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**Becoming an Explorer:  
How mature meaning systems facilitate  
the ability to change.**

**Volume 1**

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A Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is based on a qualitative study, which investigated how the participants' beliefs and feelings about self influenced their ability to learn and, implicitly, to change. The purpose of the study was to explore the consequences of employing different self-theories, to determine if there are optimal ways of construing self, which facilitate change and if these self-theories can be learned. This was separated into three questions and the first was to identify self-theories which seem to facilitate or hinder change.

The existing literature on self-theories has identified many aspects of construing which influence how individuals respond to situations, which require them to learn or change in some way. Individuals' beliefs about their level of intelligence and their personal abilities have been shown to dramatically influence their abilities. However, little is known about the precise mechanisms through which self-theories are elaborated. This thesis set out to explore why some primary school teachers were responding to a professional development course in a defensive and aggressive manner. The findings indicate, that beliefs and feelings are inherently linked together and form the basis of individual meaning systems. There is evidence that when these early self-theories are sufficiently developed through childhood into mature meaning systems, they facilitate learning and change. In contrast, when early meaning systems are less developed these immature meaning systems hinder the ability to change.

The participants in this study were construing their beliefs and feelings about self along a dimension. At one extreme 'beliefs about self' were construed 'as hypotheses to be tested,' and at the other end, 'as truths to be validated.' In representing the different beliefs about self as dimensions and not as categories the intention is to emphasise that individual construing can be elaborated. In order to describe the findings the participants were divided into three categories to allow their self-theories to be more easily compared and contrasted. The three categories of participants were called 'Explorers', 'Changers' and 'Maintainers'. My interrogation of the qualitative data identified different self-theories, which were confirmed by the participants'

characterisation of self as growth or validation seeking and their descriptions of change as being positive or negative on their repertory grids. The combined data clearly differentiated three categories of participants and their specific self-theories, which either facilitated or hindered change.

The second question was to investigate if and when self-theories have been elaborated and how this was accomplished. A unique feature of this study is the insight provided, via descriptions provided by many participants of how they elaborated their self-theories. Two sets of beliefs and responses were constructed from the data and were called, respectively, exploratory beliefs and responses and sustaining beliefs and responses. Participants who had elaborated their construing were consistently employing exploratory beliefs and responses. What is particularly interesting about the data is the number of participants who described elaborating their beliefs from 'truths' to hypotheses. This seemed to facilitate the development of mature meaning systems, which in turn increased their ability to change.

The third and last question was to determine if these 'optimal' self-theories could be learned. The 'Explorers', and to varying extents the 'Changers', were increasingly employing the exploratory beliefs and responses and often referring to how they taught themselves to use these new strategies, which indicates a kind of self-learning process. The 'transformative cycle of reflection' encapsulates how some participants elaborated their beliefs and feelings into more mature meaning systems. It identifies the knowledge and understanding about self-theories, which is required to encourage elaboration of early meaning systems.

From the participants' accounts of elaborating construing it was possible to develop a new theory-based approach to reflection. This enhances previous understanding about reflection by including a theoretical understanding of how self-theories influence our responses and this enables more informed reflection to be practised. This approach, if incorporated into practice, would offer the possibility of enhancing development of mature meaning systems, which facilitate learning and change.

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## **Chapter 1: The Background to the study**

### **1.0 The problem in this study emerged from ICT training.**

The impetus for this study began with a question that emerged for the Scotia consortium as they began to provide computer skills training for primary school teachers and librarians in 1999. The Scottish Executive Education Department, within the New Opportunities Fund, had decided that these groups of employees would benefit from further training in using computers. The Scotia Consortium was one group who developed a training package that was supported by tutors to go into schools and libraries. It was within these two contexts that the problem arose with the presence of at least one teacher in every school who behaved in an aggressive, defensive or hostile way towards the tutors.

The tutors began to question why some of their trainees were responding in this way to the training. The Scotia Consortium looked for a counsellor/psychologist with an education background to explore this issue in relation to the teachers. My background as a primary school teacher and then as a psychologist with a small private practice was considered ideal to investigate how the teachers construed/experienced learning and change.

If the Scotia tutors were correct in identifying such a wide range of responses by the teachers to the computer skills training then this would be important to investigate. If teachers who are working with young children had such strong reactions to being in a learning situation themselves, then there was an urgent need to understand what it was they believed that generated such a diverse range of responses. The teachers' beliefs were construed as self-theories, which were explored within a personal construct theory (PCT) framework. PCT allows individual constructs to be identified and the connections between constructs to be explored.

