

**A Therapist's Journey from Naiveté to Knowing:
A Heuristic Inquiry**

A dissertation submitted to
Auckland University of Technology
In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Psychotherapy (MPsych)
HEAL901

Michelle Yates

September 2017

Acknowledgements

It takes a 'village' to raise a dissertation and I have a wonderful group of people in my village. I'm hugely grateful for each of the following people:

Dr Jonathan Fay, my academic supervisor – a patient, wise, enthusiastic and life-giving Mentor.

Dr Amanda Mitchell, wonderful co-adventurer and friend, without whom none of this would be possible.

My son, Tom Yates, and Dr Noel Spanier, for their helpful academic support.

Dr Steve Appel, my encouraging clinical supervisor and mentor.

All the lecturers in the AUT Graduate Diploma and Masters Programme, 2012-2015, for their investment in my development and for helping ignite my passion and curiosity.

My parents, David and Lynda Avery, for life, love, encouragement and abundance.

Jane Hinds, committed and generous therapist – helping me face and climb mountains.

The Rev. Michael Yates, my loyal husband, for assisting with maintaining the course of the 'family ship' and for enabling this individuating journey.

Tom, Reuben, Anna and Joshua Yates, my children, who bring endless balance, love, humour and great joy.

All my friends at university for love and acceptance – especially Bronwyn, Paul and Ola.

The friends whom I 'do life with' who loaned me faith and courage – and whom I now celebrate with.

The God of Heaven and Earth – Author of it all.

I acknowledge each of these people as beautiful gifts to me.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by any other person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor any material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or any other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date:

Abstract

Vicarious traumatisation is a widely researched, well-recognised phenomenon amongst professionals working with significantly traumatised individuals, groups and communities. It is the reality of how our clients and their narratives impact us negatively, on the deepest levels of our own internal emotional world. Much less recognised however, is the possibility of the therapist's growth as a result of working in post-traumatic circumstances. Using a heuristic method, this dissertation develops a personal narrative of my experiences of emotional contact with trauma and my post-traumatic growth while doing volunteer work. This was for a period of several years, in which I was also training as a psychotherapist. Through the lens of this personal narrative, the rich possibility of personal and professional growth to be gained by therapists working with trauma or working in traumatic circumstances can be explored, and the results of this investigation communicated and understood.

Contents

Chapter One – Initial Engagement

| | |
|---|----|
| Introducing the Context of Bougainville..... | 7 |
| ‘Wait Pela Meres’ (White women) in the Heart of Bougainville..... | 8 |
| The Invitation..... | 10 |
| What Lies Ahead..... | 11 |

Chapter Two – Literature Review

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| The Theoretical Foundation..... | 12 |
|---------------------------------|----|

Chapter Three – Methodology

| | |
|--|----|
| Introducing a Heuristic Inquiry..... | 17 |
| In Search of a Question..... | 17 |
| Heuristic Inquiry..... | 18 |
| The Potential Pitfalls of Heurism..... | 19 |
| Method..... | 21 |

Chapter Four – The Narrative

| | |
|--|----|
| Immersion, Incubation, Illumination..... | 24 |
| Treasure..... | 25 |
| Heurism – Mining One’s Self..... | 27 |
| Search for Meaning – My Dream..... | 29 |
| “Mister Pip”..... | 32 |
| Freedom..... | 36 |
| Bougainvillean Woman..... | 40 |
| Comfort vs Discomfort..... | 43 |
| My Reflection..... | 47 |
| Powerlessness..... | 49 |

Chapter 5 – Explication and Synthesis

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 53 |
| Freed to Be..... | 54 |
| Paddling in Their ‘Kanu’ (Canoe) – Deepening Empathy..... | 56 |
| Bougainville Hope..... | 58 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Fireflies – The Spiritual Realm..... | 60 |
|--------------------------------------|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Prevailing Amidst the Paradoxical..... | 62 |
|--|----|

Chapter Six – Discussion

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 64 |
|-------------------|----|

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| Personal Responses..... | 64 |
|-------------------------|----|

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Curiosity, Courage, Compassion..... | 65 – 67 |
|-------------------------------------|---------|

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| The Wider Context..... | 68 |
|------------------------|----|

| | |
|--|--|
| Realms of Traumatic Influence – Clinical Application and | |
|--|--|

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Generalisability..... | 69 |
|-----------------------|----|

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| The Individual..... | 70 |
|---------------------|----|

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| The Self as Refugee..... | 70 |
|--------------------------|----|

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| The Familial Realm..... | 71 |
|-------------------------|----|

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| The Societal Realm..... | 72 |
|-------------------------|----|

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| The Natural Realm..... | 73 |
|------------------------|----|

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Conclusion of Discussion..... | 74 |
|-------------------------------|----|

| | |
|------------------|----|
| The Horizon..... | 75 |
|------------------|----|

| | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| References..... | 77 |
|------------------------|-----------|

Chapter One

Initial Engagement

Through the lens of this personal narrative, the rich possibility of personal and professional growth to be gained by therapists can be explored, in working with trauma or working in traumatic circumstances, and the results of this investigation communicated and understood. The question underpinning my work is:

How might I experience personal growth and enhanced practice as a psychotherapist, as a result of working with people experiencing trauma and post-traumatic distress?

Of particular interest to me is my focus on growth in myself as a psychotherapist. However, I believe the learnings and reflections contained within this dissertation may be of benefit to any allied health care professional, seeking to understand how personal and professional growth is possible in the context of working with traumatised people. As a nurse, volunteering in the under-resourced health environment within Bougainville, I am distressed when encountering the significant lack of priority ascribed to mental and emotional issues of the population at large. With my nursing 'hat' on and my psychotherapeutic inner workings, I cannot avoid approaching traumatised people in a holistic way and wondering about their "meaning-full disease" (Broom, 2007, p.xiii).

This dissertation illuminates a parallel process between what I discovered, both externally by working amid the traumatised, post-war society of Bougainville, and intra-psychically, with my heuristic journey informing a deepening identification with a traumatised nation. This traces my journey from naiveté to knowing and forecasts my capacity beyond.

Introducing the context of Bougainville

As a nation, Bougainville was first raised in my consciousness by the media in the mid 1990's, reporting the hostility of civil war. The war was precipitated by an uprising of angry local Bougainvillean land-owners, distressed about the environmental degradation resulting from careless mining practices at the Panguna copper mine (Connell, 1997). Their attempts at influencing ConZinc Rio Tinto Australia (CRA) to review their mining practices, and compensate the locals more appropriately, had been unsuccessful. Angry about the "colonial masters who manipulated [their] lives...to serve their own ends" (Abaijah, 1991), the Bougainvilleans wanted to assert their authority, and declare their desire for independence. The Papua New Guinean

(PNG) government responded in a heavy-handed manner to the angry Bougainvilleans (Havini, 2004).

'The crisis' (as it is feebly referred to), lasted around ten years, causing economic, environmental and personal devastation, and claimed the lives of approximately 20,000 people (Lornie, 2013). The socio-economic ramifications of the war remain evident, with significantly reduced industry in Bougainville, as reflected in the slow recovery of the GDP to pre-war levels. A few months after the commencement of the conflict, PNG responded in 1990 by the "withdrawal of public servants and closed down all banks, government offices and services including hospitals, all medical clinics, government and community schools" (Havini, 2004, p. xx). The "blockade" imposed on Bougainville by PNG, prevented both travel in and out of Bougainville, and any trade relationships. The catastrophic impact of this ten year crisis in Bougainville still reverberates in 2017. The most recently published research on the current mental health and psychosocial impact of the crisis reports that:

"the Bougainville Crisis resulted in violence related deaths; the displacement of more than half of the population; widespread human-rights abuses; far-reaching societal impacts including the undermining of the traditional authority of elders and women and damage to cultural values and relationships; property damage; and significant impacts on education and the economy" (Tierney, Bolton, Matanu, Garasu, Barnabas & Silove, 2016, p.1).

Bougainville continues to be assailed by these *psychological toxins* which run rampant through their damaged society.

Wait pela meres (white women) in the heart of Bougainville

How is it that two European women from New Zealand became drawn to a remote people in a jungle thousands of miles away? An excerpt from my journal, as written below, gives a beginning foretaste of the numerous factors that influenced my initial journey to, and ongoing relationship with Bougainville.

I am sitting in a lovely church building in a small village in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea...singing the Lord is my Shepherd and Holy, Holy, Holy...Methodist hymns I have known since my embryonic state. These hymns have been sung by my family for generations, including my great grandfather, William ('Wes'), great grandmother

*Elizabeth and their son, 'Jack' – my grandfather – who may have sung these same hymns
in this nation 100 years ago...on Dobu Island, Papua [PNG as it was called in 1910].*

Feeling deeply moved.

Connected to my ancestors.

Looking out the window towards the sea...

The waves breaking on the reef.

Bushes loaded with beautiful pink hibiscus flowers.

Ladies on one side, men on the other.

Dog sleeping on the floor.

Warm breeze flowing through the open louvres.

Hand-wrought wood-work on the altar.

The sound of hand-held fans flapping backwards and forwards...

*...thrilled to be sitting in the chapel, feeling incredibly grateful to be here, contemplating
my ancestors – wondering about their influence both spiritually and genetically on me
pursuing the opportunity to visit this war-torn land... Personal Journal, February 10th,
2013.*

In 2015, I was gifted a copy of the biography of my great aunt Gwen Avery (Molloy, 2011). Curiously, this book helped me appreciate the deeper spiritual and genealogical call to many facets of myself and my work. I discovered how her mother – my great grandmother, Elizabeth Avery – stamped a spiritual and genetic imprint on my being. I have in common more points of identification with her than I can fathom: a call to the developing world of Papua New Guinea, a Christian faith, a profession of nursing, a Reverend for a husband, and a family role as mother. Her call and relationship to me through the generations is profound, and a delightful discovery amid my research. This discovery also points to the confluence of Bougainville, psychotherapy, and Christianity in my life. I appreciate this discovery, as a beneficial facet of writing this whole-person-centred dissertation.

The Invitation

My friend has been working intermittently in Bougainville as a teacher, since 2006, assisting with the provision of theological education for the Bougainvillean people who pass through the local bible college. In my role as the national mission's leader for our denomination, I carry the responsibility to improve our efforts to support her, enhance communications within New Zealand about the plight of the Bougainvillean people, and apprehend the numerous relationships and endeavours she facilitates. Little did I realise what was going to unfold for me as I responded affirmatively to her invitation to visit and gain a better understanding of the context in which she works. One hundred years later, my great-grandmother's life-story was replaying in my own life.

Owing largely to the contribution of another good friend, a medical doctor, our first trip to Bougainville in February 2013 was more than just a reconnaissance mission; it incorporated a strong medical focus. During our two-and-a-half-week stay, she and I conducted six medical clinics, including two island clinics and four mainland clinics. We also visited many sick people in their homes and in churches. Alongside the local nurses, we consulted a total of four hundred and fifty Bougainvillean people, for whom a trip to the doctor was an absolute rarity and a luxury. This was the first of what we hoped would be many medical trips to the beautiful islands of Bougainville.

Through my journey of discovery, I have found a kindred spirit in the entertainment industry. Describing herself back then as a "slightly naïve and crazy girl" (NZ Girl, 2006), New Zealand born singer-songwriter, Brooke Fraser, went to Africa and had a profoundly paradigm-shifting experience. Whilst visiting the war-torn country of Rwanda, she had deeply personal and spiritual responses to the trauma she encountered. In an interview, she shared that "there are times in your life when you physically feel pain, when you've had your heart broken or been betrayed. In Rwanda for the first time, it was like that; I could physically feel this ache and compulsion that I must do something" (NZ Girl, 2006). Her sentiments reflect my own response to my experience of the poverty, scarcity, trauma, tragedy, and beauty of Bougainville. Her lyrics, from the song *Albertine*, "...now that I have seen, I am responsible" (Fraser, 2006), captures the sense of compassion, justice and responsibility I now feel towards war-torn Bougainville.

Chapter One encapsulates numerous factors which comprise part of the long initial phase of this heuristic inquiry. They are some of the introductory influences which have ushered me to this point of deeper exploration and integration.

What Lies Ahead

Chapter Two is the jungle of the literature I explored to add substance to my narrative and to reinforce my foundations. I highlight many sources of inspiration, including some delightfully surprising sources, like my Great Aunt's biography. Although I privilege my own material, all these references are influential on the development and grounding of my thinking.

Chapter Three explores my journey through the process of choosing a methodology and describes my method for conducting the research. Chapter Two is an integral part of this research, but is documented separately.

Chapter Four is constructed from numerous depictions related to Bougainville – both situations in Bougainville and reflections from the comfort of home – and also contains my responses to them. These are a selection of depictions, from a much larger group of depictions, which had particular resonance with me. Amid my reflections, my written creativity is enhanced by photographs, poetry and prose.

Chapter Five is the explication of my learning from Bougainville and their impact on me as a person, and tracks a representation of my growth.

Chapter Six is the concluding chapter of this dissertation, discussing the clinical relevance of my experiences, and the transferability that psychotherapists might contemplate, in relation to our profession.

Chapter Two -Literature Review

The Theoretical Foundation

During the past four years of my life-stage of “generativity” (Erikson, 1963, p.240), I have been given the opportunity to pursue higher education, not only in the academic sense, but also in the experiential sense, as I immersed myself into some paradigm-shifting situations. Working with my clients as a beginning psychotherapist, and as a nurse volunteering in post-war Bougainville, I have gained a deeper understanding of the considerable effects of large-scale trauma on individuals who have experienced a “level of savagery and brutality that is difficult to comprehend [and who] remain deeply traumatised” (Reddy, 2008, p.119).

Whilst away in Bougainville in June/July 2016, apart from facilitating medical clinics in the jungle, I had the added intention of recording as much of my phenomenology as I possibly could, in order to fulfil my research intentions. I wrote copious amounts in my journal, to capture my thoughts, feelings and experiences in the ‘real time’ of my immersive experience, writing with as much authentic rawness that I could permit myself. My conviction was that this material would be my intra-subjective data to refer to, whilst in the incubation phase of my writing. The fourth chapter contains many of these reflections, full of my personal phenomena, carefully captured in my personal literature in the form of my journals.



Figure 1 – Sample of my journals

Whilst searching in the library, on the library website and on the internet, I discovered vast resources available on the topic of the vicarious traumatising of therapists working with people in post-traumatic circumstances. I found, however, that very little espoused the potential for personal and professional growth when working with traumatised people. This stimulated my curiosity, assisted in the generation of my research question and I believe justifies my research.

The variety of words I used for my online searches included 'Bougainville', 'trauma', 'war', 'therapy', 'growth', 'hope' and 'transcendence'.

I searched the archives of journal articles gifted to us throughout the process of the Master's Degree at AUT, recalling many relevant and useful readings, which I had already read, contemplated and attempted to integrate clinically. The book of readings from the DBT and Trauma module was full of particularly helpful articles.

Discovered on the internet, Tierney, Bolton, Matanu, Garasu, Barnabas & Silove's (2016) journal article of outcomes of a long research project in Bougainville, provides an up-to-date assessment of the mental health and psychosocial impact of the Bougainville Crisis (p.1) and has been a timely and fascinating resource. A recent Skype conversation with David Tierney, one of the authors, has been valuable to my research and curiosity, about how to respond in practical terms to the plea from the Bougainvillean cry for help from outside their nation, to address the many issues highlighted by their research.

An opportunity to attend a lecture at AUT by one of our lecturers, Paul Solomon, yielded an introduction to the work of Vamik Volkan (2000). He is a war-trauma specialist, and his article named *Traumatized Societies and Psychological Care – Expanding the Role of Preventive Medicine*, enlightened me on the shared macro ramifications of natural disasters and manmade disasters, such as civil war. He is mindful of individual psychology and carefully attends to group psychology following trauma in many international contexts. As a post-war psycho-historian, Lifton's *History and Human Survival*, 1970, provides an intimate rendering of his experience and research in post-war Japan, following the bio-social degeneration of the atomic bomb catastrophe of Hiroshima. His work has informed my curiosity about generational trauma and recovery, following widespread violent trauma to both a population and their land. I discovered Robert J. Lifton's writing whilst reading Volkan's work, as Volkan referred to Lifton and I realised the significance of his contribution to the literature.

The mine in Bougainville was created secondary to many years of explosions of dynamite, searching for treasure – not as devastating as an atomic bomb, but devastating none the less – with widespread societal damage to match. Lifton and Volkan both discuss not only traumatised societies but also highlight some of the facets of post-traumatic growth evident in various post-traumatic contexts, for example “adaptive bio-social regeneration” (p.6).



Figure 2 – Rusting Ruins at Panguna Mine – Personal Archive.

Pinkola Estes' (2008) book, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, had been recommended to me by a fellow student in 2012, and I had a copy of it waiting for the right time to begin reading it. I was drawn to the wildness and naturalness encapsulated in the book and realised the benefit of a permission-giving exploration into my own wildness, which the author facilitates. Jordan (2009) promotes the possibility of fully integrating the environment into therapy. This includes the importance of considering how environmental trauma affects us all, how we might respond to it in the here and now of the clinical space and indeed the potential to be healed by the natural world.

