating like a spiral. Either spiraling downward, increasing the spaces of alienation, or spiraling toward increasing spaces of belonging. Lisa describes the downward spiral when she went to Australia as her alienation grew until she was depressed and entertaining notions of suicide. Trevor also describes this downward spiral as his sense of alienation makes him feel less in control of his life and destiny, which in turn gets him to be davka and alienates him further.

Natalie describes an upward spiral as she finds spaces of belonging at work, she begins to see herself as not needing as much to stand apart, which allows her to find more spaces of belonging where she otherwise would expect herself to be alienated.

6.2.8. Apart from – A part of

The structure of these words in the heading reflect an interesting theme that emerges: the paradox of distance. The word 'apart' denotes separate from something and yet the letters are written together. The phrase 'a part' of something means to be involved in or together with and yet the same letters are written separately. The theme that has emerged is that it is sometimes easier to feel together with someone when one has some distance, emotional or physical. And when one is closely connected it is often necessary to erect barriers to create some distance.

Trevor describes how he envisages his relationship with his family improving were he to have a certain amount of separation from them:

Like I feel that if I had my own physical home I think my relationship with my family would become better because then you are not on top of each other, you are not having to deal with daily things all the time, all the little itsy bitsy things that actually become greater than – they turn out to be greater than they should be or all thrown out of proportion

Natalie mentions the same notion for her and her family. She also describes how her experience in London allowed her to be more like her mother without concern
and yet when she is in South Africa, she wants to put distance between her and the sense of herself being like her mother.

I’ll tell you something though that will be quite significant for this. I am very much like my mother. Not in fundamental ways, but externally... And I catch myself often, don’t do that cause I’m like my mother. And when I was in London I was so much like my mother but I felt like me. You know? And that was brilliant. And I think that’s why I connected with people so much more because I didn’t care if I was like my mother ... Or I’d hear myself even if I didn’t sound like her, I’d hear myself sounding like her. And I’d be much more open...she’s very relaxed with people, any people, any time, from what I can see and I was like that in London. Here I stop myself: “Be careful, you look like your mother”.

Lisa describes how her stint in Australia away from J gave her the space to want to go back and embrace their relationship and her gay identity. Trevor describes how leaving a religious school to go to one that was more secular gave him the space to explore and develop his religious identity.

6.2.9. Separating home and belonging

This may seem like a question that belongs in an ivory tower or is merely semantic, but it was a question that was on my mind from the beginning of my thinking on this topic. What seemed to emerge from the conversations is that the two were generally not seen as distinct from each other. There was though in the talking to Carl and Lisa some separation of the two.

Carl never describes being in Europe during exile as home. Home is always South Africa and while he is away and unable to return, he would not consider any other possibility. Even on his return, having experienced much alienation, he still considers South Africa home. While living in Europe he does speak about finding many spaces and experiences of belonging though. In this way he separates the two – while home is unattainable, he finds spaces of belonging. When it is attainable in a physical sense, he still holds on to other spaces of belonging.
Lisa speaks about the importance of connection with people, but says that while she can find belonging with friends, home for her is J and her family. It seems that during the time of struggling with her sexual identity, the experience of uncertainty around keeping the connection with friends convinced her that home could not be with people other than J and her family.

6.3. Meta-themes of co-construction

6.3.1. Amplification of meanings in the crossroads of conversation

A research conversation is not a reflection of the reality that the participants have inside of them and reveal during the interview. Rather it is in and of itself a meaning generating activity within the context of the social networks that the researcher and participants are embedded. Language is also considered an activity of meaning creation. It is therefore useful to consider that new meanings were generated within the research conversations (Tierney, 2000).

It is not a clear, cut-and-dried process to see what the new, locally generated meaning is. Nor is there a discrete distinction between what old knowledge was and what is new. That distinction would be to see knowledge in a reified manner instead of emerging contextually within the dialogue. I would like, though, to consider some examples of the locally generated knowledge.