The term 'reflective practitioner' is used in many areas of professional life and it is based on the assumption that individuals are engaging in a specific type of thinking which employs evaluation as an important component. Within this

study it has emerged that not all the participants reflect with the goal of exploring their construing but rather for some, the Maintainers, their goal is to validate their existing construing. This has implications for both individuals and organisations as they continue to meet the demands for change. If a proportion of the population or workforce approach learning situations with trepidation, and construe change as a threat to avoid, there are serious consequences for personal development and for implementing organisational change.

### **1.1 Setting the scene**

In this chapter I will be setting the context for my study by discussing what self-theories are and how the participants' employ them. I will draw attention to how aspects of these self-theories reflect an ongoing debate in the social sciences. The debate centres around the possibility of discovering objective truth which would allow aspects of self to be clearly established. Within the social science debate the two opposing positions are defined as realist/relativist. The participants in my study also employ this dimension but the 'pole' positions are 'fixed/fluid'.

Many of the participants' beliefs about self are located on this fixed/fluid, realist/relativist dimension. For example, beliefs about intelligence and abilities are construed as more or less fixed/fluid and implicitly as more or less able to change. Other researchers have investigated various aspects of self-theories and described the implications of construing self as more/less able to change. These findings provide a context for my study.

The term 'self-theories' is employed in the literature as a collective noun, which encompasses all the individual beliefs that make up a person's self-theory. There have been significant developments in understanding how different self-theories influence responses to new learning situations as well as to the meaning of failure and setbacks. Some self-theories seem to facilitate learning and change while others seem to hinder it. A few researchers have begun to explore how different beliefs are connected to each other and there seems to be a reinforcing function where individual

beliefs reinforce the construing system as a whole (Dweck 2000, Sorrentino and Roney 2000).

### **What is known about self-theories?**

This study takes cognisance of existing research into self-theories but also explores the influence that feelings have on self-theories in terms of individual motivation and goal-orientation. Dweck (2000) has explored self-theories in relation to beliefs about intelligence and her findings reflect two ways of construing intelligence which greatly influence the ability to engage in learning. In this study these same sorts of beliefs seemed to be connected to engaging with life in general and have different consequences in terms of the quality of life the participants described.

Many aspects of self-theories have been identified and explored. Although these have enhanced understanding of how self-theories influence responses to learning and change, little is known about whether these theories can be elaborated by individuals or how this is accomplished. Dweck (2000) did present an incremental view of findings to students who were employing an entity theory of intelligence and in the follow-up task the students appeared to have been influenced by the incremental theory. However, whether this influence was sufficient to alter their beliefs about intelligence permanently, is unknown.

The Scotia tutors observed a range of responses in their computer skills sessions, with some of the teachers appearing energised and challenged by the possibility of learning something new and others behaving in a hostile and defensive manner. From what is currently known it seemed probable that different self-theories were being employed, with some beliefs about self-facilitating involvement with the training while others hindered learning by construing the 'course' as a risk to self and something to avoid. As Rom Harré says,

**“To be a self is not to be a certain kind of being, but to be in possession of a certain kind of theory,”** (Burr, 1995:125).

Theories of self seem to impact on many areas of life, for example,

- They can influence responses to learning and change (Bandura and Dweck, 1985).
- They can influence how self is experienced in terms of how worthy people feel (Pomerant and Ruble, 1998).
- They can influence the level of risk that is construed to be present in a new situation, relationship or task (Licht and Shapiro, 1982).

**There is a gap in our understanding of how self-theories change.**

The consequences for the individual of their choice of self-theory would appear to be significant in terms of what is considered possible and in the quality of life they experience. There seems to be a gap in what is known about how and when self-theories are elaborated. It would be useful to be able to identify and evaluate the consequences of employing different self-theories and to explore when participants are elaborating or maintaining their self-theories.

This study investigated the effect of self-theories on the participants' ability to elaborate their construing and change. Specifically it explored how participants construed the experience of change in any area of their lives, which they chose to discuss. There was evidence of many applications of the beliefs about self, summarised in table one, and reviewed in the literature chapter, being employed. What emerged in this project was the participants' use of these beliefs, in many areas of their lives, where they had to change over and above formal learning situations. Beliefs about self as 'fixed or fluid' influenced most areas of life and the consequences of construing self as more or less able to change was reflected in the level and types of feelings being described.