Containing narratives from the lives of traumatised women in the heart of Bougainville, Havini and Sirivi's book, *As Mothers of the Land* (2004), became absolutely integral to my dissertation, and was a powerful informant from individuals directly impacted by the conflict. I had read excerpts from this book prior to going to Bougainville for the first time in 2013, but in my naiveté had found the material too traumatising to absorb. I, however, felt intense magnetism to its content at the beginning of my dissertation process, and searched the internet to find a copy to purchase. For a princely sum Amazon provided me with a copy of what is now a precious possession, signed by both editors, who also author many chapters. Having extensively immersed myself in its contents, this book provided me with many personal narratives of trauma and transcendence. This relieved me of the need to interview people myself, seek their permission to share their stories, and then obtain ethics approval for all disclosures.

Intergenerational trauma is a particularly palpable issue in Bougainville, the impact of the crisis is visited upon subsequent generations. Informative articles by authors like Davies and Frawley (1994), have guided my understanding of this phenomena, indeed stimulating my quest to understand both the mal-adaptive and adaptive impact of one's heritage upon oneself.

In an effort to empathically attune to my clients, patients and the wounded earth, I have journeyed inwards to access my own hidden experiences of trauma. Moustakas (1990) provides a pathway for me to use my own experience as a kind of ‘beginning knowledge’, enabling the development of empathy. My own experience illuminates not only my experience of the ‘other’, but also how I experience *myself*, and my deep response to the catastrophic effects of trauma. This is known as an “inverted experience” (Salk, 1983, as cited in Moustakas, 1990, p.15), which is an experience that inverts the entire focus from the client to noticing the therapist’s intra-psychic response. This in turn informs her experience of the *other*. Roth (1990) notes that “empathic immersion in the psychological past and present of the patient, when linked with resonating experiences in the therapist, suggests the heady and fascinating material that is the daily bread of the working therapist” (p.16). This example of rich inter-subjectivity may be powerfully beneficial for both therapist and client.

My own process of moving from naiveté to knowing has been both dreadful and exhilarating – requiring reflexivity, reading, therapy, relational connection, creative writing, prayer, solitude and contemplation. I have had to process personal material from which I had previously dissociated for much of my life. This journey has been painfully revealing, discovering aspects of myself of which I feel ashamed and afraid. However, I have also found aspects of myself where I am measuring significant and sustained growth. Brockhouse, Msetfi, Cohen, and Joseph (2011) note that there is much literature about the significance of the occupational hazard of vicarious traumatisation for therapists, but comparatively little about the potential for growth while working amid vicarious exposure to trauma.

An example of a positive outcome of the vicarious exposure to trauma might be how this aids the therapist’s development of *empathy*. Seen as the “key to the therapeutic relationship”, empathy is the “art of understanding... the gateway to vulnerability”, and helps “sustain therapists in their work” (Brockhouse et al., 2011, p.736). The notions of vicarious post-traumatic growth in the therapist, and post-traumatic growth in the traumatised person, foster my sense of hopefulness towards an increased effectiveness in working with traumatised clients. While reading a book on hope, edited by Parse, one contributor, Pilkington (1999), notes that hope is acknowledged to be an essential component of “health, growth and transformation...for personal and collective change” (p.43), imperative for both the traumatised client and her therapist.

Jenmorri (2006) suggests that “the experience of ...vicarious traumatisation itself, when met with reflection and meaning-making, may become a *crisis of opportunity* which clarifies a practitioner’s spiritual framework for the work and for life in its fullness” (p.50).

This *crisis of opportunity* represents an enormous challenge for any therapist, and is an invitation to participate in something deeply life-altering. It enhances the development of empathy, widening the therapist's capacity to embrace wounded humanity, and testifies to immense human collapse, repair and resilience.

Existentialist therapists like May (1969), Frankl (2006), Yalom and Josselson (2011) are influential in aiding my deeper engagement with the philosophy of human existence, and face the most profound questions we ask ourselves. I believe these are the questions which accompany engagement with psychotherapy, but are often disguised on initial presentation.

McWilliams (2004), Roth (1990), Herman (1992) and Briere & Scott (2006) inform the transformation of my gathered internal and external experiences into growth points and clinical application. Roth (1990) confirms that "I have no doubt that immersion in these endeavours will enhance and broaden the empathic and cognitive capacities of the prospective therapist" (p.14).

Speaking of her work with trauma survivors, Goldenberg (2012) asserts that "they change us, drive us, inspire us – every day. Neither will they let us be still. They challenge us all to do justice to them, and to do justice – and live justly – in an unjust world" (p. xvi).

Finally, the Holy Bible continues to both inform and guide me when considering a call to respond to life in a wider frame beyond the temporal. The New International Version is my favorite translation and I also occasionally refer to the Amplified version for its poetic rendering of Divine Wisdom.

Chapter Three - Methodology

In this chapter I will show my process – from choosing my subject, finding the appropriate methodology, discovering my question, executing my method and evaluating my data.

One of my guiding questions during this process was: Is it possible to capture the essence of oneself and one's growth phenomena, amidst the exploration of a dissertation?

In Search of a Question. At the commencement of my psychotherapy training in 2012, I made a determination to seek to integrate as many facets of my existence as possible during the dissertation process. It took the form of a promise to me. The significance of my connection with Bougainville, and the relationship I have with myself in that country, seemed like the ideal location and subject area in which to facilitate a holistic exploration of my internal phenomena, capturing my movement from naiveté to knowing.

Numerous encounters with others, both significant and seemingly insignificant, have been part of my previously unconscious guidance process, towards both the formation of my question, and my choice of methodology in order to answer that question. One such influential conversation occurred during a mealtime while on the AUT Noho Marae in 2014. I happened to sit beside one of my lecturers, who appeared to be fascinated by my looming dissertation journey. She asked me some empowering questions about my plan and the possible design of the research. Her enthusiasm shaped my quest. A further conversation during a social occasion for students in 2015 with another lecturer sparked my initial curiosity towards the possibility of engaging the heuristic methodology to facilitate the integration.

Embarking on my dissertation in December 2015, I attended a variety of classes at AUT which presented all the possible options, furthering my process of selecting the most appropriate methodology. Three methodologies appealed to me. Initially, I imagined thematic analysis may have been an option to consider, having already had the experience of conducting this variety of research during the clinical component of my Master's degree. This methodology is a "form of pattern recognition within data where emerging themes become the categories for analysis" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p.82). These themes are elucidated by careful reading of data – repeated over time. With a great deal of my data being internal and experiential, and although qualitative, and potentially phenomenological, I realised this was not going to aid the process of answering my experiential question.

Hermeneutic phenomenology was influenced by the philosopher Edmund Husserl (Lavery, 2003, p.22) with his development of the science of phenomenology – *the study of lived experience*. Heidegger and Gadamer were interested in Husserl’s phenomenology, but added an interpretive component, “focus[ing] on the meaning that arises from the interpretive interaction between historically produced texts and the reader” (p.28). I was not seeking to interpret my data – I wanted to become fully aware of my experiences, record them and respond, tracking my growth along the way.

Heuristic inquiry, as developed and disseminated by Moustakas (1990), was the obvious option. I was immediately enticed by the ability to not only use numerous sources from within the scholarly world of academia, but could also include sources outside academia for my research – including literature, myself, my journals, creative writing, and works from within the world of the creative arts. As a story-teller, rather than an academic, this heuristic tool opened up the horizon to me, enabling me to encompass and integrate the worlds I was hoping to explore – a task more expansive than any purely cerebral pursuit. “The opening of [my] wounds and passionate concerns” (Moustakas, 1990, p.14), whilst examining my internal phenomena seemed risky, and engendered feelings of both trepidation and courage. Nouwen (1972) proposes that “none of us can help anyone without becoming involved, without entering with our whole person into a painful situation, without taking the risk of becoming hurt...” (p.77).

After many attempts to formulate my question, and with input from my dissertation supervisor, the guidance of my aforementioned conversations and having explored possibilities in class, the question I developed and now seek to answer is –

“How might I experience personal growth and enhanced practice as a psychotherapist, as a result of working with clients experiencing trauma and post-traumatic distress?”

Heuristic Inquiry

Moustakas (1990) proposes that heuristic research “incorporate[s] creative self-processes and self-discoveries” (p.9), and is a “way of engaging in scientific research through methods and processes aimed at discovery” (p.15), thereby hoping to understand one’s phenomena with greater depth. The philosopher Edmund Husserl, known as the father of phenomenology, proposed examining human phenomena, “without theoretical presuppositions ... [then] discerning what is essential and necessary to these experiences” (Husserl, IEP, p.1). Moustakas

acknowledges one of the building blocks of his heuristic paradigm is the philosophical realm of phenomenology.

I infer from Grant and Giddings (2002) that heuristic research falls into the “Interpretive Paradigm” (p.16), in which truth is sought about the phenomenology, denoting “what it is to be human” (p.16). This fits well with my desire to integrate existentialism and spirituality into my inquiry. Moustakas acknowledges the existentialist forefather, Søren Kierkegaard as one of his ultimate influences in the study of the individual and the development of the heuristic methodology. The poetry, prose, and photos contained in this work exemplify the existential and metaphoric nature of creative engagement with one’s own life processes. The method section, commencing on page nineteen, illuminates the phases of the heuristic journey.

Moustakas (1990) includes an acknowledgment of the researcher’s own “internal frame of reference” (p.26) as integral to this methodology. The specific facets of this internal frame include – *tacit knowing*, which refers to the knowledge we know, but cannot tell (p.20); *intuition*, which is the space we all have between what is explicitly known and tacitly known (p.23); and *indwelling*, which is the ability to look inward to explore the deeper significance of a theme or human experience (p.24) and focus on “significant ideas relevant to personal growth, insight and change” (p.25). The rich parallels between heuristic inquiry and psychoanalysis added the ultimate dimension for me, and became the most enticing conduit of holistic person-centred research.

The Potential Pitfalls of Heurism

The process of moving from “an objectified observer to a subjective participant” (Rose & Loewenthal, 2006, p.139), was a challenge, with myself, the potentially isolated researcher, doing the bulk of the meaning-making. I made efforts to address this challenge, in my personal therapy, my research process and by accessing wider conversation/consultation with others. I also experienced the reality of one’s entire focus being on one’s subjectivity, with the need to “retreat from the intense, concentrated focus on the question” (Moustakas, 1990, p.28). This feels like a parallel process with how one might experience clients in the therapy hour, and heralds one of the competencies required for health and longevity of the therapist – integrating therapist countertransference *and* cognition.

Sela-Smith (2002) warns about the possibility of a “free-fall surrender” (p.70), with what I imagined might become boundary-less musings or creative piffle. This “surrender” might also make one susceptible to misplaced emphasis, for example, over-analysing trivial data. Even so,

the nature of the heuristic paradigm seems to be more accommodating of trial and error learning, providing opportunity for free-spirited subjective analysis and engagement. Being mindful of the learning outcomes while fulfilling the phases of one's research is a challenge, ensuring both systems are adhered to. I have found the immersive experience of the research process all-encompassing and have had to work hard to extricate myself from my subject, to facilitate greater focus on fulfilling the learning outcomes.

Learning to be mindful of my blind-spots was another growth edge. These are moments in which the researcher is significantly influenced by "countertransference issues, issues for how they hear and interpret the story of the other" (Rose & Loewenthal, 2006, p.139). An example is my identification with the powerlessness experienced by the Bougainvillean people. In supervision I discussed my positive bias towards the Bougainvillean people, which has developed as my research has progressed. I have come to realise that my bias is more help than hindrance, however, allowing me deeper into an identification that does not erase differences but finds common ground.

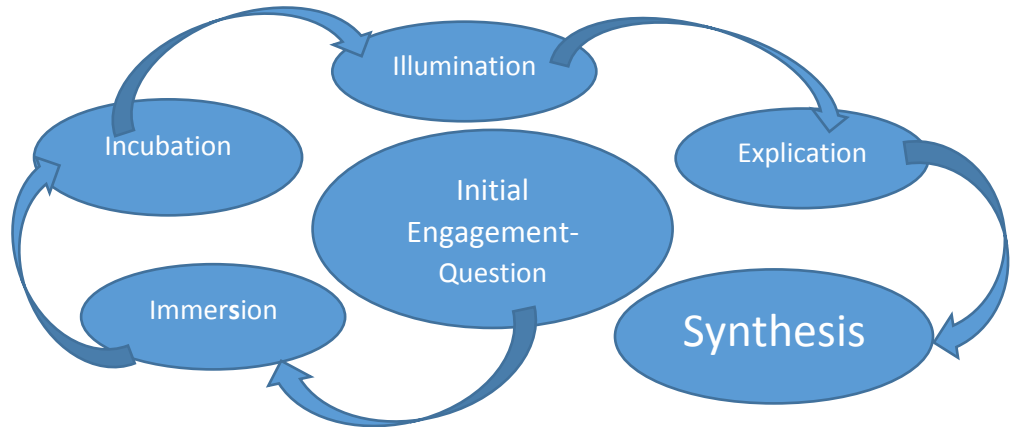
Method

My process utilises various sources of information from self-examination, literature review, use of personal journals written while in Bougainville, response to media, newspaper and journal articles. I have expanded these steps to illuminate my own experience on the following page. This informs the way I addressed the phases of heuristic research, as proposed by Moustakas (1990), following the steps outlined in his book:

1. **Initial engagement** – The inner process of discovery of the subject for intense focus for the dissertation, including the emergence of the question to guide the research odyssey.
2. **Immersion** – The building relationship between the researcher and the primary focus. This includes significant time thinking and expressing to others, brewing the subject matter as constantly as is possible.
3. **Incubation** – The researcher deliberately moves away from the intensity of immersion and steps back, looking at a wider perspective, nourishing the previous steps and seeking to allow room for some "creative integration" (p.29).
4. **Illumination** – The open-minded researcher responds to an awakening of themes/qualities which emerge.
5. **Explication** – The researcher embarks on a full examination of what emerged in the illumination of the previous stage.

6. **Creative Synthesis** – Once intimately familiar with all the data, and having had time to thoughtfully consider the previous steps, this stage usually culminates in the form of a creative depiction, for example, a narrative, poem or painting. In my case, the synthesis will be represented by my discussion chapter – Chapter Six.

Diagrammatic Representation of Moustakas' (1990) Heuristic Journey.



Model 1 – My interpretation of the theoretically linear progression through the heuristic process

The Phases of my Heuristic Research Inquiry Expanded

My process of *immersion* (Moustakas, 1990, p.28) in the nation of Bougainville, in June 2016, came after a long *initial engagement* (p.27), which started in 2013, on my first trip. The task of the initial engagement phase is to “discover an intense interest, a passionate concern... [which] holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications” (p.27). I was profoundly drawn to beautiful yet traumatised Bougainville and I began to dream of and conceptualise ways in which I could integrate many facets of my existentialism – my professionalism as a nurse, altruism, post-graduate psychotherapy master’s degree and my spirituality – thus creating a holistic synthesis, amid academic rigour and assessment.

The heuristic research paradigm became a rich conduit facilitating this integration for me. My immersive time in Bougainville was powerful, intentionally having more intimate conversations with our friends and our patients, which was both influenced by my desire to more deeply understand their post-traumatic phenomena, and facilitated by their increasing trust in me as an individual, and us, as a medical team. We have committed ourselves to them and they are willing to share their lives with us. It is a huge privilege, which I do not take for granted.

During my immersion in Bougainville, my mind was very alert, attentive to cues all around me. I was deliberately paying attention to that which impacted me in real time. When my journal was not near me, I jotted notes in my phone to record my responses to new data or experiences.

Sometimes all that was needed was a word to use as a trigger later – in the quiet of the day – allowing myself time for reverie. The photos my medical partner and I both took, and the recordings we made on our phones, were also taken to enable a moment to be captured in some way and its profundity not lost. I knew that on my return to New Zealand, my next phase of incubation would be enhanced by such a holistic collection of data.

The *incubation phase* (Moustakas, 1990, p.28) was a very painful time for me as I disengaged in a bodily sense from my context in Bougainville, by flying home, thus enabling “the inner tacit dimension to reach its full possibilities” (p.28). While locked in my study space in my bedroom, I journeyed through deeply hidden and overgrown valleys of my memory; responded to painful recent experiences; sat quietly and thoughtfully, examining both what was immediately accessible to me and curious about what was locked away. I felt, wept, wrote, celebrated, read, dreamed, created, grinned, mourned and groaned. I permitted myself to experience the emotional aftermath of my immersive experience and think deeply about that experience. I desisted from trying to squeeze my writing into some sort of pre-theorised recipe and began to free myself from the constraints of academia and delved into my deep inner dimensions, my phenomenology, with an inquisitive and open posture.

During this phase, on the days I had put aside to write, I woke early in the morning, and made myself a pot of tea. I put earplugs in, in order to free myself from any distractions, and closed the door to my writing space. I opened my journal and read various entries, sometimes accompanied by the sound recordings I made.

My poetry began to emerge, and fresh prose became my constant companion and informant, pouring straight out of my troubled, stimulated and creative soul. I believe the way I have structured this writing, is consistent with my revelatory process. My poetry punctuates my prose and analysis, and the work contains an honest “recreation of [my] lived experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p.39), embellished by word-pictures, depictions, photographs and audio files (recorded by me in June-July 2016). The prose and journal entries are differentiated from poetry and analysis by italicising the words and indenting the paragraphs. The chapter headings are signposts, and indicate my journey. The heuristic methodology for research “defies the shackles of convention and tradition” (p.17) and therefore allows me some creative freedom in presenting my experience and analysis.