The conversation is a process of thinking, refining ideas and constructing new ones. One can see through the conversation how this operates. Through the conversation there are new punctuations and observations that shift meanings around an issue.

Notice the tone with which Natalie says these words. She is thinking through an issue and making connections that she previously had not made:

But something comes to my mind about that...It's because I know it so well that I know the differences. Maybe. Maybe.

In the conversation with Carl, through this exchange we spoke about something in a way that hit home for him and framed certain experiences in a way that he found useful to relate:
Darren: K, while you are talking it strikes me so much how your idea is informed...how a person’s idea of home is informed so much by their experience. Because for you it is so important to have that diversity because that diversity helps you to find a space where you can belong and get rid of a space where you feel alienated.

Carl: Exactly! That’s in a nutshell. And ja, I can tolerate sitting here and having a beer with someone who is talking absolute nonsense, and then knowing I am going home to sit on the internet. I can go there in a squatter camp and talk to people and no-one can relate to what I want to talk about.

At one point in the conversation with Natalie she saw her meaning around groups shift. She was saying how she does not enjoy being part of a group:

I don’t like groupings. I’ve never actually. I remember even when I was young saying “I’m not going to be in that group; I’m not going to have a best friend; I’m not going to do...I’m going to be the same to everyone”.

This is then part of the dialogue that followed in which she began to see herself as able to enjoy certain groups and not have a blanket block against them:

Darren: Can you remember a time when you were part of a group entirely and totally and you felt comfortable with that?

Natalie: Can I say in London again?

Darren: Ja, say London again.

Natalie: Definitely. I was very much a part of the same social group and we all went out together all the time. And I loved it. But I think I was kind of part of the creation of the group.
Natalie made a similar shift through the conversation around her ideas on her family:

Ja. My first instinct would be to say “Home doesn’t really play much of a part and when you break it down, a lot of the stuff is home. I think it’s a lot more than I’d like you know.

So I think that’s probably ... it’s a big thing. You know I was thinking on the way here I was going to say ja well I’m not really. Home’s there, this is me and I’m my own person. But I think there are one or two connections which when you’re not looking sneak in the door.

Through the conversation with Trevor we discussed his ideas around making mistakes. He began talking about mistakes as obstacles that have hindered his linear path to the places he should be in life. Through exploring this he began to make different meaning around mistakes as something from which he can learn and apply instead of having only regrets or be haunted by them.

Through the conversation he also broadened his ideas around home. He began in a somewhat constricted space relating home to the break-up of his engagement. He spoke about home needing to be within the framework of a happy marriage. As we spoke he broadened the definition to one that did not relate to the pain he was feeling at the time. He broadened his definition to be more encompassing which allowed him to be more of himself embracing a longer term view into the future with the quality of hope.

To look at the meaning generating process of the research conversations on another level, there is certain language and frames that I bring to the conversation through the questions that I ask and my responses to the answers. If language is a way of punctuating experiences, then immersing one’s self in different words and making meaning with those words has the effect of reframing experiences.

The notions of home, belonging, alienation and identity provided a way of speaking about life experiences, that the participants had already thought a lot about, in new ways. It seems to me that the participants found this a useful process. The reason that I say this is that each of the participants used the language
enthusiastically. They used the language to tell their stories in such a way that their spaces of belonging seemed to be growing rather than diminishing.

Darren: Now that you have said all of this, what do you...what is home for you?

Lisa: That is such a hard question Darren. This is why this whole thing appealed to me because it made me think. I have come to the conclusion that you know that old adage slash song that “Wherever I lay my hat that’s my home?” I very much feel like that. That wherever my family is, that’s my home. And right now J is my family and she is my home and therefore this is my home. I would rather live in Sydney, but my home is with J and this is where we have to be at the moment for visa reasons etc. But we won’t get into that. I don’t feel that Sydney is home to me more than Jo’burg, but I feel that I belong more in Sydney at the moment.

Darren: Is home and belonging the same thing?