**The participants' construing mirrors an ongoing debate in the social sciences.**

The dimension of 'fixed to fluid' seems to be referring to the philosophical debate, which emerged in the social sciences. The origins of the participants' construing of self as 'fixed' probably stems from a view of

science known as realism. The underlying assumption of realism is that there is a 'real' world which scientists can discover if they remain objective and develop suitable research methods. Implicitly 'selves' can also be tested, measured and 'facts or truths' discovered.

**“At the heart of realism is the assumption that there is a reality which exists independently of our awareness of it”,**  
(Robson, 2003:33).

Many of the participants in my study refer to both 'real' worlds and to 'real selves' who can be measured, assessed and known. A defining characteristic of some participants are the beliefs they have about self which have the status of 'truths'. In contrast to this realist stance is an anti-realist position, which does not subscribe to the notion that there is an external reality that the researcher can discover, measure and explain in a definitive way as 'truth'. This is a relativist stance and Coolican (2004:241) defines this as,

**“A theory of knowledge holding that objective facts are an illusion and that knowledge is constructed by each individual through a unique personal framework.”**

A relative stance views the participant in a different way and positions them as experts in their own lives. Where a realist stance emphasises the explanation of human behaviour, a relative stance would seek to understand human behaviour (Bryman, 2001).

One of the main intellectual traditions responsible for the anti-positivist position has been phenomenology. Phenomenology is concerned with questions of how individuals make sense of the world around them and a key belief is that the world has meaning for people. Instead of there being 'truths' to be discovered about people, in terms of their perceptions and experiences of the world, there are individual interpretations of self, others and experiences. People are assumed to have individual meaning systems through which they attribute meaning to their own self and actions and to the

actions of others. The purpose or focus of research from this position is to find ways of gaining access to individual's 'common-sense thinking' and in doing so be able to interpret their self, world and actions from their perspective.

**“The phenomenologist views human behaviours...as a product of how people interpret the world...In order to grasp the meanings of a person’s behaviour, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person’s point of view,”**

(Bogdan and Taylor, 1975: 13-14).

This is a significant shift away from one clearly defined explanation, which is given the status of 'truth', to individual descriptions based on the participant's personal meanings. There is also a shift in how the participant is viewed with a move from the person as a perceiver of 'reality' to the person as a constructor or interpreter of their 'own reality'. In terms of research the focus is not so much on how the participant perceives the world as to how they construe or interpret it (Ashworth, 2003).

The focus of my study is investigating self-theories, which facilitate and hinder change, and this will use the participants' construing of their experiences of change as the primary data. In positioning their construing at the centre of my study I am emphasising the interpretative nature of this endeavour. No 'truths' will be discovered, but rather, I hope to provide a plausible interpretation of how the participants' self-theories facilitate and hinder their ability to change. A significant dimension in this study is a realist/interpretative one, which is employed by the participants in their descriptions of self, in their experiences of change and, to organise their self-theories.

At the realist end of the dimension participants are referring to 'real', stable selves who can be clearly defined, measured and known. These realist beliefs allow participants to be very certain about their 'self', what their abilities are and what it is possible for them to accomplish. Their beliefs about

self have the status of truth and these participants often find change difficult to embrace. In contrast, at the other end of the dimension participants take an interpretative view of self and construe their beliefs about self in a more fluid way, as their current story of self, which they anticipate elaborating as they encounter new situations and events. Within this realist/interpretative dimension are beliefs about the extent to which their self can learn or change. Realist beliefs are seen in the construing of participants who believe they can 'know' their 'real self' and who refer to these 'truths' about self as core ways of understanding and explaining their experiences and their self. Interpretative beliefs about self are seen in participants who employ and describe their self as an evolving story, which is implicitly a more transient theory of self.

#### **Some participants have re-interpreted their construing of self.**

A unique feature of this study is the participants' accounts of changing their self-theories. In doing so they seem to move along the realism/interpretative dimension with increased awareness that it is possible to re-construe fixed beliefs about self into something more fluid. A crucial factor in elaborating their self-theories is the influence that feelings have on both the meaning-making process and in reinforcing established self-theories. Some participants have been able to elaborate the meaning of feeling increased anxiety or uncertainty so that, instead of being construed as indicating a potentially risky situation, they were construed as meaning that something new or unusual was about to happen or was required from them. By elaborating the 'meaning' of their feelings the participants created a space in which to create and consider alternative ways of responding and ultimately to elaborate their beliefs.