I chose to include in my dissertation the sound recordings I made, because they are part of what informed me – taking me back to the moment, when revelation was rich and raw. The listener to

the audio files is invited momentarily to step more deeply into my immersive experience, therefore having an immersive experience of their own.

With my newly open posture, as encouraged by supervision, and the intentional process of letting go, my deeper awakening began amidst intentional indwelling. My biggest task amid this *illumination phase*, was to “uncover meanings and essences” (Moustakas, 1990, p.29) and increase my awareness. “The purpose of the explication phase is to fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layers of meaning” (p.31).

The themes which emerge amid this illumination phase, encapsulate a shifting and deepening—a mining of my psyche and the integration of a process both felt and cognised. I have made room for a sustained look at me; my drivers, influences, goals, pain, self-dialogue, professionalism, faith, purpose and freedom. Moustakas (1990) proposes “meanings are inherent in a particular world-view, an individual life, and the connections between self, other and world” (p.32). During this phase, I searched for literature to substantiate my findings – either online in the AUT library; in one of the many books I purchased or borrowed; in the books of readings from the various courses provided in the Master’s degree programme; and even assessed the bibliographies of some of those books and references of the journal articles, to search for more inspiration.

My *creative synthesis* encapsulates me moving from myself as an individual, to the small ‘hamlet’ of the therapy room, to the villages and jungle in Bougainville and onto the wider sociological realm of nationhood. This process has expanded my frame of reference and I have represented that as carefully and creatively as I could manage, with me at the centre. I seek to capture my movement along the continuum, from naïveté towards knowing, and therefore growth. I also discuss the generalisability of my findings to the profession of psychotherapy. I searched online for works of the trauma theorists/therapists in greater depth during my creative synthesis phase, and found they created a substantial theoretical thread which wove the links between my individual experience, the clinical application and the relevance of my research to the profession of psychotherapy.

Chapter Four – Narrative

Immersion, incubation, illumination

This chapter is a chapter full of meaningful depictions and my responses to them. Although occurring in real time during my immersive journey to Bougainville in 2016, the time spent once home incubating my experiences, allowed me important time for reverie – time spent thinking and feeling – capturing my experiences in words – as honest as I could be. It is rich with creativity and the widespread use of metaphor.

Whimsical, carefree.

A dandelion seed in the breeze.

Me.

Dizzied by currents of air.

Floating, frolicking.

My innocence.

A delightful way to be.

Whimsical and carefree.

The seed lands – an awkward spot.

The elements pound.

Extremes.

The seed surrenders its protective sheath.

Tender vulnerability unveiled.

Roots embed in the soil.

The soil of trauma, love, hope, desperation, failure, loss.

Roots descend deeper.

Reservoir of life.

Tender new shoots reach towards the sun.

Transcend smothering darkness.

Grounded, grieving, growing, giving.

ALIVE.

Michelle Yates, July 2016

Whimsical, Carefree, written during my incubation phase, encapsulates my journey as a naïve ‘seed’, caught on the breeze of dreams and idealism, floating through my humanity. My initial engagement with Bougainville, occurred amid such a flurry of fantasy – the seed of my soul entranced by adventure and an opportunity like I had never faced before.

Treasure

Prior to leaving New Zealand for my medical/immersive heuristic research trip to Bougainville in June 2016, I wrote the following poem, attempting to encapsulate what the beginnings of the heuristic process (Moustakas, 1990) of self-examination for my dissertation felt like. I felt anxious prior to my departure, something I hadn't felt on the previous two trips to Bougainville. I was aware of my deepening and developing awareness, as facilitated through my personal therapy and process through university. I felt fearful about my tender heart and soul but was determined to maximise my time in Bougainville – to have a deeper engagement with my subjectivity. The poem, below, has an almost fantastical sense of a childhood story-book adventure, waiting to unfold –

Searching for Treasure.

Searching for a treasure chest.
Long hidden by the sands of time.
Obscured.
Deliberately hidden at first.
An exotic and sacred location.
The key to the rusty lock, lost.
No map for ease of passage or exploration.
Left alone to fumble and figure.
Buried deep.
Brain whirring – fingers frenetic.
Keen to capture a phrase, a thought, a thread.
A path descending.
Leading me to treasure.
South Seas treasure.
I am reminded...
The treasure is located
in me.

Michelle Yates, 25th May, 2016

The date of Friday the 24th of June will remain etched in my memory, as the day I saw the most enormous 'wound' on any expanse of land I'd ever seen. Our six hour journey from Buka town to

Siwai, south Bougainville, necessitated a trip up and over the Crown Prince Range, which contains the now non-operational open-cut copper and gold mine, named Panguna mine. In its prime, Panguna was the largest open-cut mine on the planet. According to Enright (1994), the mine is half a kilometre deep and almost seven kilometres in circumference. Not only could I see the gigantic cavity, but numerous large hunks of rusting debris remain, disintegrating amid the ghost-town of mining equipment, and the blue-streaked river contains copper sulphate from the scarred land, continuing to impact the environment.



Figure 3 – Contaminated water in the Jaba River

I felt deeply moved whilst overlooking that mine. Tears escaped from my eyes as feelings of sadness and despair leaked down my face, in what seemed like empathic attunement to the traumatised landscape. I found myself uttering soulful groans – words seemed insufficient and intrusive. The open ‘wound’ is gargantuan. The enormity of the moments of first apprehending the mine and its devastation have had an increasingly profound effect on me. The shock, grief, and then anger I felt, were far bigger than I anticipated I would feel. I was beginning to understand why local Bougainvillean clans wanted to blast an end to the mine-related environmental degradation of their land. As a person from a developed nation far removed from daily dependence on the land, it is impossible to fully comprehend how precious the land is to the people of the Land of Bougainville.

Prominent Bougainvilleans articulate its importance by admitting:

“Land is our life. Land is our physical life – food and subsistence. Land is our social life; it is our marriage; it is our status; it is security; in fact, it is our only world...for us to be completely landless is a nightmare...we are threatened people” (p.xix). (Miriung, Dove and Togolo, 1997, as cited in Connell, 1997).

As we drove down the Jaba River valley following the devastating sight of the gaping wound of the mine, gouged crater-like in the middle of the mountain-range, my attention was drawn to the deposits of waste rock and tailings, discarded during the

mining process. This waste rock constitutes huge formations of rubble, creating enormous man-made topography, unappealing to the eye, impeding natural water flow in the valley and ruining their once healthy environment. Looking at Google Earth around that area is a heart-breaking experience – the scarring deep and wide. I previously had no appreciation of the extent of the ‘raw material’ needed to be eliminated through the mining process, in order to elucidate the rich, valuable precious elements, hidden deep in the earth.

Heurism – Mining One’s Self

The mine at Panguna becomes an incredibly apt metaphor with which to extract a parallel picture of the internal mining expedition I embarked on in March 2016, in the full embrace of a heuristic inquiry. The use of metaphor amidst this dissertation is widespread as it is in my clinical work. I appreciate the way metaphor engages “concrete sensory experience (primarily visual) to convey an abstract idea” (Siegelman, 1990, p.5) and speaks to the intuitive facet of our selves.

When I first started ‘mining’ my internal experiences related to working in post-traumatic Bougainville, I knew well that I was looking for substantial material to elucidate – to maximise a metaphoric opportunity in which I wanted to mine my own depths. Initially I found a lot – drilling and exploring all around. Reading, searching the internet, foraging for facts, conversing, recalling – everything felt like valuable information. On my return to New Zealand, I attempted to remain connected to my vast experience, searching my psyche for significance, spending countless hours in front of my computer, with my ear-plugs in, to ensure, as Moustakas (1990) would encourage, “that one be open, receptive, and attuned to all facets of one’s experience” (p.16), sustaining a focus on my phenomenology. Similar to processing ore in a mine rich in deposits, I soon discovered my excess ‘waste rock’.

These were my tunneling expeditions; blasting my way into different territory, searching for my own rich valuable ‘deposits’. On my return home, four chapters were quickly constructed, which contained much material, but ultimately, little was of lasting consequence. Once I had moved deeper into my psyche, I could barely look at these files – chapters which contained thousands of words, were now relegated to the waste-rock, rubble pile – a file in my computer known as ‘the dump’. I reflect on this initial part of the return process to be partly defensive in nature, noting the degree to which my flurrying behaviour impeded my inner journey, calling out my deepest and most authentic responses and processes. This process, however, was integral to the beginning search for my valuable deposits, and therefore, the waste-rock pile had its value.

The above phrase “blasting my way into different territory” indicates the ‘forced’ nature of my explorations, awkwardly attempting to collect inner information, organise my thoughts and categorise them, at a time where no such orderly neatness belonged or could be found inside me. Through the patient and wise process of supervision, I was encouraged to “free-up” and “allow myself an outpouring...which [didn’t] need to be curated”, noting “the more raw the better” (J. Fay, personal communication, July 20, 2016). My need to control, organise and sanitise, was getting in the way of me drilling into my unconscious. Guided away from prematurely conceptualising the whole, I was encouraged to spend time exploring the numerous facets of my experience and trust that eventually the whole picture would emerge.

My desire for order and cohesion was not going to be a manufactured process, enlisting the help of an external framework. My valuable deposits were not going to be found by merely engaging with a cognitive process of exploration and illumination, or by any kind of frantic behaviour on my part. Rather it was going to be a more organic process, like the copper sulphate naturally leaching out of the quarried walls of the mine.

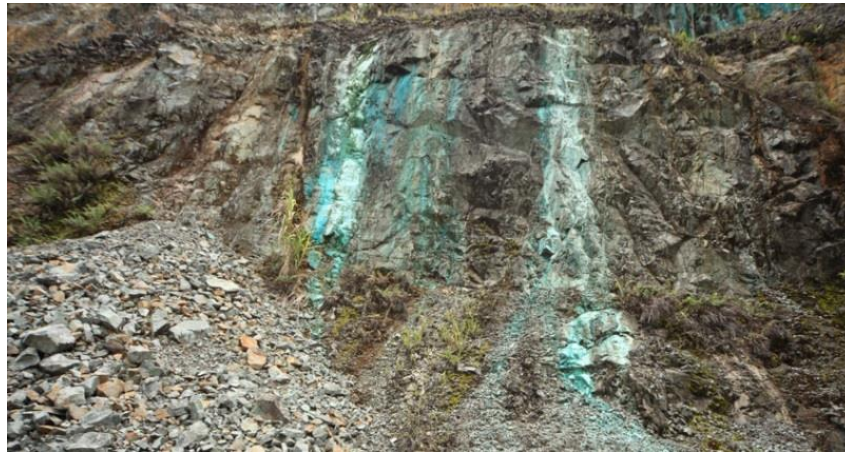


Figure 4 – Copper leaching from Panguna Mine

The Mine

A gaping wound in the earth.

The earth.

Blasted for treasure, rare commodities may bring life, instead bring greed.

Greed at the expense of life.

Society blasted of its treasure – blood on the soil.

Villages emptied of treasure, precious human treasure.

Blasted into eternity.

The gaping wounds remain.

Heart wounds, soul wounds.

Treasure stolen.

Rubble remains to remind.

Fragments.

The mine, reminds.

The mind – mined.

My mind.

Blasted.

Michelle Yates, July 2016

The rich valuable deposits I discovered within me, looked more emotionally dark than I imagined they might, when I first embarked on this journey. As I sought empathic resonance with the Bougainvillean people, I found huge 'deposits' of my own sadness, anger and grief dwelling under my exterior 'overburden' – the layers of denial, naïveté and cowardice. My overwhelming rage about the immense injustice towards the people and their land boiled within me; like the volcanic lava below the surface of the earth; shaking me like the dynamite explosions used to dismantle the earth during the mining process, with rupturing violence.

Search for Meaning – My Dream

Yalom and Josselson (2011) note that “a sense of meaning emerges from plunging into an enlarging, fulfilling, self-transcending endeavor” (p.313). My journey to Bougainville began in the realm of the aforementioned endeavour – one which was seeded in my childhood fantasies of growing up and becoming a nurse, and serving the poor people we often prayed for in our evening prayers as a family. My parents regularly embraced other people who needed some

extra support and love— having been through a marriage break-up or other difficult life circumstance for example – and I could see the tangible effects my parent’s generosity and love had on other people’s lives. Their motivations were very much about sharing God’s love and abundance, recognising His grace and abundance in their own lives. I also revere both my grandmothers whom I regard as godly women, serving others by catering for country women’s events and weddings, church occasions or knitting socks or hats for people in need, and loving us grandchildren lavishly as an example – generosity, compassion and kindness personified.

I was reminded recently, as previously explicated, about the deeper ancestral influence upon me, while reading a biography of my great aunt, Miss Gwen Avery. Her mother was my great grandmother, Elizabeth Belton. She was known in the Dunedin City Mission as Sister Lizzie prior to her marriage to my great grandfather, Reverend Wes Avery, minister in the Methodist Church. She worked compassionately with many marginalised people within Dunedin city, namely prostitutes, homeless people and those afflicted by addiction to alcohol. The twelve months between May 1908 and May 1909 she made “1180 visits to poverty-stricken dwellings” (Molloy, 2011, p.6) and visited people in hospital and “gaol”. She was described by her Matron as being “a thoroughly competent medical and surgical nurse – patient, careful, obliging, sympathetic, kind and attentive to her patients, and always conscientious in the discharge of her duties” (p.4). Shortly after Sister Lizzie and Reverend Wes Avery were married in 1910, they left New Zealand on board a ship, to serve God and humanity on the island of Dobu, in Papua, for four years.

Her first-born son, my grandfather, John William Avery, was born in Papua. Back in New Zealand for his education, he eventually became a doctor and worked in general practice and obstetrics in Canterbury, for thirty-five years. Although I recognise this is not the only influence on me, the medical genetic-imprint upon me is significant, and it is not surprising that I dreamed about becoming a nurse from an early age. I’m thrilled by the many ways I live a parallel life with that of my great grandmother; as a mother, a nurse, the wife of a Reverend and a humanitarian-aid worker.

Graduating as a registered nurse in 1989, I spent many years working in differing contexts, learning, growing and honing my professionalism. Throughout my early years of nursing I also became a mother, and consider myself blessed to be the mother of four amazing children, all of whom are now young adults. My idealistic dreams to serve humanity on the edge of despair, remained alive in my soul from my childhood on into adulthood, and were awaiting my attention. This world, a million miles away from my own in the wilds of Bougainville, beckoned me to its shores, and I responded enthusiastically. I went with the motivation to help and encourage and

be a blessing – an unexpected gift. I wanted an adventure and to contribute something meaningful to the planet simultaneously.

Reading my daily journal entries from our first trip to Bougainville in 2013, one could be allured into thinking I was in a tropical island paradise, with a heavenly history – characterised by peace, tranquility and abundance. I discover many reflections like –

Sunday morning – awoke, reasonable sleep...another morning in tropical paradise. 0700, down the cliff track and through 'Avatar Land' to the deserted swimming hole – white sandy beach, coconut palms, clear water, colourful sea-stars, curious giggling children...peaceful stroll along the beach...children calling 'mere, mere' (lady,lady).



Figure 5 – 'Curious Pikininis' (children). Personal archive.

I was soon to learn, however, that idyll is a superficial characteristic of Bougainville – a deeply traumatised nation. My capacity to dissociate from the deeper reality of traumatised humanity was a well-honed defense, which had its genesis in my childhood. There are only random acknowledgements of the trauma in the early pages of my hand-written experiences. When I first turned to my journals for material, I was disappointed by the discovery of the lack of emotional depth amidst my reflections. Ashamed and embarrassed, I was curious about how I could possibly miss the immensity of their experience and despair. I went with a particularly naïve attitude. I believe this highlights my very operational secondary defense of repression – a type of “motivated forgetting or ignoring” (McWilliams, 2011, p.127). Repression or ignoring has protected me from facing the most awful truths about suffering humanity, and stopped me from courageously facing them as an adult – to do so would necessitate me examining my own culpability – hence my resistance.

“Mister Pip” (Jones, 2006)

While immersed in my writing, I recalled a mother-son date, back home in New Zealand, which confronted me graphically with the horror of war and the ensuing devastation of the blockade imposed on Bougainville. In the middle of 2014, we went to see the film, “Mister Pip” – a screen adaptation of the book of the same name, written by New Zealand author, Lloyd Jones. It happens to be set in Bougainville during *the crisis*. I was full of anticipation about the movie. Having already visited Bougainville once, I was excited about the potential of having my senses titillated by clever casting, cinematography, screenplay and music. I could imagine scenes of lush jungle, beautiful black-skinned people and possibly even enjoying the beat of the jungle drums. I felt almost giddy with delight at being able to share this treat with my son, who has sensibilities similar to my own in relation to the plight of the developing world, adoration of natural beauty and an open heart, willing to be influenced by others.