Lisa: Yes. I do quite think so. I think home is a space where you belong. That is quite a nice realisation. I hadn’t really crystallised that at all. But yes, home is a space where you belong.

And Trevor says that he is able to say the following after discussing the difficulty he has had with the issue throughout his life:

Darren: Do you think you are journeying out of the years of alienation into the years of connection?

Trevor: Ja, I am... I don’t actually feel – maybe that’s one way of resolving it is that actually I must – it’s not really an alienation as such, it’s just that...

To take this idea one step further, Carl speaks about the effect that having the conversation at all had. He said that he had wanted to tell his story for a long time and now he would like to write it down and use the written story. Reason (1984) speaks about research being an intervention in many ways; it does not happen in a
vacuum that begins and ends with the research context, but has implications that go beyond it.

6.3.2. Amplification and silencing of identity at the crossroads of connection

The research context is constructed and shaped by both parties, researcher and participant. There are a myriad of facets that each party brings to the context. A full analysis would be beyond the scope of this work. One could take into account aspects such as gender, age, previous encounters and many other aspects of discourse and contexts in which they are embedded. I would like to highlight two particular elements that I bring to the context.

The first is the fact that I am perceived by each participant as an observant Jew. This coloured the process in certain ways, differently for each participant. Lisa was concerned that her gay identity and relationship to her Jewish identity would in some way be offensive to me or would be jarring for our interaction. She felt it necessary to justify that she was traditional and not religious. She also did this in order to test the waters before she let me know that she was gay. When she saw that it did not concern me, it paved the way for her to tell me about the main source of her alienation. In the way that she spoke, she also lead up to telling me by giving clues before telling me outright. When she again saw that it did not offend me in any way, but actually made me more interested, she became relieved and comfortable.

For both Trevor and Natalie it provided a common language. I have also been involved in the same youth movements and communities as them. This provided a common language and social artefacts which facilitated the communication and allowed them to speak easily about issues, knowing that I understood the context, without them having to explain. I did not find that it inhibited them in any way, which could be a concern with familiarity.

For Carl, he said that my being Jewish was an invitation for him to speak to me. In fact the very reason he stopped to speak to me was because he saw that I was Jewish and thought would understand issues of discrimination that he was struggling with.
Without thinking on the surface. What makes me able to speak to you is you are Jewish. Let's say very honestly. You've got the common black in me. You have got a common struggle to me. You have got a background. You understand...I can tell you...I don't know...I had no problems thinking of inviting you in. I had more problems thinking that you might be afraid. And I had ... you are different from the English white person.

(Parenthetically, I find this interesting in the way that it relates to the theme of the paradox of distance. Lisa, Jewish, was tentative. Carl found it easy to connect with that.)

Rabbi Kahn, I felt, could speak without reserve. He knew that I would connect with and relate to his value system that he would be speaking through. He spoke often with an 'ought' voice, speaking about the way things should be. It seemed to me that he was comfortable doing this because he felt I would be open to hearing it.

The second element that I brought to the research context that I felt particularly worth mentioning was the perception that the participants had of me as a psychologist. For Trevor he was looking for a healing context to tell his story and help him frame his experiences. He mentioned at the end that he felt it was a healing experience. I had thought that Natalie had a similar experience until I revisited the conversation a few times. She did say that she felt very connected because the conversation fitted well with her and I was asking the right questions. She said that she connected well with me, but then thought but then it is not a real connection because it is in the context of psychology.

Lisa was impacted in two ways. The first is that she felt a sense of common interest because she was at one point studying psychology and enjoyed a common language. The second is that she sees men involved in psychology to be self-aware and expressive and enjoyed that connection.

For Carl he enjoyed a space that he referred as an understanding one in which to tell his story. It also brought him a sense of sophisticated conversation that he often craved.
6.3.3. My experience of alienation and belonging in the conversations

Throughout the conversation I tried as much as possible to create a space of belonging for the participants. I was also aware that I entered into the space and must be aware of my own experiences within it.