#### **The purpose of the study and the research questions.**

The purpose of the study is to explore the consequences of employing different self-theories, to determine if there are optimal ways of construing self, which facilitate change and if these self-theories can be learned. The three research questions are,

1. To identify self-theories which seem to facilitate or hinder change.
2. To investigate if and when self-theories have been elaborated and how this was accomplished.
3. To determine if these 'optimal' self-theories can be learned.

The focus of the studies to date has been on identifying aspects of self-theories and some of the ways they combine, interact and reinforce each other. This study goes further, to explore how participants elaborate and implicitly change their self-theories.

Due to the exploratory focus and inductive nature of the research design, the relevant literature will be considered in three ways. To begin with, the literature that provides a context for this study will be reviewed. It will describe what has been investigated to date and create distinctions between past research and this study. It reflects the importance of gaining further understanding of the role of self-theories in facilitating change. The reviewed literature will build up a picture of what is currently known about self-theories and highlight the complexity of individual construing systems. In chapters three to six the findings are presented and relevant literature is linked into the themes, which are described to enhance understanding and to connect the findings to previous studies. Finally, in chapter eight, the findings will be compared and contrasted with the findings in previous studies. In addition, the new understanding of how self-theories can be elaborated to facilitate change will be discussed.

**In the world today 'self' needs to be able to embrace change.**

One thing that remains true about life is that it is constantly changing. Our ability to survive as a species once largely depended on our ability as humans to adapt and change in the face of biological and environmental demands. In our present socio-cultural environment, change is no less important than it was for our ancestors, although the function and purpose of change may have different connotations. Rapid social and technological changes within the last few decades have made demands on the ability of the individual to adapt and change.

At the same time, the self has become an increasingly complex project of daily living that embodies our subjectivity in the course of everyday activities. As Kegan (1982) suggests, we are more actively engaged in constructing the self than ever before. This socio-cultural ethos, with its demands for achievement and personal fulfilment, constitutes a challenge for psychology and education. If, as recent researchers claim, achievement is as much a result of self theories as it is about ability, then an exploration of the theories individuals hold about themselves is both relevant and timely.

Each of us have our own self-theories and have had experiences of both trying to make our own construing understood and of trying to grasp how others construe their lives and worlds. For those involved in teaching, counselling, mentoring and other professions where an understanding of another person's construing is important, further exploration of how self-theories facilitate or hinder the ability to learn and change would be particularly helpful. In more everyday aspects of life, as a partner, parent or friend, the ability to understand what makes life challenging or threatening for others is helpful in developing understanding and enhancing communication.

### **1.2 Theories of learning and change have developed.**

How learning and change are currently understood in our society is best seen in terms of what has gone before. For many centuries modernism and modernistic values dominated the thinking of western society and these were rarely critiqued or questioned. Modernism claimed an objective reality and a knowable world that could be objectively assessed and measured. Much of this concern with knowledge arose from the Enlightenment with its faith firmly anchored in the truth of science and scientific discovery and an ideology, which promised progress.

These assumptions led to a legitimising of knowledge that claimed to be scientifically based, and therefore was considered to be unquestionable. On this premise was based the importance of scientifically proven knowledge for professionals, and the theoretician was regarded as the legitimator of proven knowledge. Modernist notions of the self were based on the idea of a stable

self that could be discovered, measured and changed by the application of external stimuli. This was usually accomplished by the application of objective measures devised – usually by an 'expert' - to assess some internal trait or ability.

**“ Our modernist belief that we can objectively assess a person, a situation, or a relationship is based on the notion that there are (or could be) some clear standards of evaluation,”**

(McNamee, S. 1996:145).

Since these traits and abilities were regarded as stable, such measures served the function of categorising the individual rather than facilitating change. It was not until the rise of humanism that the notion of the self and self-fulfilment became a significant and salient force within the theory of change. The idea of self-worth and self-actualisation are important tenets of humanistic theory.

**“The ‘root metaphor’ of the paradigm is that of growth. The person is seen as striving to create, achieve or become. The need for fulfilment, actualisation or transcendence is regarded as a fundamental human motive,”** (McLeod, 1996:135).

Post modernism stresses the centrality of meaning making in human functioning. People are seen as actively construing their own world and consequently their own sense of self.