Going to see a movie at the cinema is a real treat for me. I always ensure I add to the occasion by wearing a special outfit, and by the time I arrive at the cinema I am filled with heart-pounding anticipation. The experience is always rich and full, feeling invited into another context, being provided with an opportunity to embrace another world, adventure or drama. Not one for sci-fi or violence, my favourite genre tends to be drama – stories with substance, adventurous or biographical in nature, for example the recent movie, “Woman in Gold”, released in 2015, about the recovery of art, owned by a Jewish family, which was confiscated during WWII. I appreciate a movie which is not only a journey of a sensory and visceral nature, but also causes me to think deeply and challenge my world-view. I value movie-makers with a conscience, who use their art to convey something substantial. “Mister Pip” had all the promise of all of the afore-mentioned components for me. My anticipation reached crescendo point amid the opening scenes.

I could easily liken this girlish excitement, to leaving New Zealand for my first trip to Bougainville in 2013...my own special drama and adventure, rich and full, expectant of having my world-view challenged but oblivious to the extent of the agonising potential of that. My journal, written after departing New Zealand in the plane, February 7th 2013, gives a clue as to the status of my soul as I flew to Bougainville –

I have found as I pray and prepare, I see so many black faces and have beautiful wonderings, hopes. Exciting stories about to unfold...I love wondering and imagining – not knowing what’s ahead and not feeling anxious is a [real] gift. (Personal journal).

With my son by my side and the glorious cinematography in front of me, I was ready for the unfolding of this story. The movie started gently with words on the screen setting the scene

historically then progressed to stunning visual imagery I was familiar with – my appetite for more was growing. “Perhaps I might see one of the villages I’ve been to, or possibly even see someone I know?!” Without warning, scenes of children playing happily on a glorious beach were juxtaposed with soldiers carrying guns and helicopters shuddering around the sky – these images blew the naïve childish notions out of my mind, as the themes of anguish and horror were unleashed and subsequently prevailed throughout the entire movie. Delightful scenery – people terrorised by trauma – a wailing mother shatters the idyll, as her dead soldier-son is returned to her.

I averted my eyes and covered my ears, feeling regretful about exposing my son to this. Until now the stories I had heard about war-time atrocities were only that to me – stories. Now the people in said stories had names and faces – dreadful sounds of weaponry firing and terrified screams emanated from the immense theatre speakers and I felt completely surrounded by violence, fear, sadness and grief.

The faces of the actors could be my friends in Bougainville. Their plight was real and raw in my mind for the first time. My tears began to flow down my cheeks uncontained. I glanced at my son to check on him and he too was raw. How can this happen? Why should hatred and greed invade and spoil this glorious paradise? It reminds me of the Garden of Eden and the paradise lost – God said “What is this you have done?” (Genesis 3:13). The question looms large in my heart – what is this that has happened to the people living in the Garden of Eden, in Bougainville? How can this be?! I was horrified. My idealised and naïve notion of Bougainville was smashed and their reality came into sharp and painful focus for the first time for me.

We barely spoke on the way home in the car. It was hard to respond with words – somehow silence was what we used to contain our pain. We had a snapshot into the immensity of their trauma – our eyes and souls and minds opened to a reality we couldn’t comprehend. I felt so impacted by the movie that I was hesitant to recommend its realistic, traumatic brilliance, yet I believe anyone associated with, or who has a heart towards the developing world, needs to see “Mr Pip” or read the book, in order to move a few degrees towards greater understanding and therefore empathy. I realise I do myself a disservice if I deny myself opportunities like this – a paradigm-shifting experience.

The viewing of “Mr Pip” is ostensibly one of my developmental stepping-stones, an opportunity to approach other people’s atrocious experiences and face the horror. Having been exposed visually, there’s no retreating from my developmental task to engage with the unbearable aspects of humanity and therefore myself. The evil, hatred and greed on this planet are pervasive

and not simply 'out there'. I am part of the human race and I need to own my own, shame, intolerance, hate – how have I participated in the wrecking of my own Garden of Eden?



Figure 6 – View to the reef – Haku, Buka Island. Personal Archive.

Into my Wild

I'm lost...

Cannot return to what was.

Somewhere in the midst of a thicket – inhaling tropical delight.

Delight which feels like freedom.

Free to hide and be hidden.

“Please may I stay?”

Unencumbered.

Me.

My defenses infiltrated.

Stillness lost.

Enemies landing on my beaches – fear, doubt, entrapment, agony.

Stealing my peace, my sense of cohesion.

My head and heart ache for comfort.

Running to the High places.

Gasping seen.

Nestling safely under Divine Wings.

Frantic gasping slows.

Holy Breath fills me with heavenly soothing.

Again I am free.

Free from striving, running.

Free to

Be.

Michelle Yates, July 2016



Figure 7 – Bougainvillean Jungle

While reading the journal entry below, please listen to audio file entitled “Jungle Sounds”.

The cathedral of the Bougainvillean jungle, calls my name, echoes around the wilderness – I respond like I belong – I am found in a new way. Surrounded by glorious creatures, hidden from sight – the flora and fauna mesmerise my senses— recordings made on my phone, of noises in the night, noises from unknown creatures, creek noises, frogs and crickets. The insanity of city-life soothed by the multi-sensory, super-visceral experience of the jungle, in touch with wild natural beauty in its unadulterated form. Careful conservation of the land by local clans ensures this pristine, virgin jungle is maintained and life burgeons accordingly. I am carefree... feeling like I belong, am welcome. I feel alert and adaptable – not wanting to miss anything – ready for everything – or am I?

These feelings and experiences seem somewhat familiar. Perhaps the call to this adventurous jungle encounter is not so new?! I open the territory of my psyche to explore its topography in search of the connection, feeling drawn by the thrill of exploration. I discover traces of the genesis of these memory-echoes, deep in the ‘jungle’ of my childhood – the last time I felt free and adventurous – making tree houses and huts with scraps of useful treasure, like an old bonnet from a car found in the bush; digging in the yard of our farm for ‘ancient artefacts’ (an old rubbish pit) which had been buried in the deep past; utilising logs and unused fence-posts to create furniture on which to entertain my visitors – the neighbours; camping in the bush, far away from civilisation and listening to the sounds which filled ones ears full of orchestral insect life; forgetting to eat for hours on end as my fully occupied little self, engaged with meaningful survival endeavours.

Forty years now since these memories were created, disguised by the layers of time which inevitably obscure them from consciousness. I find remnants of my childhood memories and realise the ways I engage with them unconsciously in my adult life. Pinkola Estes (2008) writes that “wildlife and the Wild Woman are both endangered species” (p.1) and in order to remain

connected to my wild and natural self, I cultivate regular opportunities to entirely revel in Creation. These opportunities are occasions like taking a picnic into the bush with a special friend; filling baskets with pine cones with my daughter, preparing for winter fires; tramping in the mountains and forests of New Zealand with any one of my three sons; summer occasions at the beach, foraging on the shore for shells, intriguing drift-wood and other 'gems' among the flotsam and jetsam. These moments are free moments, unhurried by expectations or timeframes, floating in a realm governed by nature. I am in love with this state of being. I am alone but not lonely; nurtured by beauty and space – freedom. My little collections of precious treasures are now contained in baskets, or pretty jars, connecting me to moments when time stood still and my awareness and gratitude were fully piqued. This feels like freedom.

Freedom – “1. The power or right to act, speak or think as one wants. Absence of subjection to foreign domination or despotic government. The power of self-determination, attributed to the will.

2. The state of not being imprisoned or enslaved...” (Oxford, n.d).

Freedom feels like being able to embrace an opportunity in its entirety, responding to my inner desires, the call of Creation and to the needs of others – wildly and fully – unconstrained by the temptation to acquiesce to comfort and caution. Saying ‘yes’ to open doors, and ‘yes’ to what otherwise may not be possible. My relationship with Bougainville seems like such an opportunity. The moment I step off the plane in Buka town, I am responding to an existential invitation to engage.

The existential angle on the concept of freedom is the idea that we are “the authors of our own lives...and we alone are responsible for choices” (Yalom and Josselson, 2011, p.311). It is a powerful theory which describes the crises we humans face, and I realise I seek more and more opportunities to expand my experience of my humanity – the wonderful Gift of Life. Included in this facet of existential freedom, is the freedom to choose and embody ideologies and world-views, which stimulate one to “confront the limits of his or her destiny” (May, 1981, as cited in Yalom and Josselson, p.318). The limits of my destiny look increasingly different as I interact with the opportunities which are afforded to me in the land of Bougainville. It means I am often stretched and uncomfortable, needing to use different sets of skills to those I use in my daily life in New Zealand, adapting to dynamic work environments, the traumatised people I face and my countertransference to the massive need.

Professionally the work is challenging. Working in searing tropical heat, day after day, seeing hundreds of sick people, taxes me physically. We work in remote clinics with no national grid

electricity, so lighting is poor and cooling off with a simple fan is not even possible. The aid-posts are sometimes difficult to access and people walk for miles and line up for hours in order to see us – desperate for some relief from their physical suffering. This tsunami of suffering humanity is overwhelming and I find myself calling for Divine sustenance.

My idealised jungle invitation is not as idyllic as I first fantasised. Danger lurks there too – like my childhood, where the darkness of ‘another’ permeated the atmosphere. Pinkola Estes (2008) reminds us that “all creatures must learn that there exist predators. Without this knowing, a woman will be unable to negotiate safely within her own forest without being devoured. To understand the predator is to become a mature animal who is not vulnerable out of naïveté, inexperience or foolishness” (p.42). Havens (1986) remind us that we face the reality of predation early in our lives and that “human predation on our own species is...widespread” (p.11). Although I experienced insidious predatory evil, I have naively and deliberately disengaged with the reality of the dark side of humanity, and indeed myself, splitting them off, finding them too difficult to bear. Bougainville brings me face to face with this reality – I can no longer deny, by hiding myself away from violence and tragedy, trauma, despair and death. No longer are my experiences of war stories and grand-scale trauma, relegated to documentaries and cinematography, split off from my reality. The characters in those stories now have names and are faces of people I know and love, and consider to be my friends.

Denial is what happens, according to McWilliams (2011), “as our first reaction to any catastrophe” (p.105) — the inability to assimilate the enormity of the event. It is hard to acknowledge that humanity can be as destructive as it is glorious. My persistent and hopeful expectation that all people are governed by light is a naïve position. All humanity embody, and are impacted on by a ‘shadow-side’. My reference to light and dark in this paragraph is an attempt to describe the states of our behaviour which are influenced by love or hate, hope or despair. One of my challenges in this work, amid my desire to fathom my depths, is the reality that “when we illuminate some part of the psyche, there is a resultant deeper dark to contend with” (Pinkola Estes, 2008, p.53). Merely focusing on the light aspects of my psyche, one “will develop the poorest psychic land” (p.53).

The deepest work is usually the darkest and one needs courage to take that journey. Pinkola Estes (2008) goes on to say that one builds resilience when facing into the darkness which “guarantees an increase of soul power” (p.54), thereby increasing capacity to tolerate the toughest realities of life. Freely choosing to open my consciousness to the atrocities of war including “assassination, murder ...the razing of villages, rape, torture” (Reddy, 2008, p.119), brutality to the utmost heinous degree, has been shocking and traumatising, and is

developmentally significant for me. Learning how to be relationally connected to people who have been wounded by dreadful trauma, is a journey I have chosen to embrace.

Freedom can sometimes be portrayed as reckless abandonment, throwing off all the shackles which constrain us to pursue whatever one desires and is typically seen as an “unequivocally positive concept” (Yalom & Josselson, 2011, p.318). However, I have learned that freedom requires careful consideration of how to proceed with our existential responsibilities with it. The wild inconsiderate freedoms expressed by the mine owners during the mining days at Panguna Mine, and the ensuing conflict then civil war of the 1980s-1990s, caused great harm to the environment and the building blocks of the entire Bougainvillean society. Trust, faith and peace were obliterated from people’s experience of life – fear, treachery, and trauma stood in their place.

I felt fear as I walked down a darkened lane at dusk, whilst an angry man remonstrated at the top of his lungs. I felt fear when a drunken man lunged himself in my direction, as I was passing by. I felt fear for my closest friend, as the predatory men came too close whilst waiting at the bank for her turn. Fear makes me fierce; fierceness floods my body and my endocrine system responds, preparing me for what feels imminently dangerous. Articulating my fierceness feels unfamiliar and risky – frightening. My fierceness flares in a primal response to threat, somewhat like a lioness in a protective stance around her cubs, or a freshly caught carcass.

My ferocity piqued when a man came for treatment. I had been preparing for bed after a hot exhausting day of clinical work and the sun had already set – the darkness of night was descending, but a darkness of another kind accompanied this wounded man who knocked on our door. He was seeking help for what clearly was a punch fracture of his fifth metacarpal, on his right hand. His hand appeared swollen and red. He stood in front of me grimacing with pain. My first question was “How did this happen?” He confessed that it was his wife that his acts of violence were perpetrated on. As an experienced Accident and Medical nurse, I already knew the mechanism of injury, but I wanted him to confess it. I wanted him to feel his shame. I was angry.

I found myself in an agonising and fiercely protective position – feeling anxious about the wellbeing of his wife and far more concerned for her, than for him. I wanted to articulate my rage to him, but by cascading into my fierce remonstrations, I realised I would put our team and mission in jeopardy. Containing my rage almost felt impossible. Within seconds I had to make a quick evaluation and formulate how to respond appropriately. I wanted to send him away. Instead I met him with cool professionalism and tended his hand, applying a crepe bandage,

placing his arm in a sling and advising a review including radiology, at Buka 'hausik' (hospital). We sent him away with some pain-relieving medication.

I was left feeling I had betrayed his wife – feeling like I had in some way colluded with the aggressor. I had tended his pain, and was thwarted to respond to either victim or perpetrator in a manner that felt consistent with the flooding emotions inside me. As I attempted to sleep, the visual imagery flashed in front of me, of his wife cowering in a hidden jungle location, alone, with her face smashed, possibly dazed with impaired consciousness, aching from the beating, and frightened. I felt distressed as the image lingered in my mind – each time I closed my eyes, her brutalised-self emerged in my consciousness. A volcano of anger smouldered inside me – desperate for my Bougainvillean Sister, and all her counterparts who suffer at the hands of violent aggressors – victims of a nation in the grip of a long post-traumatic phase, where new trauma is perpetrated and fear perpetuated.

Bougainville Woman

Your footprints remain in the sand on my shore

Evidence of where you have been...

How you've changed me forever

You showed me your ocean of grief and loss

The ship wrecks, the storms

The fragments of destruction –

Broken, disheveled, disconnected.

Things once precious—

Now ruined

You help me know what is difficult to know

I see you – I feel you

Michelle Yates, May 2016.

There is a palpable wildness in Bougainville...I intuit that at a moment's notice, the whole country might erupt into uncontained anger, hatred and violence – that various factors, unknown to me, might fall into alignment and conspire against hard-wrought peace and harmony. My hyper-vigilance would not even protect us against this undercurrent of feeling and its potential consequences. We rely heavily on our local Bougainvillean friends for their interpretation of

socio-cultural cues and subsequent response to them, and I notice my dark thrill in relation to the possible dangerous reality. The wise words of the character Gandalf the Grey, from the Hobbit, ring like a warning in my ears...

“There are no safe paths in this part of the world. Remember, you are over the edge of the wild now...” (Tolkien, 1937).

Danger - “Exposure to harm or injury; risk; peril.” (Dictionary).

I feel excited and terrified about danger...being in danger. ON THE EDGE. Peering into an abyss...some danger known but some danger too frightening to know. I face into the risk...more and more illuminated about the potential. I feel brave and scared. I feel alive. This is dangerous stuff...on the edge. Some friends say... “I couldn’t do that”. I love my bravery and my willingness to step into the unknown to serve humanity.

I am reminded about the passionate humanitarian advocate Marilyn Skinner from Watoto, Uganda. In a women’s conference I attended, she implored that we “spread the salve of [Divine] love onto the festering sores of humanity” (M. Skinner, personal communication, September 2012) – this looks like discomfort, edgy living, and risky business. The spectre of danger is invigorating – being looked-after because the need is imminent. I loved the experience of being looked after and looked out for by our friend and ex-Bougainville Resistance Army Commander...“don’t cross there”, “don’t discuss this” ... “I’ll just be sleeping next door” ... “expect the unexpected” ...In war time he faced his people and knows the potential.

Death and 'Mama'

Her tiny elderly body enveloped by a large chair.
Hair dyed black from the ceremonial grieving 'culture' of recent times - Precious Ones gone.
Grief her new companion.
Pointing to her back – “pen” (pain)
I reach out to touch her pain – delicate finger-tips – careful to alleviate and not create pain.
My white hand on her elderly back – black skin.
I feel the warmth of her skin, skin which has contained her, protected her these eighty some
years.
My heart is warm – moved by these intimate moments.
Her invitation to touch her touches me.
I am touched.
Lives touch.
I touch her sadness and am sad.
All her loss feels too big to measure.
Lost loves, lost life, lost hopes.
I imagine her innocence lost with the trauma of war – her village unrecognisable
Her family diminished. Her frame diminished.
I linger in the moment, the reverie of Mama.
Living in the “valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4).
My tears are near.
My heart is raw – perhaps my touch conveys – tender acknowledgement.
I trade places – I am she.
Michelle Yates, August 2016.