In the conversations with both Trevor and Natalie I felt that we connected congruently. I felt a space of belonging for myself as I enjoyed my identity constructed in the conversation as someone with whom they could be honest and search in a very personal way. I enjoyed being able to create a healing space in which meaningful conversation could occur.

The quality of the experience was also very connecting with Lisa. I enjoy being able to connect with people who hold an assumption that I may not be able to because of mutually exclusive contexts. I enjoy the both/and identity constructed in erasing these distinctions.

I know that I am a white South African. I have always struggled with the differences in the lives people in South Africa experience. Yet I have always felt that I have not connected enough with people beyond my immediate context. I found it a profound and in some ways healing for me to listen to Carl's story of struggle and get a sense of his experiences and meaning around them.

On one level I felt quite distanced from Rabbi Kahn through the conversation. I was trying to find a way out of his philosophy and into his personal space. I know that his philosophy is integral to him, yet I couldn't help thinking that he was monitoring what he was saying because of that issue mentioned above about never being able to leave the garb of rabbi behind. Yet there were also times that I felt he allowed himself to speak more freely than he otherwise would have. He seemed grateful for an opportunity to do this and I felt a sense of connection in that.
Chapter 7

Reflections

Tierney (2000), in speaking about the importance of creating reflexive and vulnerable texts, says that vulnerability is not a position of weakness, but one from which to attempt change and social fellowship. In chapter one, I wondered whether vulnerability is not in some way a position of strength. In this spirit, I believe that it is because it opens us up to making greater spaces for belonging in our interaction and move the context of our realities closer to home. In this same spirit I have attempted to create a text that carries this vulnerability to contribute to change and social fellowship.

I have tried to reach deeply into myself and into my experiences together with other people. I have tried to explore an issue that touches me deeply and is at the core of my living. I have tried to see if these same issues touch other people. Perhaps I have done so through my own lenses, contextually constructed, but how else does one know?

In Chapter one I presented the way that I understand the themes of alienation and belonging to operate along my journey to find home. The themes that ran through the study emerge from that context. I then, in chapter two, tried to explicate the broadest context in which all our activity operates, as I understand it – epistemology. The very air that knowledge breathes. I have done this to paint the set on which our understanding of the self and identity play out. Our experience of home and identity is inextricable. And as the literature and participants have shown, negotiating our sense of alienation and belonging are integral to our sense of identity.

I have pictured alienation and belonging as a broad template of experience. Almost like magnetic forces where alienation repels and belonging attracts. Alienation are those experiences that separates and holds apart. Belonging are those experiences that connects and joins. The places, values and people with which we join or jettison are echoes of our identity.
I have tried to immerse myself within a social constructionist and postmodern perspective with which to explore the issues of this study. This sees all knowledge as products of social interchange, constructed within the context of our interactions and history. Along with this is then the notion of identity being one which arises in the intersubjective space between people, existing and shifting in the dialogical moments. Although there are many disconfirming and fragmenting ways of understanding postmodernism, it seems to me that it also holds the potential for far greater ways of connecting. The assumptions in modernist thinking that hold people apart and separate as individually bounded monads is eschewed. In its place, the assumptions that relationship is the creator of identity, allows for an understanding of identity and the world that is a priori about connection. If we can wear these glasses in our everyday interaction with people, we can enhance our understanding of the way that we negotiate our sense of self. We can also contextualise our experiences of alienation and belonging and understand the effects that they have on us.

At the same time, wearing the glasses of connection places upon us a greater responsibility to care for the experience that the other person has together with us. She may not have an essential core, but that experience will go to her constructed core. We profoundly affect the identities of the people who constitute our context and with whom we interact. We profoundly affect their experiences of alienation and belonging.

In chapter three I traced the modernist conception of self through the disciplines that have held self to be central – sociology and psychology. The thread that runs through the diverse theories is that of the self, ontologically separate from the other. This notion itself can be seen as socially and historically constructed as the zeitgeist that informed these theories carried the assumptions that fed the notion of self.