**“Nearly everything we attempt or accomplish today is done in relation to what kind of selves we are. ...individual identity is the basis for all manner of choices and decision making that affects our lives....The Self, in other words, is not only something we are, but an object we *actively* construct and live by.”** (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000:10)

Whether or not we consider our present era to represent late modernity or post modernity, we cannot fail to recognise and acknowledge the effect of the reflexive turn in society. It challenges the basis of the unshakeable truths of the past so that nowadays, even the most sacrosanct beliefs are questioned.

**Theories of intelligence have also been elaborated.**

One of the concepts that has not been immune from such scrutiny is that of intelligence. Early theorists of psychology and education saw intelligence as innate and immutable. Psychologists such as Skinner (1974) and Thorndike (1965) emphasised the role of external factors in the process of change such as rewards and punishment. Such theories were based on the idea of self as a stable entity that could be discovered and measured by the application of external stimuli. A well-known example of such measurement is seen in the popularity of IQ tests and their claim to evaluate an individual's potential progress over the life span. This view is based on the belief that we can objectively assess a person against some predefined standard of excellence.

However, Bandura (1963) offered a theory of learning and change, which took account of the social environment in which the individual lived. He proposed a theory of self-efficacy and claimed that people's beliefs about their skills and knowledge have a profound effect on these abilities. This social learning theory introduced the idea that performance was significantly influenced by emotions. Bandura argued that emotions play a critical role in the implementation of change. He claims that positive emotions, such as pride and self-satisfaction, motivate change by virtue of their capacity to function as positive reinforcers. For Bandura, it is these internal feelings, rather than external factors, which govern behaviour and change. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy also provides new perspectives on the role of self and self-worth in the process of learning.

Contemporary society is apt to question the notion of a stable self, seeing the concept of self as a panoply of perspectives and social roles which are described by Gergen (1991) as made of divergent realities which are socially constituted and historically situated. Whether or not we regard the notion of

the self as stable or fluid, recent research suggests that achievement is as much a result of beliefs about the self as it is about ability. Given our society's concern with achievement and lifelong learning, it would seem that further exploration of the theories individuals hold about themselves as able to change and learn is important.

### **1.3 How self-theories develop.**

This study seeks to explore these self-theories and the implicit implications that these have for life and learning. The focus of this study was to investigate individual's self-theories by analysing how people experience change in their lives. Evidence was found of previously identified self-theories such as Dweck's (2000) research into theories of intelligence, which elaborates on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. According to Dweck (2000), it is students' beliefs or theories about their intelligence which determine the goals they pursue and these theories set up adaptive and maladaptive achievement patterns which either facilitate or hinder their ability to learn. Each person's self-theory forms the core of a whole meaning system; a personal framework within which change can take place.

These personal frameworks have developed over the life span of the participant and have all begun with a child's early meaning system which have been elaborated to different extents. Dweck's (2003) investigation of early meaning systems suggests that goodness and badness are important early organising concepts for children with the creation of a 'good' self, being an important outcome. There is evidence in studies that explore the development of self-theories of self being construed as both 'real' and fixed, that is having essential unchanging aspects. It seems likely that these have emerged from children's early conceptualisations of self where they are working to determine who they are.

A significant construct for children in gaining this understanding of self is deciding what is real or pretend, fact or fiction. Each child needs to understand that there are some unchanging facts about their self such as the colour of their hair or skin. However, it is equally important to be aware that

while they can pretend to be the little mermaid, sleeping beauty or a princess this will remain fantasy and is 'not real'.

This is a complex endeavour for children as adults in our culture frequently collude to sustain 'fantasy' as 'fact', for example adults often maintain that fantasy figures such as Santa Claus, the tooth fairy and the Easter Bunny are 'real'. There is a double standard at work that requires children to 'tell the truth' while adults are allowed to propagate fiction and this further complicates the child's task of understanding what is real and what is pretend. It is often not until the age of eight or nine that a child becomes aware that adults are actually perpetuating a myth, or lying! Children have to re-interpret the meaning of 'real and pretend' as they become aware of how adults are employing these concepts. It seems possible that this initial struggle to determine what is fact or fiction is a crucial part of the process of elaborating early conceptualisations of a 'real' self.