Death accompanies me like a vapour – unable to be seen, “play[ing] a major role in one’s internal experience. It haunts the individual like nothing else does. It rumbles continuously under the membrane of life” (Yalom & Josselson, 2011, p.321). I face the possibility of my own death – unable to linger long in such contemplation – resistant to its embrace – feeling more devastated about the risk that death hovers over my closest friend and fellow team member. Death feels like the final reprieve for the Bougainvilleans – many of whom die far too young from preventable disease. Their suffering is immense and often needless – simple medication and access to

medical help would significantly decrease suffering and death. Neither of these options is readily available to these isolated people. I notice my desire to prolong life and hold-on to freedom – I am not ready to face my own death. But the Bougainvillean people face death every day. Whilst in Bougainville, we talked about death regularly, and were aware of both acutely unwell, terminal patients and also numerous deaths occurred while there for two full weeks.

Life sometimes feels less sacred in the jungle of Bougainville...people present to our clinics with very advanced pathology at times...I am curious about this...acceptance of the inevitability of death. A mother brought her child to see us...he was four years old and close to death...a simple untreated pneumonia was the thief waiting to steal his life. His mother seemed numb...I stayed near...



Figure 8 – Caring for a sick pikinini (child)

Comfort vs Discomfort

A night of delightful slumber.

My bed delivers a delirious experience of supreme repose.

Eight inches of comfort technology cushioning my body for hours.

Feather duvet – electric blanket.

I surrender to the night – heated delight – soft and inviting.

Slice of heaven on earth.

My Reward.

Michelle Yates, August, 2016.

This is my daily reality in New Zealand. Such luxury! Lounge-room comfort...pantry-full comfort...soft-carpeted floor comfort. While in the jungle of Bougainville however, I experience nothing which comes near to such plentiful comfort. One's mattress is often situated on the floor and is a fraction of the depth of mine at home. Although when sleeping in Bougainville, despite

increased awareness of my sacro-iliac joints and my hips as they form a relationship with the floor, rather miraculously, I sleep well enough.

While reading this prose, to facilitate an immersive experience for the reader, please listen to audio file entitled, “Bougainville Jungle”.

As I lie there in the dark night of the Bougainville jungle, contemplating the challenges and blessings at the end of the working day, I can hear the glorious layers of sounds, emanating from hidden locations – chirping, whirring, cheeping – tunes of the creatures of the dark Bougainville night – so dark it’s not possible see one’s hand in front of one’s face! No sounds of the mechanised or vehicular varieties. The comfort this provides is so deep. Profound peace. Surrounded by glorious Creation. I am held in the arms of nature and feel the presence of The Divine Creator. I feel such satisfaction after a hard day of work in remote medical clinics, having made connections with precious people in great need. I feel tremendous comfort, in an existential sense, as I offer my humanity to serve humanity.

As I float into semi-consciousness, my mind is drawn to the many thousands of people in Bougainville during the war who had no comfort. In fact they had to endure extreme and ultimate discomfort. Having fled their homes in beautiful coastal villages, in order to evade Papua New Guinean Defense Force torture and murder, they moved into the inhospitable mountainous and jungle regions of Bougainville.

Of her experience of this, Bougainvillean woman Marcelline Tunim (2004) writes,

“In the jungle we had to sleep in the open. It was cold and we didn’t have blankets and there were insects biting. Almost everything was wet and damp and it was terribly hard to make a fire and even to get sunlight ... it poured with rain every afternoon and the children were cold at these high altitudes...”(p.45).

It is hard for me to fathom the full extent of the trauma these dislocated Bougainvilleans experienced for the ten years, from the blowing-up of Panguna Mine’s power supply in 1988, until the cease-fire in 1998. Miringka (2004) reports the overwhelming nature of their recovery “from the total devastation of [their] infrastructure and alienation from [their] own homes and clan lands” (p.105), not to mention all the atrocities performed in the name of justice, and the psychological wounding which is perniciously pervasive.

One balmy July night while in Bougainville, I awoke after a nightmare had frightened me with my ultimate distressing fear— that one of my children would suffer and die and that I would be

separated from him for the rest of my earthly life. It is a thought which terrifies me. The dream was graphic. My youngest son was drowning, rapidly descending further and further down into the sea, and despite my best efforts, I could do nothing to save him – powerless. I awoke distressed – suspended in a limbo state between dream-world and reality for what seemed like ages, waiting to discern what was real and what was not. They were agonising moments – my bed contained my writhing self. I finally grasped the reality that I had been dreaming. Immeasurable relief flooded my being, but my cells were turgid with adrenaline.

While I lay in bed after my nightmare about my son disappeared, my mind became haunted by images of the mass graves in Buka town, which I had learned about earlier that same day. I had become aware of a compilation of the human-rights abuses which were painstakingly recorded throughout the crisis by Marilyn Havini. This document was named “A compilation of human rights abuses against the people of Bougainville 1989-95” (Havini, 2004, p.111) and is known anecdotally as ‘Marilyn’s List’. Thousands of names are on Marilyn’s List; so many loved-ones gone forever. The ridiculous mass anguish associated with the grand-scale loss became a reality for me, for a few overwhelming moments. With the recent dream lingering in my psyche, I had a glimpse of the horror, dread, and agony which the people of Bougainville had been exposed to for almost ten years. I had to get out of bed, which in some way replicated a restricting coffin, and go into the kitchen of our wee home, and write.

In some small way, I realise my nightmare and the aftermath in my bed, created an opportunity to for me to identify momentarily, with the mothers and families who lost precious sons, daughters, sisters, fathers, uncles and brothers in the war. Loved-ones stolen from their families, torn from their lives before they had fully lived, their blood stains the land. My discomfort and sense of powerlessness in relation to the suffering of the people of Bougainville is acute.

Herein lies a challenging paradox. Superficially this country is a glorious example of God’s Creation. An abundance of lush flora abounds. Soil rich and fertile. One could be deluded into thinking one is in heaven itself. Rage, hatred, trauma and loss also exist here. Such beauty and such horror – co-existing. It feels incongruous – difficult to fathom – to get my head and heart around it feels impossible. My soul experiences immense discomfort; of the variety which caused me to groan at the top of the mine, as I apprehended for the first time, its vast scarred expanse.

I have a beautiful artistic representation of this paradox, drawn by a Papua New Guinean artist. He and I had a conversation while waiting in the domestic departure lounge for our flight from

Port Moresby to Buka. I greatly appreciated his openness to me and my discomfort with the paradox – such beauty and such tragedy. As I attempted to convey my inner wrestling, we had an intimate connection – intuitively I felt we understood each other. On the plane, we sat in different locations. At the completion of the flight, he presented me with a piece of art which he had created on an air sickness bag he found in the seat-pocket of the ‘balus’ (plane). I felt deeply understood, and simultaneously overwhelmed, by his representation of beauty and tragedy, as pictured below, such a generous response. An exquisite gift!



Figure 9 – Beauty and Tragedy. Personal Archive

On my return to New Zealand, and with permission from the artist, I spent hundreds of dollars having an exact copy made for my good friend and colleague, and arranged both the original and copy to be framed, to hang in our homes. It is not easy to look at the art, because of the immensity it represents, but I believe it is important to do so. It represents my willingness to *face* rather than *avoid* what is difficult and complex to bear. It keeps me visually connected to the truth and appropriately uncomfortable – heartbroken.

Heartbreak can render people feeling both powerless and potentially hopeless. These are both strong emotions which I identify with as part of my emotional experience of heartbrokenness in relation to Bougainville. I love how the ancient scriptures tell us about the Divine mandate to “bind-up the brokenhearted” (Isaiah 61:1, New International Version), and experience wholeness again. Wholeness might equate to transcendence...as the victims of war become less fragmented and as the healing journey continues, people begin to regain a sense of hope and seek a future which heals the past.

I notice as I read Havini and Sirivi's (2004) edited book, that I'm eager for comforting stories of hope and transcendence – where despite the most dreadful circumstances for example, the women of Bougainville, who happen to be the focus of the book, achieved the most incredible heights of development – organising their traumatically re-configured society. Sirivi (2004) noted that “when our lives reached the worst state imaginable living on the run behind the blockade, we had to make some attempt to rally ourselves to survive...we had to adapt to a new way of living” (p.73). My grandmotherly counter-transference of pride in these women overwhelms me when I read these incredible stories of transcendence. I marvel at their capacity to move from victim to victorious in aspects of their lives. Sirivi (2004) goes on to say “I see those hard days as our victorious days...we explored ways to develop self-sufficiency” (p.76).

My Reflection

I notice something quirky about myself, that when I'm near a reflective surface, I sneak a quick glance at my face, checking to ensure I don't have a piece of spinach stuck to my front tooth, or an alfalfa-style sprout of hair, sticking up from the top of my head. I also check to see if I might look dreadful, with mascara smudged under my eyes or swollen up after a night of deep slumber, looking like a marshmallow.

In a village in Bougainville, no such opportunity exists. No mirrors to be seen. Not even a pane of glass or the shiny chrome of a vehicle. Most homes have only mosquito mesh over the window frames to ward off invasion of unwanted blood-sucking predators. Perhaps it's terribly vain to be concerned about one's appearance in the middle of a jungle, BUT perhaps this funny behaviour of mine belies something deeper, a question, that if I can't see myself, do I even exist? Am I here? Perhaps in Bougainville a mirror might confirm that I'm not lost... absorbed into obscurity, in another land, surrounded by immeasurable beauty and dreadful darkness. Am I here or am I dreaming? Reflection and reflexivity.

Reflexivity seems like utter indulgence in Bougainville, when mere survival calls for so much focused attention – hours in their gardens simply so they can nourish their families and prepare for the coming seasons. They float on the sea in their outrigger canoes to secure their family's portion of protein for the day or to sell at the market for a few 'kina' (local currency). The women carry huge and heavy burdens of their root-vegetable productivity, all the way back from the gardens on their backs, which may be many kilometres from their homes. No mechanisation or aids to assist them with such loads. Once home, they nurture their children, start the 'paia' (fire), stoking it until it is sufficiently hot enough to boil water and cook their 'kaikai' (food) for that

evening and the following day. Garasu (2004) notes “the daily burden of gardening, the collection of fire wood, cooking for very large family groups and extended family obligations takes away three quarters of every day” (p.97). No electricity, no microwaves, no gas burners – *nothing* to make life a little easier.

The load they carry through life feels too great – the load of grief and loss – the load of poverty and all the lack which poverty entails – the load of responsibility to carry their nation towards hope and healing. I have known lack in my life. I recall the years we spent, living in the country, and me not feeling like I had the same privileges as my friends in town for example. My teenage-self sometimes felt hard done by. My experience of lack however is immensely disproportionate to the lack, and therefore need, in Bougainville. They lack so very much – not merely lacking the components on the basic level of existence, but they also seem to lack a sense of accomplishment and that they are potentiating as human beings, with the associated hope of reaching those attainments being lost. This seems like the privilege of the fortunate. I am one of the fortunate! The fortune of my birthplace is immense. My ancestors already faced and progressed through the developmental issues Bougainville currently faces and I benefit enormously from the privileges as a result – unlike some of my fellow country-people who are less privileged.

Curiously, I find myself, see me in Bougainville, despite the lack of visual reflection. I see myself in the care-free ‘pikininis’ (children), splashing in the river, soaking in moments of glee. I see myself in the rebellious teenager, striving for independence and respect, angry at the world. I see myself in the meres (women), transcending their trauma and carefully mending the fabric of society. I see myself in the caring yet circumspect ‘bubu’ (grandmother), hopeful for a brighter future. I see myself in the idealistic volunteers I meet, wanting to make a difference and I also see myself in the grandfatherly ‘bubus’, who are frustrated with slow progress in the repair of their society and the poor attitudes exhibited by youth. All these facets of me, and more, are elucidated as I confront my jungle circumstances. “There seems to be a balance of pleasure in finding universalities in people’s experience and the marvel of true differences, the wonderment of the psychological traveler to the realms of another’s mind and experience” (Roth, 1990, p.11). I have revelations and experiences which bring me face-to-face with myself. My reflection found in the black-skinned people I meet.

The land also informs me, calls forth courage and faith, as I consider Creation and all its treachery and glory – traversing large river fords; driving on subsiding roads; feeling like

I'm floating on a mere slip of land, thrust out of the earth after the collision of tectonic plates. When might the next movement occur? The wildness inside me feels triggered – alive and responsive – loving the pared-back version of life, making do with less, travelling light – somewhat like tramping in the mountains in New Zealand with my sons – in touch with nature and My Creator, allowing my senses the full experience of being fully human, alive and engaged. Feeling created for “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) and living in a state of naturalness. This connection to my primal self, unrestrained and adventurous, feels like a giddy state of being – perhaps this is freedom – throwing off the shackles of my roles and responsibilities and the conventions of whiteness – whatever they are.



Figure 10 – Travelling light in the New Zealand Bush

Powerlessness

It's a shocking sight to see – a pylon once carrying countless megawatts of power, now either blown-up or disconnected from the power source – a sign of unrest and a symbol of the people reclaiming their own power – power to decide and determine what is best for them rather than having that imposed on them by outsiders. Havini (2004) reminds us that in 1989 the Bougainvillean's “...cry for self-determination was repeated and civil war between the BRA and PNG forces erupted” (p.xix), sending a powerful message to the international community that enough is enough.

Enough ‘raping and pillaging’ of the land for its natural resources;

*Enough of the greed determining the continuation of practices detrimental to the environment
and ultimately to the people;*

Enough interference from mis-attuned, disconnected capitalists.

Enough powerlessness.

“Psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless...traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning” (Herman, 1992, p.33). The Bougainvillean’s sense of powerlessness may have its genesis amid their history of colonisation – interference from impinging international ‘parent’ nations. Historically, their freedom and independence have been decided for them for decades, by different international governing bodies, including Germany, Japan, Papua New Guinea and Australia. Keen for the resources which lie hidden in the earth in Bougainville, little heed or respect was paid by the colonising nations to the needs of the people and the land as I have previously noted. The Bougainvillean people began to represent their concerns about the effects of the mine on the area of Panguna, to the PNG government in the 1980s, but it seems their pleas for help were ineffective or ignored. The environmental impact studies conducted were not accepted by the local Bougainvillean landowners.

My own feelings of powerlessness in Bougainville were overwhelming. Pervasive. Almost draining away my sense of hope for a brighter future – it’s hard to hope when there is no power to change what seems inevitable. Futile. Endless poverty and negative societal ramifications secondary to war prevail. Perhaps this sense of hopelessness is my counter-transferential experience of the Bougainvillean people’s plight – attuned to the experience of colonisation – people’s power both relinquished and taken. Power found and lost.

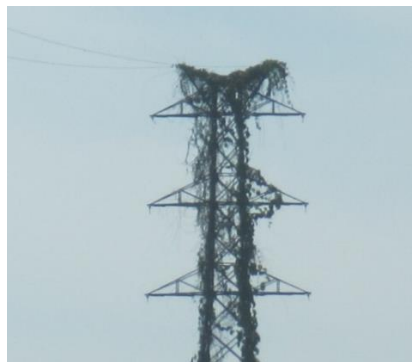


Figure 11 – Pylon previously used to provide power to Panguna Mine – Personal archive.

The ruptured pylons remind me however, about the remnants of the people’s power – a powerful and explosive message. I tried to capture photos of these pylons as we drove by. They looked like some kind of robotic memorial to independence – an utter paradox thrust out of the ground, juxtaposed against the natural soft, lush green jungle. The vines even decide to declare their verdant rebellion – attempting to disguise and strangle

the alien structures. The vines collude with the people, in a victorious overthrow of the dominant invaders of the land. It's an exquisite metaphor.

The enemies of Bougainville underestimated the formidable resistance the BRA would mount in response to their invasion. Imagining a quick capitulation, the PNG forces needed to enlist international support to wage what ended up being a ten-year war (Havini, 2004). The Bougainvilleans had a taste of phenomenal power and it propelled them to prevail. As previously noted, several peace talks were held before there was accord between all sides. The ceasefire occurred. The massive toll taken on Bougainvillean society however, will be felt for decades to come. The irony remains – combative powerfulness for years, with an enduring result of the powerlessness of poverty. This includes a poverty of choice available for development. Tierney et al. (2016) note “the widespread erosion of the social and cultural fabric of the society has had negative impacts at the population level, adding to the context of psychosocial vulnerability” (p.7) and go on to say that “there is an immediate and a strong interest within Bougainville for assistance” (p.8). The “bubus”, grandparents – often lament, that as a nation, they need outside help to “kamap” – develop.

I am struck by my ambivalence amidst the paradox. How do I sit with such a paradox within me...both reclaiming their power and losing it again as a result of the struggle? My tacit knowledge now coming to my consciousness – that knowledge which is too difficult to know, now known. My identification with the desire to shun powerlessness and find my own power is undeniable, the force of the current is strong.

As a girl, I experienced powerlessness. Our home was infiltrated by a man who took away my sense of being in charge of my own body. He took what he decided was his, in subtle ways, so that no-one would notice. I noticed. I felt violated. His access to my body was not granted by me, but he took it anyway. My ability to be powerful as a pre-teen, then as a teenager was compromised, and my sense of self was damaged. I attempted to represent my situation and remove myself from my powerless state, to no avail. Decisions were made on my behalf, which meant I remained feeling powerless. Unheard...not responded to...powerless.

My violent thoughts towards this intruder became extreme. I had fantasies of how I could bring about his demise, thereby freeing myself from his predatory behaviour. For many years I felt imprisoned in my own body, unable to feel free – not free to wear a simple t-shirt, in case it became an un-spoken invitation to touch or to comment – not able to love my youthful body, because of how it brought unwanted attention, which rendered powerful feelings of disgust about me.