I then, in chapter four, explored the transition to a postmodern epistemology through social saturation via technologies of communication. This played a role in facilitating the development of postmodern philosophy, as technology brought many and varied others and their value systems into our context. That provided
many different ways of constructing the self. It seems to have placed us in a context
where this is indeed unavoidable. It is important to note that it is these ideas,
particularly Gergen’s template for speaking about identity which plays a large role
in informing the way in which I understand identity to operate. This then has been
a lens through which I have entered into the analysis of the participants’ notions of
identity and the emerging themes.

The assumption is then that people begin to enjoy multiple selves and fluid
identities enabling them to belong in different contexts as they embrace this
flexibility. I found it interesting though that these ideas seem not to have fully
trickled out of the halls of academia to the participants of this study. The self
seems to be somewhat tenacious and is resistant to decentring. Postmodern
literature is aware of this (Gergen, 1991) and does not assume a smooth transition.
Perhaps this mirrors the concurrent availability of resources from different
epistemologies, those which we are more used to being easier to utilise. The
participants spoke very much in guises of Anderson’s (1997) three faces of the
modern person and only sometimes and briefly showed glimpses of postmodern
identities.

The participants spoke about being true to their real selves. At times sounding like
neo-Romantics and at times like scientific-rationalists. There are many examples
from the participants talking that are echoes of an alienated monad in the
modernist sense. There are assumptions of being ontologically separate from the
people close to them with which they see themselves as fundamentally separate.
Some of the solutions involve finding ways to bridge the gap which seem difficult.
Some of the solutions involve creating distance in order to try and come closer.
Both of these echo the modernist assumptions of separate self and society with the
answer being trying to discover and negotiate the relationship between the two.

The participants also speak about trying to find their true self and identity. When
they did reflect on the way that their personality changes between contexts it was
often with a sense of distress. On Gergen’s (1991) continuum from modernist to
strategic manipulator to pastiche personality to relational selves, the participants
would generally seem to fall around the strategic manipulator and pastiche
personality phase. They do have a sense of their identity not being a given and the
need to engage in a search in order to establish it. They are suffused with the multiplicity that the postmodern context provides, yet still hearken back to the notion of a true essential self.

This is something that, as Gergen describes, tends to be a contributing source to certain experiences of alienation as they doubt their integrity and have a clouded vision of self. Rabbi Kahn and Carl seemed to be comfortable with moving between different identities in different contexts. Yet the reason why I said that perhaps the social constructionist notions have not fully reached the participants is related to the language that they used. Their culturally available resources that inhere in language are very modern sounding. I wonder if they had different language, the language of constructionism, at their fingertips whether they would be able to speak about their identities in different ways. In so doing they would make meaning differently and possibly grow the spaces in which they are able to belong.

It seemed clear that the notion of a search for home paved with experiences of alienation and belonging was something that resonated with each of the participants. This was so even to the extent that three of them mentioned this process as a central theme in their lives with which they constantly struggle. The one question that I entered the research process with was whether the struggle for identity was resolved at a certain stage, or is it a constant struggle, continually changing through life?

It seems, from the social constructionist literature and the participants' conversation, that identity is a continually emerging experience. At times, especially when one has a greater sense of home and belonging, the negotiating of identity is either an exciting process of discovery or a somewhat stable and comfortable process. Within stages of alienation, it seems that the struggle for identity is greater. These processes seem, with respect to Erikson (1968), not to be age or stage bound, but a process that weaves its way through the fabric of one's entire life.

Through this life-long process, the way in which we make meaning around the seemingly inevitable experiences of alienation can influence the oscillation of the dialectic of alienation and belonging. In some ways an experience of alienation can be a passport to greater spaces of belonging. An example of this is Lisa’s alienating
struggle with her gay identity has ushered her into being able to experience belonging within difference. This was something that she had found frightening before. Keeney (1983) says that the health in human ecosystems refers to a vital balance of diverse forms of experience and behaviour. To engage in an effort to maximise or minimise, rather than allow diversity leads to an escalating sameness which can be defined as pathology. This seems an apt metaphor: home in a human being's ecosystem is the journeying within a diversity of experiences of alienation and belonging. Finding home involves synergising or negotiating the dialectic of alienation and belonging rather than merely minimising alienation.