In my study the realist/interpretative dimension is employed by participants in very different ways, to help them explain who they are and what they consider possible, or not. Where early theories of self have been sufficiently elaborated self seems to be construed as more of a story, where certain core beliefs create continuity about self, but these are open to re-interpretation. In contrast, where early theories of self remain less developed then there are significant references to essential 'real' selves who are clearly defined and well known. The realist/interpretative beliefs about self are evident in the literature which has been reviewed and can be seen in descriptions of self as 'fixed or fluid' in terms of the ability to learn and change.

The implications for the individual of the theories of self that they construct and live by are of enormous significance. The way in which self is construed will influence their perceptions of self, others and the world at large (e.g. Holstein and Gubrium 2000). What is believed to be possible or not, what can change or not, where risks can be taken or not, will all be impacted by the core beliefs about self. In addition, their emotional experiences will be largely dictated by the beliefs and theories they hold (e.g. Dweck and Legget, 1988

and Bandura and Dweck, 1985). In another piece of research, Stone (1998), found that if you believe you can't change your level of intelligence or aspects of your personality, then entering into a learning environment may generate more anxiety and uncertainty than for someone who believes that everyone can learn more if they work hard.

Dweck's (2000) research forms a framework that highlights how underlying beliefs create two very different theories of self. A belief in the potential to change is at the heart of the distinction between the two theories of intelligence she describes. The first of these theories is called an Entity theory and is defined by the belief that basic change in intelligence is not really possible, since intelligence is construed as 'real', fixed and unchanging. The alternative theory of intelligence is described as an Incremental theory that promotes the potential for change as its foundation. Within this theory, intelligence is viewed as something to cultivate through learning and the core belief is that everyone, with effort and guidance, can increase their intellectual abilities. These two theories of intelligence, Entity and Incremental, are believed to have significant implications for an individual's ability to learn and change.

### **Failure - a problem to be solved or an indictment of the self?**

How failure is construed has been identified as being very important (Dweck, 2000). While both entity and incremental theorists do equally well when they are succeeding, it is when they experience difficulties or failure that significant differences emerge. For those people using an entity theory of intelligence, failure in one area is often transferred to other domains, which seriously undermines self-worth and confidence. There is a tendency to respond by withdrawing either effort or themselves from the situation. It constitutes a serious threat to self and can generate enormous anxiety about learning anything new as there is a constant risk of failure and a subsequent loss of self-worth. Entity theorists were found to construe failure as an indictment of the self, experiencing shame and discouragement (Mueller and Dweck 1996).

In comparison, for respondents' using an incremental theory of intelligence, failure was viewed as a problem to be solved, and they felt motivated and challenged to engage in finding a solution (Ames, 1984, Stipek and Kowalski, 1989, Dweck, 2000). The meaning of concepts such as intelligence, personality, confidence, success, failure and helplessness all influence individual theories of self. It was from the work of Seligman and Maier (1967) that psychological understanding of how beliefs about self as able to influence events or as helpless to influence events emerged.

In their experiments, some animals demonstrated helpless responses when they mistakenly believed that they could not leave a painful situation. In a similar way Dweck (2000) found that individual meanings seem to exert a powerful influence throughout construing systems and appear to create two very different theories of self. With mastery-oriented beliefs self is construed as able to adapt, learn and cope with setbacks, work out new strategies and solutions and to view this process as a sign of intelligence. The goal with these beliefs is to expand understanding and to increase the repertoire of available responses and strategies.

In comparison, with helpless-oriented beliefs the self is required to learn instantly and effortlessly. Setbacks are construed as indications of a lack of intelligence and result in the experience of increased anxiety about self-worth. The goal with these beliefs is to validate the self as worthwhile and intelligent and to avoid unfamiliar situations where they are unsure of their ability to easily succeed and so validate their worth.

### **The consequences of individual meaning-making**

Individual meaning making is of crucial importance in creating and developing self-theories and the differences can, at times, be very clearly observed. Whether failure is construed as a temporary setback in the process of learning something new or as a global indictment of self is essentially the consequence of the meaning which has been ascribed. The meanings that people employ shape their understanding of self and the world and have consequences in terms of how people feel about self. When self is

construed as able to change, when learning is construed as happening over time and as requiring effort, when problems and setbacks are anticipated as part of life then there is less anxiety about how self is performing as self-worth is not so dependent on performance. This makes it easier to engage in and enjoy new activities and relationships without so many concerns about how self will perform or cope.