Leaving home at the age of seventeen was my chance to dissociate from this undermining situation. I moved back to New Zealand, country of my birth, and began my nursing training, journeying away from powerlessness and towards self-determination. I was in charge of me. The last time I saw this man was on my wedding day, twenty-nine years ago. That was the last visual access he had to my body. The last time I would feel revolted by his leering eyes all over me. I was free. And damaged.

I wrestled with my Christian internal frame of reference, proposing the ideal to forgive “seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22). The pressure for me to extend forgiveness to this man was immense – to deny my powerful feelings of hatred and disgust towards him and move on. As a young woman I had to bury my powerful feelings of rage, but my capacity to forgive was impossible. It seemed unjust that he be forgiven. As it seemed unjust that the mine owners be forgiven for their deliberate denial of the land-owners pleas for environmental consideration and appropriate compensation.

How does a woman, seeking to regain her sense of power, begin and sustain a new trajectory towards healing and hope? How does a country return to civil society and find healing following such long-term abuse?

Chapter Five-

Explication and Synthesis

Introduction

While beginning to encapsulate a synthesis of this work, I am mindful of the significance of the task of processing months of the heuristic examination of my intra-psychic space and my work in Bougainville, drawing it all together like a Bougainvillean village feast. The poem amid the introduction of my dissertation called “Whimsical, Carefree” floated the representation of me as a dandelion seed in the breeze – influenced by gusts of wind and currents of air – my direction seemingly determined by external factors. The metaphor of the seed of me, having landed in the “awkward spot”, relinquishing my protective sheath and exposing myself to the elements, now morphs in my mind, and the dandelion seeds now represent my thoughts and the emergent themes which are present in my consciousness – not ‘out there’, but very much inside me – and mine.

My challenge is how to capture the seeds, perhaps with a theoretical and experiential ‘butterfly net’ and embed them in a coherent manner. This is by no means an exhaustive account or analysis, as I am aware of many other possibilities which I could have pursued, but in an attempt to be congruent with what emerged for me while writing I have pursued the following themes. “What has awakened in [my] consciousness” (Moustakas, 1990, p.31) are themes of isolation and feeling lost, finding myself; the experience of danger, death, freedom; confronting not running, courage, and many intersections of hope and spirituality.

Explication – “The purpose of the explication phase is to fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layers of meaning” (Moustakas, 1990, p.31). “Meanings are inherent in a particular world view, an individual life, and the connections between self, other and world” (p.32).

My deliberate return to the word immersion in the title of this piece, exemplifies my random progression through my research. This beginning of my ending represents the academic task to illuminate my findings and synthesise them. However, aligning with the paradoxical nature of some of my illuminated experiences and findings, my ending feels more like a beginning.

A beginning, in the sense that some of my revelations are personally liberating – freeing me from my previously limited experience of myself and allowing of a more expansive inclusion, less segregated iteration. Freeing my fierceness and wilderness, my passion and exuberance...my

connection to the universe...helps me feel less uptight and more relaxed about who I am and free to Be.

The hidden paths I have journeyed along, whilst delving into my existential encounters and my response to them, are seemingly paths which never end; rather they woo me “deeper and more deeply still into [my] own knowing. The tracks we are all following are those of the wild and innate instinctual Self” (Pinkola Estes, 2008, p.4). My desire to follow my inner ‘tracks’, unencumbered and free, has delivered unexpected and wild opportunities to tune-in to myself. The concepts of “indwelling, self-searching and self-dialogue” (Moustakas, 1990, p.31) inherent in the heuristic process, have facilitated a liberating journey; given me permission to freely dwell in my internal ‘forest’ and examine my flora; freely curious and questioning – free to grapple and settle, to fight and flee. Free to respond.

Jenmorri (2006) reminds us that “we imbue our lives with meaning through creating, telling, and recreating stories about our experiences and our place in the world” (p.41). Through the narrative I have shared in this work, and the extensive, immersive process I have conducted throughout this writing phase, I have realised the formative nature of the experiences I have shared, and how they continue to shape my expression of my humanity and my practice as a nurse, psychotherapist and humanitarian aid worker.

Freed to BE

The life-giving experience of my dissertation supervisors ‘Super-Ego’ endorsement to ‘let-go’, ‘free-up’ and almost ‘go wild’ whilst writing, gave me permission to write like no-one was watching, and evaluate my own defensive restrictions and my perceived external constraints, which had their historical genesis in keeping myself protected and safe. Roth (1990) implores that “we must strive to see life as it is, not as it should be” (p.8).

The existential call to freedom, as already discussed, not only represents a call to respond, but engenders a deeper more profound response to my freedom – free to be me. Free to feel my feelings, in their vast diversity, less restrained by my history, family culture and my seemingly uptight Christian faith. The parallel process which emerged, of letting-go in my writing, facilitated a letting-go of fear, made possible amid a relationship of deep trust. This trust communicated confidence in me, that I am enough; my thoughts and feelings matter and that they are valuable. This is the first time in my life, to have been validated so holistically in an academic environment. The call for me to trust myself in this dissertation process was implicit in my academic supervisor’s enabling stance. I could not have predicted the vast therapeutic benefit, of writing

this dissertation. That an academic exercise could mean so much to me personally and developmentally is deeply wonderful. I revel in this element of surprise!

I have been set free to notice and explore, wonder and examine – MYSELF – in a loving environment, devoid of judgement and flourishing with faith and hope – in me and in the process. My trust and faith in myself began to grow. Faith, that I’m not merely a seed floating in the breeze – insubstantial. Rather I notice that the seed of me is loaded with life and potential – wanting to take root in substance and meaning. Faith, hope and trust seem to be on the opposite end of the continuum, to fear and restriction. Faith, hope and trust are like pathways through the jungle and clearings in the bush. They bring life and abundance and stoke potential and unleash life-giving vigour.

This freedom has facilitated a reunion between disavowed parts of myself; parts relegated to a dungeon of darkness. Through the process of writing; in my personal therapy and the unprecedented support of academic supervision, some of those relegated parts now have seen the light of day, and their contours are not as terrifying as I believed. The contours of my grief and anger, sadness and rage are now known to me in greater measure and the mystery and judgement are removed. As I work with my clients here in New Zealand and connect in increasing depth with the traumatised people of Bougainville, my increased capacity to bear witness to other’s pain and maintain “self-cohesion” (McWilliams, 1999, p.21) is measurable.



Figure 12 – Steps to the beach – Haku

This might be seen as professional resilience, finding a path through the jungle of trauma, maintaining therapeutic connection, amidst the worst imaginable narratives. This is exemplified by my engagement, for example, with reading material exemplifying in words, the trauma the

Bougainvillean women experienced in particular. When I first encountered Havini and Sirivi's (2004) book in 2013, as previously recorded, I could barely read a chapter or two. The visual imagery it produced in me was terrible. Having been immersed in its contents now for months, I believe this is a measurable development indicator for me. Seeking to deeply understand another's experience, signals my movement along the continuum from naiveté to knowing.

Paddling in Their 'Kanu' (canoe) - Deepening Empathy



Figure 13 – Saposa Island – Personal Archive

Havens (1986) proposes that “to find another, you must enter that person's world. The empathic visitor then discovers what he has taken for granted in his own world: that it is a world of particular time and space” (p.21). This statement is representative of my experience in Bougainville where I literally enter another world – one unrecognisable from my own, which indeed helps me contemplate and face my own.

My own powerful feelings inform me about the ‘other’ I happen to be with in this ‘other world’. It is unusual as a therapist, to be able to enter “that person's world” to the extent that I have done in my trips to Bougainville. As I mentioned previously, I have always enjoyed reading an autobiographical book or participate in a movie of the same nature – to vicariously live another's life for the journey ‘between the covers’, and openly respond to the experience of other. As a psychotherapist, this is true amid the experience of one's client. Roth (1990) describes empathy as “the psychological capacity to “taste” the experience of another...and a form of reestablishing contact with the mother...it bridges a separation between people” (p.12). Our clients take us on an internal voyage with them, mostly without a map, which feels like an “immersive [experience]...pursuing intuitive clues or hunches, and drawing from the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge from within the tacit dimension” (Moustakas, 1990, p.28). Our therapy

room becomes another world, a “transitional space” (Winnicott, 1975, p. xvi), where space is created and permission is given to wonder and be curious together.

My bedroom, containing my writing desk, has been my *transitional space*, as I have explored my own tacit knowledge and intuition, while writing in this post-traumatic illumination and explication phase. Winnicott (1965) expounds the transitional space is where “true spontaneous gestures” (p.75) of self are discovered. The journey of my inner Bougainville has taken me into territory which was unexpected for me. The process of indwelling, as elucidated by Moustakas (1990), has enabled me, the researcher, to “attend to [my] own awarenesses, feelings, thoughts, beliefs and judgements as a prelude to understanding” (p.31). In the many weeks since my return, I have delved deeply into my history, purposefully considering memories which have been triggered by my experiences in Bougainville, finding empathic paths of resonance towards decreasing the space between me and the ‘other’. It feels like an integration of past and present, and a significant foundation for the future. Illumination opened out to me like the glorious magnolia in my front yard – revealing its spring transformation, after the recent history of winter.

Providing me with theory and language with which to explore and describe my own search for meaning, Frankl’s (2006) influential work has been pivotal in helping me conceptualise my purpose as a human being and as a therapist working with people who have suffered significant life-altering trauma. He promotes the idea that “man’s search for meaning ...unique and specific...and fulfilled by him alone” (p.99) is integral to a healthy human existence, and indeed a propellant forward, encouraging development of purpose, engagement, spirituality and transcendence. In his book, he describes the process of surviving war-related trauma, and creating a life rich in meaning amid the worst kind of human suffering – a concept unfathomable for those of us who have not experienced this kind of transcendence.

I am absolutely inspired by Bougainvillean women like Marilyn Havini and Sister Lorraine Garasu; writers, activators, humanitarians; who against the toughest of odds, have remained engaged with their nation’s reestablishment of peace and Bougainville’s ongoing quest for independence, the former having done so for five decades. The incredible resilience of these women speaks to me about the human potential to transcend the worst circumstances and live an authentically free life, embracing her calling and influencing others to regain their power – lending others strength, finding meaning in life, strengthened by hope and faith. They have exemplified what it means to be “the author[s] and arbiter[s] of their own recover[ies] (Herman, 1992, p.133), thus leading their people from captivity, like the story of Moses leading the Israelites into the Promised Land (Exodus). Through them, I experience hope vicariously.

Hope is a common thread in many of the stories in Havini's (2004) edited book, and Pilkington (1999) proposes that hope is an essential component of health and ultimately transcendence (p.4).

Whilst reading the following poem, please listen to audio file entitled, "Village children singing".

Bougainville Hope

Hope smells like...

Coconut baking, in the Buka-town copra mill – best prices for years.

Freshly tilled soil, planting for coming days.

Dinner cooking on the open fire.

Hope looks like...

Primary schools full of children.

Cocoa trees heavy with the fruit of abundance.

Women organising themselves to help repair.

A fresh coat of paint on tired medical clinic walls.

Healthy babies.

Men and women working hard to re-build the economy.

Hope sounds like...

The hubbub of a vibrant market, full of produce and people.

Noisy sports fields used by healthy teens.

Sunday services burgeoning with the singing faithful.

A horn on the ship, blaring in the port, laden with export goods.

Hammering nails constructing the new nursing school.

Hope feels like...

Healing hands of medical professionals.

Young and old dreaming dreams.

Celebration.

Happy productivity.

Satisfied generativity.

Hope tastes like...

Home-grown kaukau, banana, pawpaw.

Enough food.

Fish from the sea.

Fruit shared by neighbours.

Celebration feasts – prepared by many.

Michelle Yates, September 2016.



Figure 14 – Freshly caught shrimps – Konga, Bougainville – Personal Archive

My hope is fueled by these displays of Divine bounty. Amid the damaged and broken reality of post-traumatic Bougainville I find life-giving veins of hope. Fay reminds us “Hope creates a space where faith can grow” (J. Fay, personal communication, September 2016).

Fireflies

Little Spirits illuminate the darkened jungle

Sparkly Gentle Guiding Lights

Luminescence abounds

Enticing – beckoning

Suspended in the atmosphere

Sharing balmy jungle eve

I see them – they see me – neither flee – trusting

Reassured by their bright presence – calming, soothing

Comfortable proximity

I am not alone

Breathtaking

In awe

Little lights – alight

Light brings life

I breathe in

Alive

Michelle Yates, August 2016.

The Spiritual Realm

The fireflies in the jungle remind me I am not alone, ever present and delicately symbolic of the spiritual realm. There is much amid the literature to suggest that the people of Bougainville were strengthened by their faith in God, during the time of the crisis (Reddy, 2008; Sirivi, 2004; Havini, 2004; Garasu, 2004). Sirivi (2004) testifies that during the war, behind the blockade, the Bougainvillean people gathered...

“...on Sundays for communal prayer services... [where] our faith became a unifying force in our continued resistance and in our ability to sustain ourselves during the war and the blockade...In many of the hardest times in my life I have prayed to God and, in so doing, found peace in my heart” (p.16).

Jenmorri (2006) promotes the idea that “conducting therapy with trauma survivors may...offer a context and impetus to forge a deeper spiritual resilience” (p.50). My faith in God is my anchor as I metabolise my response to working within the post-traumatic environment of Bougainville. In fact, I believe my faith and this Divine Love is what draws me, not only to the desire to serve humanity, but also to the realm of psychotherapy. My secure attachment to God is the soil from which my deepest hope springs forth. For generations my ancestors have kept the faith, transcending all kinds of developmental challenges throughout the history of my family. I deeply appreciate the Divine plan for ultimate redemption from suffering and pain. Having already elucidated that earlier in my writing, the Holy Scriptures make it clear in Isaiah 61 where God intends to “bind-up and heal the brokenhearted...to proclaim liberty to the captivesand bring beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of heaviness” (Isaiah 61:1-3, Amplified Bible). This descriptive language is rich and provides a hopeful picture for the future of humanity.

I acknowledge that God uses humanity to heal humanity, and faith in God is what underpins many Bougainvilleans today. It is a privilege to be able to offer “a good therapeutic relationship [which] is not only supportive of effective treatment, it is virtually integral to the resolution of major relational traumas” (Briere & Scott, 2006, p.75). Herman (1992) goes one step further, noting that “recovery can only take place in relationships; it cannot occur in isolation” (p.134).

While reading this prose, please listen to audio file entitled – Never Grow Old.

There is a spiritual ‘holding’ that I know. The miraculous happens all around us...I connect with people intimately...skin to skin...eyes embedded in each other’s...searching for truth, evidence. I chat easily to people...always have...praised for my comfortable relational ways...years of being with people...endlessly interested in the people, their culture and their stories.

*“Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life” (Psalm 23:6)
...reminded to lift my gaze and incorporate my loved-ones into my motherly view...my embrace....as more children were born to my husband and I, I was able to embrace and love more. It’s a Divine love with a capacity beyond that which feels possible...it’s*

parental love...long arms, warm heart, open and tender. I can embrace both realities despite the paradox contained therein.

Prevailing Amidst the Paradoxical.

Paradox - “a seemingly absurd or contradictory statement or proposition...” (Dictionary)

Beauty and Tragedy

Abundance and Lack

Safety and Danger

Hurt and Healing

Light and Dark

Powerfulness and Powerlessness

Black and White

Life and Death

Laughing and Mourning

Strength and Weakness

Vulnerability and Invincibility

Heartbreak and Hope

I have come to recognise and appreciate that each of these polar positions are not mutually exclusive – but in relationship to the other – co-existing simultaneously, providing the balance, the dialectic tension. I cannot reconcile these differences but am learning to live amid paradox. The Bougainvillean people show me how this is possible in their post-traumatic society. They live with the tremendous pain of the past with all its ongoing sequelae, yet climb aboard hope, as the vessel which carries them towards a brighter future. As a therapist, learning to empathically attune to my clients, this is a tremendous growth opportunity for me, ‘feeling-my-way’ into their experience of repair, rebuild, trying to fathom their capacities. As I step into their world, I see forgiveness in action; notice grace and hope; observe outstanding sacrificial love in abundance and realise their capacity to continue “giving at that time kept [them] going as one people striving for independence. It kept [them] focusing on the future. [They] did not give up hope” (Sirivi, 2004, p.38).

“Some of the best interventions in posttraumatic psychological injury are implicitly existential and hopeful. This perspective can also be beneficial for the therapist – the possibility that the client can not only recover, but also may gain in some way from traumatic experience, brings tremendous richness and optimism to the job of helping hurt people” (Briere & Scott, 2006, p.69).

I am in awe of the Bougainvillean people, the process of writing a dissertation and the examination of aspects of myself. “Awe involves the willingness to feel very small in the presence of the vast and unknowable” (McWilliams, 2004, p.32). I feel such awe and deep respect, amid the confluence of numerous facets of my life and acknowledge that I am extremely fortunate to participate in such richness.

My growth has been sustained – noticing less fear, greater courage, more creativity, heightened resilience, increased empathy, more connection to God, greater awareness of white privilege, more willingness to feel with my clients and better equipped to effectively respond. Many of these facets, I acknowledge, are freshly unearthed understandings and capacities requiring greater development. Like a seed growing out of the soil, the shoots of my development are tender, requiring nurture, nourishment and time.