Alienation is like a cat on a hot tin roof.
Belonging is like a dog sleeping on the warm driveway.
Home is in between the two.

If one can see identity, not as essential, but rather relational, the same set of social circumstances can open new vistas and opportunities. This could allow one to fluidly belong as one experiences shifting identities in different contexts - allowing the multiphrenia to give way to the plural self where multiplicity is useful and not alienating. The assumption is that the focus on consequence and the dissolution of essence allows one to experience more useful identities and less oppressive forms of life.

One of social constructionism's tenets is that context and local meaning is crucial to identity construction. In reading the above paragraph, it holds the danger of this becoming universally proscriptive, urging one to attain health by achieving maximum fluidity. If one reads it, though, together with a focus on local context being a place in which to generate meaning, one may choose less fluidity in favour of preferred values offered by the local context. In my own adherence to a religious value system, I often notice the tension between the two. I have found it useful to adopt a both/and perspective, adhering to the principles that I choose as true for me and negotiating other value systems. In my experience there can be fit and a sense of belonging with a both/and attitude in the inclusive postmodern sense.

Michael (1996) mentions 'big identities' that are notions of identity understood together with epistemology and 'small identities' that are the negotiation of
everyday life. Both seem to me to be connected to the search for home. Epistemologies shift in our perpetual search to make life home, to make the world home. Negotiating our everyday lives is inextricable from these epistemologies. Our everyday living, our decisions, interactions, meaning making is the process of searching for home.

It seems that the search is not a linear process, a journey in a straight line, it is a dialectic, constantly moving in and out of alienation and belonging. Alienation and belonging are not held separate in our experience. As one is experienced, the trace of the other is always there. As we stop experiencing one, we oscillate into an experience of the other. In the experience of alienation we search for a way into belonging. In our experience of belonging we recall the space of alienation. Circumstances, our meaning making and identity seem can as to move us out of the space of belonging. Or our sense of identity no longer fits in that space and we move ourselves into alienation.

Perhaps the process itself is one which we can learn to negotiate in a way that we are comfortable with. If we can see the dialectic as a template for experience, helping us frame our meaning making and living, then we can get a sense for when we get ‘stuck’ and increase our ability to shift out of the stuckness using this as a frame.

Each of the participants mentioned the importance of a significant other in their finding home. Identity is created in relationship and therefore constructed mostly together with intimates. Home is a place in which one’s relationships give rise to identities that one prefers to negotiate life with, identities that are freeing and not constraining, that bring a sense of belonging and not alienation. Yet the journey involves negotiating both experiences. One’s identity shifts within the journey, and hopefully is able to find again the space called home.

Some years later I find myself sitting in that same Jacuzzi with Lions Head behind me and the sea in front of me. This time I am not alone, I am sitting with my wife, my parents and my two children. Having been through this process I have an expanded
understanding of home and the meaning making process in the search. I hope that I can show this to my children so that they are able to negotiate their experiences of alienation and belonging so that they are able to make life a journey within the experience of home.

Epilogue

Have you ever wondered what happened to people after the movie is over? The movie is like a journey that begs for resolution of some sort. Once this has been achieved, we have arrived. There is an implicit assumption with which we are left – that the characters will continue to be fine for the rest of their lives.

However the camera never seems to leave our lives and so we don’t have the luxury of reaching the ultimate resolution or utopia in which we can forever relax. The flow and dynamism of life keeps us always dealing with life that arises. So we don’t reach and stay in this place called home.

Perhaps then home is always elusive, remaining a guiding star in our firmament. Perhaps a way of punctuating could be to see the journey itself as being the process called home. With apologies to an old cliché – home, then, is the journey and not the destination. Or better, home can be our way of journeying and not a conclusive static state of achievement.
References