To touch grief and not be consumed.

Moved by sadness and not entombed.

Incensed by injustice and liberated by love.

To feel pain and remain connected to hope.

Celebrate life and enjoy freedom.

Embrace truth and find peace.

Michelle Yates, November 2016.

Chapter Six – Discussion

Introduction

I will use this discussion section to illuminate the trajectory of my response to my heuristic journey. In it I will explore the learnings which pertain to myself, to my psychotherapeutic practice, and to psychotherapy in general. Then I will consider the wider societal/political application of my findings.

This final chapter, is written in direct response to the initial examination process, which illuminated the need for me to make a more explicit link between the research of my phenomenology and its relevance to my budding profession of psychotherapy. While writing the body of the dissertation, I became so immersed in my own ‘mining’ process, that it was very difficult to extract myself from the depths. The learning outcomes, buried in the rich soil of my narrative, needed more finely-tuned attention, and to be brought to the surface and into the light of examination. A few months of distance from the writing process, enabled a more objective view of the significance of my research. The process of adding this section, was painful, yet rich and rewarding, bringing satisfactions of its own.

Personal Responses.

As the eldest child in my family of origin, I learned from an early age to be sensitive to the emotional experience of others. As a result of my learned “self-negation”(Johnson, 1994, p.102), prioritising the needs of others became my *modus operandi*. Choosing nursing as a profession in my teens, then moving on to psychotherapy in my forties, my needs for intimacy were met vicariously, as I cared for and identified with others (p.102). Therapy and supervision helped me move beyond my well-developed sense of responsibility and unbalanced other-centredness. My developing “psychoanalytic sensibility”(Mc Williams, 2004), is the gift I have to offer my clients, and provides me with a professional framework and therapeutic legitimacy, as a “wounded healer” (Nouwen, 1972).

As a psychotherapist, my theoretical *internal frame of reference* is nourished by the “noncontingent acceptance of a person” and compassionate stance of Briere (2012, p.5) ; the reverie of Bion and the attachment matrices of Bowlby (1973) – all relational in nature (Mitchell, 1986). Relationality, compassion and connectedness are my strengths, with empathy as the central point, and I enjoy Mitchells notion that “the person is graspable...within the tapestry of relationships, past and present” (p.460). I appreciate how existentialism adds to the above layers

of influence by contributing the philosophical realm of purpose and meaning-making and makes room for the trans-personal. My dissertation brings me into a greater relationship with a number of other influences on the development of the person, and both the pathogenic and adaptive impact of those influences.

Through my vicarious exposure to mass trauma, via my wild jungle experiences; interaction with literature; and illuminated by the narratives recounted to me by individuals in the post-war society of Bougainville, my journey towards greater 'knowing' as a beginning trauma therapist, has been both shocking and marvellous. I have faced the darkest facets of humanity, my own shadow-side included, and assimilated them into a more accepting and expansive world-view. Simultaneously, I have been inspired by tremendous fortitude and resilience shown by many people traumatised by war-time atrocities (Miringka, Havini, Sirivi, Garasu, 2004). This resilience despite adversity, drives my desire for a deepening commitment to remaining connected to hope, and more present to, and mindful of, both the harsh and wonderful realities of human existence.

This dialectic tension between shock and marvel stretches me to the extent of myself, making me acutely aware of my vulnerability and the risk to my safety, both physically and emotionally. Yet I am curiously drawn to the danger. I am able to name my increased capacities – notably, greater capacity for resilience; increased ability to contain and hold myself in the here and now of the therapy hour; and face rather than flee from horror. In facing the existential crises of my own mortality, isolation and desire for engagement with meaning-making endeavours while in the jungle of Bougainville, my capacity to hold others in such crises is enhanced, with greater empathic resonance and more courageous commitment.

The development of my capacity for *indwelling*, that is; my “willingness to gaze with unwavering attention and concentration...in order to understand ...constituent qualities and... wholeness” (Moustakas, 1990, p.24), has enabled three themes to emerge from my journey, that describe lasting changes in me – curiosity, courage and compassion. I will now explicate these themes.

Curiosity. Having experienced traumatised humanity first-hand, it is no longer possible for me to dissociate from traumatic realities, by engaging defenses like “psychic numbing” (Lifton, 1971, p.222). My understanding of the lasting psychological effects of post-traumatic distress and maladaptation has deepened. Yet, the positive adaptation shown by the many individuals who have experienced trauma lifts my spirit (Hollander-Goldfein et al., 2012). I am increasingly able to maintain curiosity in the face of traumatic material and the post-traumatic experience – including

the reality of post-traumatic growth – as trauma sufferers exhibiting resilience and strength, enables resilience to grow in the soul of the therapist (Jenmorri, 2006, p.50).

McWilliams (2004) notes that “awe allows our experience to take our breath away; it invites each client to make a fresh imprint on the soul, the psyche, of the therapist” (p.32). My fresh awareness of this awe fuels my capacity to remain engaged and hope-filled, as I join people in their therapeutic journey towards greater freedom. As Jenmorri (2006) reminds us, working with traumatised people provides a “crisis of opportunity” – not merely remaining stuck in despair.

With increasing numbers of clients engaging with me in my psychotherapy space, from situations of political unrest and societal trauma, I now regularly seek cultural supervision and search the literature to inform my understanding in a broader sense, of the issues faced by many displaced people on the planet. This displacement refers not only to the geographical displacement, but also the intra-psychic displacement that occurs in the movement from equilibrium into disequilibrium.

Being present to my countertransference is part of what informs me. My counter-transference is widely variable, and I experience whole-person phenomena, for example maternal responses, compassion, desire to rescue, anger, desire to fall asleep, and dissociation. I notice my more finely-tuned intuition developing – that is “the capacity to make inferences and arrive at a knowledge of the underlying structures or dynamics” (Moustakas, 1990, p.23). The knowledge I gain through both explicit means and the more intuitively derived, enlightens my endeavours as a curious researcher, and psychotherapist.

Courage *“Courageous action involves voluntarily pursuing a socially worthy goal, despite the accompanying risk and the fear produced by a challenging event” (Magano et al, 2017).*

As a person, both inside the therapy room and without, courage is an area in which I have sustained measurable growth, while working in post-traumatic circumstances. My previous stance in regards to dealing with my countertransference to trauma, was an overwhelmingly fearful sense, that exposing myself to traumatic information would disable me, rendering me unable to manage my feelings and undermine my world-view to a destabilising extent.

This, however, is not my reality amid the beginning of my psychotherapy practice or the immersive experience of my heruistic inquiry, and my expansion of courage stands out as one of the tangible areas of my personal growth. Areas which demonstrate an increase in my levels of courage are – courage to face my difficult feelings about myself and others – courage to ask difficult questions of myself and my client and able to be present to the awful truth of their experience – courage to face my lack of knowing, and in turn, courage in seeking to know –

courage to dream with clients about alternative 'ways of being' in the world – courage to face the inevitability of failure and misunderstanding – courage to dare to hope and remain hopeful – courage to want to make a difference.

Compassion. In being with the traumatised people of Bougainville and working with my clients here in New Zealand, I acknowledge the unique position of travelling alongside people as they suffer through the re-telling and re-experiencing of their traumatic experiences, enabling an opportunity for me to learn, identify and join. Mindfulness clinicians, Siegel, Germer & Olendski note, that “compassion is the invisible matrix which holds the entire enterprise” (2008, p.5) of psychotherapy with the traumatised client. Compassion, as they describe it from its original Latin language roots of “com pati”, is the capacity to “suffer with” another (p.5).

As a therapist, my ability to feel that compassion – to suffer with my clients — is a gift I can give others. I am no longer compelled to tidy up the horror or bury it below a pile of effective defenses, rather I can allow myself to be moved amid the narratives of others. My current client work demonstrates my increased capacity to bear the pain of suffering people, in the here-and-now of the therapy space, including my growth of compassion towards the persecutor.

Compassion for the Therapist. Developing a compassionate heart towards one's own self as a trauma therapist is also indicated – self-care being a vital component of maintaining therapeutic equilibrium. Briere (2012) states that “unconditional caring, attunement and acceptance, in combination with the therapist's overall mindfulness of self and the client, can provide new experiences that both support emotional and cognitive trauma processing” (p.2). My attunement to the potential of the negative effects of vicarious traumatisation and the issues pertaining to work-life balance for example, has become more acute. In my personal practice, mitigating the effects of these phenomena is essential.

My self-care practices consist of my engagement with nature; restorative time within my family and intimate relationships; and connection to my faith, to name a few. My professional compassion disciplines include immersion in my own psychotherapeutic journey, research and engagement with clinical supervision. I appreciate the way Briere (2012) differentiates between selfishness and self-care or “non-egocentric appreciation of the self” (p.6). As wounded healers, we psychotherapists cannot give what we do not have. With the help of my personal psychotherapeutic journey and my process through university, I have made the shift, from self-negation to “non-egocentric appreciation” of myself and my needs.

The Wider Context

Through the process of exposure to post-traumatic experiences, I have also been exposed to some much larger macro-socio-political themes, for example – the impact of ecological degradation (Connell, 1997) – war-related displacement of people and the implications of separation from life-giving land (Havini) – the bio-social degeneration secondary to war (Lifton, 1971) – the dynamics of oppressors and the oppressed in war (Volkan, 2000) – the sequelae and ongoing dynamics of torture and terror.

Opening me to these issues through my experience in Bougainville has been distressing, and has provided me an opportunity to consider the ramifications of such devastation upon humanity, and my response to them. The wounded earth of the Panguna mine was a terrible sight and informed my greater understanding of the desperate and eventually violent response of the land-owners in Bougainville (Havini, 2004), to stop the mining practices and persistent detrimental ecological practices. Hearing stories from the women in Bougainville about their displacement trauma, and their resilience in the midst, has been both heartbreaking and inspiring.

Reviewing my client work in my own therapy space in New Zealand, I have many clients who fit into the categories of the above traumatised groups. This includes some Sri Lankan people, who have fled the impact of the twenty-six year civil war between the Tamils and Sinhalese, and are working at rebuilding their sense of self and their lives here in New Zealand.

Faced with this kind of global issue, I have felt very small and insignificant. I have also questioned what kind of difference I could possibly make in relation to such massive effects of bio-social trauma. The settled place I have come to in relation to this, is that I cannot make a difference on a macro scale, but that I can relationally journey with people therapeutically (Briere, Herman, Yalom & Josselson), who are directly impacted by some of these issues. Being armed with greater curiosity, courage and compassion, when I encounter the effects of trauma in my therapy space, I am much more mindful of the way in which traumatic events impact society at large, my client(s), and of course, me.

Realms of Traumatic Influence –

Clinical Application and Generalisability

Introduction

In this final section of the dissertation, I will discuss the relevance of my Bougainville experiences to my clinical work, integrating this context with the context of clients who present for psychotherapy with trauma symptoms based on other horrific socio-political situations. I will explore how multiple realms of trauma inflicted by family, society and the natural world impact the individual, and their implications for the realm of psychotherapy. The diagram below pictorialises the realms.

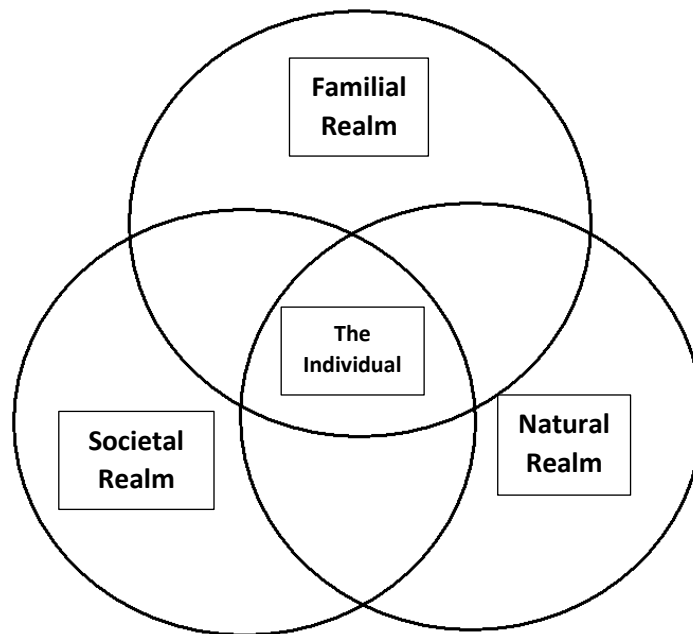


Figure – Realms of influence

The Individual

Whoever steps over the threshold into our therapy space, is not merely an individual who lives and breathes, relates, thinks and feels. They bring with them a vast myriad of complex socio-cultural influences, traumas and experiences. The first area I will consider is the realm of family of origin and its associated systems, gender roles, resourcefulness, resilience levels and belief systems. Extending out from familial influence, the individual is also influenced by the wider society in which they are situated, encompassing such intangibles as the ideological realms of politics, religion, societal norms and cultural mores and of course anything which has the potential to undermine societal equilibrium, such as large-scale armed conflict and the ensuing rupture to development.

The final realm of influence on us as individuals, are the issues which impact the natural world in which we live, for example the implications of climate change, natural disasters and world wars. The reality of the current Syrian refugee crisis highlights the magnitude of one such planetary issue, with significant post-traumatic and displacement trauma (Volkan, 2000). This not only affects millions of displaced Syrian people, but also impacts the countries absorbing the new wave of displaced humanity, causing economic challenges and stretched infrastructure, especially countries like Turkey, who have welcomed more than three million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, n.d). In this context, I would like to more carefully define the word refugee and introduce a concept of the *Self* as refugee:

“Who is a Refugee? – a refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence” (UNREFUGEE, n.d.).

The Syrian crisis has generated global concern and compassion in the West. Informed by my Christian frame of reference, I recall displacement as exemplified by the historical account of the Hebrew’s exodus from oppression and slavery in Egypt in 1445 BC (Moses and the Exodus, n.d.). As Moses facilitated a safe transition for his people into the ‘Promised Land’, we as psychotherapists may at times effectively facilitate the same variety of journey, although in a much more humble way.

Helping one’s clients rediscover hope is “intrinsic to effective trauma treatment” (Briere & Scott, 2006, p.69). Therapy has the potential to provide the traumatised client with “a framework for pathways to change, a ground from which one can imagine possibilities in situations of hardship and start to take action” (Jenmorri, 2006, p. 43), thus moving towards a new reality, a form of ‘promised land’.

The Self as Refugee. Intra-psychically, on some level, we are *all* refugees. Each of us have narratives that contain situations from which we have consciously or unconsciously, *fled*, due to the violent and traumatic impact to one or more aspects of ourselves. Our potentially harmonious early years as infants and toddlers, through our tumultuous individuation, and onwards into adulthood, are fraught with trauma, perpetuated by numerous factors (Erikson, 1963). We as humans flee by physically removing ourselves from toxicity, or perhaps we manifest an intra-psychic variety of fleeing, for example, developing elaborate defensive processes, like disassociation, or dysfunctional personality organisations (McWilliams, 2011). Each of our clients and we ourselves may thus be considered a refugee. Traumatic injury to the *Self* can result from the realms of family, society and larger planetary and natural world issues, from which we seek refuge, and which I will now explore in turn.

The Familial Realm

As therapists, often our first realm of curiosity in relation to the genesis of our client's trauma is that of the nuclear family or family of origin. Attachment theorists such as Bowlby (1973), and developmental theorists such as Erikson (1963), help us grasp how significant the realm of family is in the development of personality and qualities of character, including both positive and negative adaptation – both perpetuating family trauma or developing strength and resilience in the face of adversity and developing compassion for others, for example.

When working with traumatised individuals, Bowlby (1973) suggests that “In their day-to-day work, whether with disturbed children, disturbed adults or disturbed families, clinicians need to view causal processes backwards, linking the effects of today's disturbance back to the causative conditions and events of yesterday” (p. x). Being mindful of a client's family history is therefore integral to our assessment and treatment planning.

Children, for example, “who develop in [a] climate of domination develop pathological attachments to those who abuse and neglect them, attachments they will strive to maintain even at the sacrifice of their own welfare, their own reality, or their lives” (Herman, 1992, p.98). This example of pathological development in the face of injury has implications for the adult individual seeking healthy relationships. Furthermore, such damage is perpetuated inter-generationally (Davies & Frawley, 1994).

The interpersonal, face-to-face clinical encounter exposes us to numerous facets of trauma. Information about the types of experience which influence clients, and how these client narratives converge with our own, allows a greater depth of understanding to emerge (Jenmorri,

2006, p.41). Moustakas (1990) reminds us that “our most significant awareness’s are developed from our own internal searches and from our attunement and empathic understandings of others” (p.26).

The Societal Realm

Politics and religion are two topics often avoided at dinner parties and for good reason – they can be excruciatingly divisive. The psychotherapist, by contrast, is required to courageously explore the often painful realities linked to these ideologies and life positions. Music (2011) helps us measure various constellations which exist within societies, often influenced by cultural and religious ideologies.

As psychotherapists, we may build therapeutic relationships with immigrants, asylum seekers and first generation New Zealanders who have fled treacherous contexts and nations in favour of a safer and more opportune environment here in New Zealand. On an individual level, such traumatised clients may exhibit classic post-traumatic phenomena of *hyper-arousal*, *intrusion* and *constriction* (Herman, 1992, p.35), however they may also have “have psychological repercussions beyond individual PTSD” (Volkan, 2000, p.5), compounded by societal rupture on a macro scale, that result in “particular, uniquely damaging ways, for generations” (p.6). What accompanies them/us intra-psychically is also difficult to gain freedom from.

Volkan (2000) reports “that after ethnic, national or religious hostilities, whole societies change too. Though post-conflict changes piggyback on physical destruction, economic collapse and political restrictions, the shared psychological causes also need to be thoroughly explored” (p.24). The residual aftermath following shared mass trauma, are the “societal grief, anxiety and change” (p.3) – both pathogenic change, for example, bio-social degeneration and adaptive change, and also for example, bio-social regeneration (p.6). Volkan notes that trauma incurred by violence at the hands of aggressors, precipitates an alteration to “large group identity” (p.3) and that the large group creates a “mental representation of the disastrous historical event which may develop into a “chosen trauma” for the group” (p.6). This in turn has implications for managing future conflict...hyper- arousal and hypervigilance become the *modus operandi* for many and is compounded in the group dynamic.

The openness, curiosity and courage of the therapist facilitates such exploration, and can ameliorate the effects of trauma, by humbly and courageously journeying with our clients through their retelling and re-experiencing, within a compassionate relationship, enabling the “capacity to sustain moment-by-moment focused awareness of – and openness to – one’s internal experience and environment, without judgement and with acceptance” (Briere, 2012,

p.2). Existential therapists also promote the therapeutic benefit of having the experience of a life-witness – a void which a willing, compassionate and empathic therapist can fill (Yalom and Josselson, 2011).

The Natural Realm

“Environmental issues, our relationship with the planet, and the oppressive conditions which give rise to aspects of personal distress, are all issues of relationship, and therefore can be argued should be integrated fully into our therapeutic practice” (Jordan, 2009, p.28). When considering a holistic approach to our work as psychotherapists, what concerns our clients therefore, has the potential to concern us, move us and possibly even cause us to respond, and not only in the here-and-now of the therapy hour.

Environmental Degradation – Implications for Psychotherapy. As I have described in the depiction in Chapter Four, the result of earth-shattering mining practices has been devastating for the land of Bougainville and the Bougainvillean people. It was distressing for the local land owners to the extent that they bombed the power-supply to the mine, rendering it ineffective and sending a strong message about the essential task of caring for the planet, but more particularly, their earthly life source. Being galvanized for the common cause of protecting their nation, a powerful response was triggered.

The Bougainvillean people have an intimate relationship with nature, “intrinsically connected to water, food, the turning of the seasons and the climate” (Jordan, 2009, p.28) and this is true to varying degrees of course, for all humanity. Jordan notes that to be connected to nature is to be connected to the self (p.28), so the implications in psychotherapy lie in the reality that if the land is damaged and the people are disconnected from their life source, impacting not only their body, but also damages the psyche and spirituality of the larger society in significant ways. We have the opportunity to respond to this as psychotherapists.

In relation to natural disasters, for example tsunami or earthquake, Volkan (2000) reminds us that when “nature shows its fury, and people suffer, people tend to accept the event as fate or as the will of God” (p.3). According to a study by Goenjian (2000), cited by Volkan, there are “no significant differences” (p.3) in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) presentation, between those people who have been traumatised by severe environmental trauma, compared to those who have been traumatised by severe violence – the severity and symptomatology and process of individual PTSD are similar.

He also acknowledges that following natural disasters, traumatised nations can show positive adaptation to the trauma, for example a phenomenon known as “earthquake diplomacy” (Volkan, 2000, p.4) – strengthened relationships between countries resulting from working together to resolve issues created from a natural disaster. The “threat of annihilation” (Herman, 1992, p.33) is one of the shared experiences of the two groups experiencing mass trauma. One differentiating phenomena in those people following conflict, however, is the “rage and entitlement to revenge” (Volkan, 2000, p.7) of the victims of war.

Not only do post-war sequelae relate to the nations involved in the conflict, but also relate to the planet – when one part of the whole is in dis-equilibrium, the whole is impacted. Lifton (1971) describes the dynamics and disruption to the relationship between the nations of Japan and America, following the devastation of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the reverberations of which sent a powerful message to the rest of the planet.

The impact of each of these realms on the individual, are dynamic and sometimes catastrophic. We face them in our therapy spaces to varying degrees as well. Holding the client in the context of the much wider picture of their family, social, and natural worlds is a skill we psychotherapists hone and perfect over time. Courageously and curiously approaching the vastness of these subject matters, allows our compassion for our clients to grow, and contributes to our efficacy in planning, and applying the treatment that will assist them to flourish.

Conclusion of the Discussion

Heuristic research is described as an “organized and systematic form for investigating human experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p.9). I set out with a plan to keep track of my thoughts and feelings at the commencement of my dissertation process, and watched with amazement at the emergence of the rich and variable nature of my emotional responses to my experience.

Engaging with my method, and perpetually returning to my question at the centre of my thinking kept my purpose paramount, and my process closely held in mind. My experience of supervision was a “containing” experience and simultaneously freeing and permission-giving. Trying to capture the profundity of my experience within the guidance of the academic criteria of the learning outcomes has been extremely challenging. In order to capture this essence, I am grateful to have been able to incorporate outpourings of poetry and pieces of prose, parts of me that feel raw and real; congruent and authentic to my experience.

The process of turning something so experiential and paradigm-shifting, into an academic exercise, has stretched me to the utmost. I have searched in many directions for guidance and resources to help me articulate my findings. Previous course-work in the Master's programme helped to prepare me for the dissertation process, including articles and books from our course reading material, and the dissertation paper which was started in December 2015.

My preoccupation with my work has been sacrificial, with my family and friends feeling it most, especially since July 2016, while I dwelled in the post-war trenches of Bougainvillean society, and soaked in as much of this world as was healthy to do. When my balance tipped towards a less healthy existence, I was lovingly guided by my mentors including my academic supervisor, clinical supervisor, therapist, family and friends, to seek balance – not a luxury that those who are traumatised can always opt for in their lives.

I have thrived in the freedom of allowing myself the experience of applying my *unwavering attention and concentration* (Moustakas, 1990) to a subject so dear to my heart for this past year. My work is the culmination of much thinking, research, reading, feeling, theoretical curiosity, agony, conversation, reflexivity and critique. The numerous moments of creative synthesis embedded in my writing feel to me like “peak moment[s] when the researcher recognises the universal nature of what something is and means, and at the same time grows in self-understanding and as a self” (Moustakas, 1990, p.90). I have sought to capture and communicate these wholeheartedly.

The Horizon...

The experience of writing this dissertation has been a wonderfully difficult experience – searching within myself and exploring many facets of my existential phenomena in response to the trauma of others. Growth is something which has the potential to go on forever – educating oneself and remaining open to opportunities to learn. As a beginning psychotherapist, I am mindful of the doors of possibility being flung open to me upon completing this academic part of my work, and seek to integrate my findings in the clinical environment and investigate more. I notice my client base is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse and am seeing more clients who have experienced the kinds of trauma I have written about – violence at the hands of others; displacement trauma; immigration/assimilation trauma; loss and grief; victimisation due to belief systems, disability and gender.

Through the process of my introspection and analysis of my responses to working with traumatised people, following the post-traumatic circumstances related to migration, childhood

trauma and violent conflict, I am able to track my personal development and growth. The three themes which emerged most prominently were my growth in courage, curiosity and compassion towards wounded humanity – my own narrative included.

While contemplating the application of this work to the field of psychotherapy, I have noticed how the realm of family, the societal realm and the natural realm are perpetually shaping and informing every individual in their way of being – both functionally and dysfunctionally – and that as therapists, our curiosity potentially leads us into exploring these realms and their ongoing impact in the lives of our clients.

I have therefore answered my question - **“How might I experience personal growth and enhanced practice as a psychotherapist, as a result of working with clients experiencing trauma and post-traumatic distress?”** – with an abundance of evidence categorised herein.

Although this is the conclusion of this dissertation, and my ‘labour’ is over, I acknowledge there is much more ahead of me, on my trajectory towards greater *knowing and* increased application. I am satisfied with this holistic Heuristic Journey, and the vulnerable experience of exploring and representing my intra-subjectivity as honestly as possible. My gratitude for this valuable life-giving opportunity is immense. I feel great hope that the best is yet to come.

‘Mi pinisim bikpela’ dissertation.

(I finished the big dissertation.)

References

- Abaijah, J. (1991). *A thousand coloured dreams*. Victoria, Australia: Dellasta Pacific.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). Attachment and loss: Volume II: Separation, anxiety and anger. *The International Psycho-Analytical Library*, 95: 1-429.
- Briere, J. (2012). Working with trauma: Mindfulness and compassion. In C.K. Germer & R.D. Siegel (Eds.). *Compassion and Wisdom in Psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Briere, J., & Scott, C. (2006). *Principles of trauma therapy. A guide to symptoms, evaluation and treatment*. California, CA: Sage Publications.
- Brockhouse, R., Msetfi, R., Cohen, K., & Joseph, S. (2011). Vicarious exposure to trauma and growth in therapists: The moderating effects of sense of coherence, organizational support, and empathy. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 24, (6), 735-742. doi 10.1002/jts
- Broom, B. (2007). *Meaning-full disease*. London, England: Karnac Books.
- Connell, J. (1997). *Papua New Guinea: The struggle for development*. London, England: Taylor & Francis.
- Danger. (n.d.). Dictionary.com *online dictionary*. Retrieved September 16, 2016, from <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/danger>
- Davies, J., & Frawley, M. (1994). *Treating the adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse. A psychoanalytic perspective*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Enright, F. (1994). *Australia's war for mining company profits*. Retrieved September 16, 2016, from <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/australias-war-mining-company-profits>

Erikson, E. (1963). *Childhood and society*. New York, NY: Norton & Co.

Frankl, V. (2006). *Man's search for meaning*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Fraser, B. (2006). *Albertine*. Retrieved July 20, 2016, from <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/brookefraser/albertine.html>

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigour using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80-92.

Freedom. (n.d.). In Oxford Living Dictionaries *online dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/freedom>

Garasu, L. (2004). Women, war and the BICWF. In J. Sirivi & M. Havini (Eds.). *As mothers of the land: The birth of the Bougainville women for peace and freedom* (pp.95-97). Canberra, Australia: Pandanus.

Goldenberg, J., Isserman, N., & Hollander-Goldfein, B. (2012). *Transcending trauma: Survival, resilience and clinical implications in survivor families*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Grant, B., & Giddings, L. (2002). Making sense of methodologies: A paradigm framework for the novice researcher. *Contemporary Nurse* (2002) 13: 10-28.

Harris, G. (1999). Recovery from armed conflict: The main tasks. In G. Harris, N. Ahai & R. Spense (Eds.). *Building peace in Bougainville*, (pp 60-71). Armidale Centre for Peace Studies, University of New England and the National Research Institute Papua New Guinea.

Havens, L. (1986). *Making contact: Uses of language in psychotherapy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard. (Is this Harvard University Press or Harvard Health Publications? Please specify)

Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Isolation. (n.d.). In Oxford Living Dictionaries *online dictionary*. Retrieved August 24, 2016, from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/isolation>

Jenmorri, K. (2006). Of rainbows and tears: Exploring hope and despair in trauma therapy. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 35 (1). doi:10.1007/s10566-005-9002-7

Johnson, S. (1994). *Character styles*. New York, NY: Norton.

Jones, L. (2006). *Mister Pip*. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books.

Jordan, M. (2009). Back to nature. *Therapy Today*. Retrieved April 24, 2017, from http://www.ecotherapy.org.uk/files/ecotherapy/home/Therapy_today_article_on_ecotherapy.pdf

Laverty, S. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(3), 21-35.

Lifton, R. (1971). *History and human survival*. New York, NY: Random House.

Lifton, R. (1991). *Death in life: Survivors of Hiroshima*. North Carolina, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Lornie, D. (2014, June 20). Bullet wounds. *Postcourier, PNG Weekend*, p.8.

McWilliams, N. (1999). *Psychoanalytic case formulation*. New York, NY: Guilford.

McWilliams, N. (2004). *Psychoanalytic psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Guilford.

McWilliams, N. (2011). *Psychoanalytic diagnosis*. New York, NY: Guilford.

May, R. (1969). *Love and will*. New York, NY: Norton.

Mitchell, S. (1986). Roots and status. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 22: 458-466.

Music, G. (2011). *Nurturing natures*. East Sussex, England: Psychology Press.

NZ Immigration (n.d.). Retrieved May 20, 2017, from
<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/statistics/rqbarrivalsstatpak.pdf>

Miringka, R. (2004). Community developments and BOCBIHP. In J. Sirivi & M. Havini (Eds.). *As mothers of the land: The birth of the Bougainville women for peace and freedom* (pp.99-105). Canberra, Australia: Pandanus.

Molloy, T. (2011). *Gwen Avery*. Published by the author.

- Moses and the exodus (n.d.). Retrieved July 11, 2017, from
<http://www.bibletimelines.net/article/145/available-timelines-sorted-by-category/moses-the-exodus-timeline>
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology and applications*. London, England: Sage.
- Nouwen, H. (1972). *The wounded healer: Ministry in contemporary society*. New York, NY: Doubleday Religion.
- NZ Girl. (2006). *We interview Brooke Fraser*. Retrieved July 20, from
<http://www.nzgirl.co.nz/entertain/7224/>
- Paradox. (n.d). Dictionary.com *online dictionary*. Retrieved August 14, 2016, from
<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/paradox?s=t>
- Siegel, R., Germer, C., & Olendski, A. (2008). *Mindfulness: What is it? Where does it come from?* In F. Didona (Ed.). *Clinical Handbook of Mindfulness*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Parse, J. (Ed.). (1999). *Hope: An international human becoming perspective*. Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett.
- Pilkington, B. (1999). The many facets of hope. In J. Parse (Ed.). *Hope: An international human becoming perspective* (pp.9-45). Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett.

Pinkola Estes, C. (2008). *Women who run with the wolves: Contacting the power of the wild woman*. London, England: Random House.

Reddy, P. (2008). Reconciliation in Bougainville: Civil war, peacekeeping and restorative justice. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 11, 117-130. doi:10.1080/10282580802057744

Rose, T., & Loewenthal, D. (2006) Heuristic research. In D. Loewenthal & D. Winter (Eds.). *What is psychotherapeutic research?* (pp.133-144). London, England: Karnac.

Roth, S. (1990). *Psychotherapy: The art of wooing nature*. New Jersey, NJ: Jason Aronson.

Sela-Smith, S. (2002). Heuristic research: A review and critique of Moustakas's method. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 42, 53-88. doi: 10.1177/0022167802423004

Siegelman, E. (1990). *Metaphor & meaning in psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Sirivi, J., & Havini, M. (Eds.) (2004). *As mothers of the land: The birth of the Bougainville women for peace and freedom*. Canberra, Australia: Pandanus.

Sirivi, J. (2004). Building a jungle society. In J. Sirivi & M. Havini (Eds.). *As mothers of the land: The birth of the Bougainville women for peace and freedom* (pp.73-76). Canberra, Australia: Pandanus.

Sirivi, J. (2004). Life in the jungle during the blockade. In J. Sirivi & M. Havini (Eds.). *As mothers of the land: The birth of the Bougainville women for peace and freedom* (pp.35-44). Canberra, Australia: Pandanus.

Sirivi, J. (2004). Running the blockade. In J. Sirivi & M. Havini (Eds.). *As mothers of the land: The birth of the Bougainville women for peace and freedom* (pp.51-53). Canberra, Australia: Pandanus.

Tierney, D., Bolton, P., Matanu, B., Garasu, L., Barnabas, E., & Silove, D. (2016). The mental health and psychosocial impact of the Bougainville crisis: A synthesis of available information. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*. 10:18 doi: 10.1186/s13033-016-0054-x

Tok-Pisin. (n.d). Tok Pisin *online dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.tok-pisin.com/>

Tolkien, J.R.R. (1937). *The Hobbit*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Tunim, M. (2004). The blockade and feeling to the jungle. In J. Sirivi & M. Havini (Eds.). *As mothers of the land: The birth of the Bougainville women for peace and freedom* (pp.45-46). Canberra, Australia: Pandanus.

UNHCR (n.d.). Syria regional refugee response. Retrieved July 12, 2016, 2017, from <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>

UNREFUGEES (n.d.). What is a refugee? Retrieved July 12, 2017, from <http://www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee/>

Volkan, V. (2000). Traumatized societies and psychological care: Expanding the concept of preventive medicine. *Mind and Human Interaction*, 11: 177-194.

Winnicott, D.W. (1965). The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development. *The International Psycho-Analytical Library*. London, England: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 64, 1-276. Retrieved from <http://www.pep-web.org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/>

Winnicott, D.W. (1975). Through paediatrics to psycho-analysis. *The Psycho-Analytical Library*, 100, 1-325. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis. Retrieved from <http://www.pep-web.org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/>

Yalom, I., & Josselson, R. (2011). Existential psychotherapy. In R. Corsini. & D. Wedding (Eds.). *Current Psychotherapies* (pp.310- 326). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.