In contrast, for entity theorists, many of their meanings serve to create a self who is limited in their ability to adapt and change. There is a need to master new skills and information quickly and effortlessly, and a tendency to construe low marks, setbacks and failure as a reflection of their worth or lack of worth. Each new situation contains the possibility that their limited self may not be able to meet their standards of performance. According to entity theorists there seems to always be a threat of invalidation and anxiety about self-worth. Within each of these construing systems there are reinforcing aspects where individual beliefs combine to sustain others and perpetuate the feelings of anxiety connected to self. The meanings that entity theorists employ seem to have consequences for how they construe their experiences and for the feelings they have. As Reid (2002:110) suggests,

**“Error is not error, it is simply more information. Error is an attitude.”**

While Dweck (2000) have explored many aspects of individual theories of self in relation to intelligence and identified two main self-theories, entity and incremental, there has been little investigation into whether these self-theories can change and how this occurs. Covington, (1992) found that, where people are working within a framework where failure represents an indictment of the self, there needs to be a re-evaluation of that construct before mastery-oriented responses will develop or change can occur.

### **The complexity of individual construing**

The complexity of individual construing is apparent when only a few key studies are reviewed and how the different beliefs are interconnected and

serve to reinforce and sustain each other makes this a fascinating topic. Within the literature there are signs of researchers beginning to explore and identify some of these connections between beliefs and to embrace both the complexity and diversity of human construing. I created table one to highlight how beliefs about intelligence, goal-orientation and the meaning of 'setbacks' are experienced by the participants as feelings and so the first indications of the role of feelings in individual construct systems is made explicit. An important feature of this table is the presentation of entity and incremental theories of self as a dimension along which participants can move additionally, this dimension reflects the realist/interpretative beliefs the participant's employed in these studies.

**Table 1 - Theories of intelligence**

<b>Theories of Intelligence</b>	
<p>Belief in the potential to change is at the heart of the distinction between theories. Beliefs that contribute to an Entity theory are described on the left and those that contribute to an Incremental theory are on the right.</p>	
<p><b>Entity theory</b> is defined by the belief that basic change is not really possible, as intelligence is construed as 'real,' fixed and unchangeable and reflects realist beliefs.</p>	<p><b>Incremental theory</b> has as its basis the potential for change because it is a pragmatic process and reflects interpretative beliefs.</p>
<p><b>These beliefs create a 'self' which,</b></p>	
<p>Is in continual need of validation. If intelligence is fixed, it should also be stable and global – I should be good at everything.</p>	<p>Desires ongoing learning and growth. I may not be successful at everything, but I can apply effort and learn more.</p>
<p><b>The meaning of failure is different and crucially important with an,</b></p>	
<p><b>Entity theory</b>, failure in one area represents a complete lack of intelligence and is a serious threat to self-worth.</p>	<p><b>Incremental theory</b>, failure is construed as a problem to be solved.</p>
<p><b>The meaning of applying effort is also different. With an</b></p>	
<p><b>Entity theory</b> applying effort means you are <b>not</b> intelligent!</p>	<p><b>Incremental theory</b> applying effort is a way of being smarter.</p>
<p><b>Therefore the choice of goal is different.</b></p>	
<p>With an entity theory a performance goal to validate the self as successful is chosen.</p>	<p>With an incremental theory a learning goal to develop skills and knowledge and to become smarter is selected.</p>
<p><b>Goal orientation indicates the emotional response to unpredictable and unfamiliar situations with a,</b></p>	
<p><b>Performance goal</b> predicting high levels of social anxiety, fear of failure and anxiety about unfamiliar situations.</p>	<p><b>Learning goal</b> predicting low levels of social anxiety, and the ability to cope with uncertainty and unpredictable situations.</p>
<p><b>Therefore encountering stressful life events results in,</b></p>	
<p>Self-blame and disengagement.</p>	<p>Active, constructive coping.</p>
<p>(Dweck, 2000 and Dykman, 1998)</p>	

In comparing and contrasting beliefs about self (in table one) it becomes apparent that individual beliefs about self and the broader theories of self have consequences. There are consequences not only in terms of what self is believed able to do or not do, but also in how it feels to have a self who is more or less able to change. An important theme in exploring self-theories is the participant's 'felt' sense of self and Sorrentino and Roney's (2000) research into the emotional implications of certainty/uncertainty orientation investigated this issue.

#### **1.4 The emotional implications of certainty/uncertainty-orientation**

Sorrentino and Roney (2000) have extensively investigated the question of how uncertainty affects the individual's ability to change. They found that while people were similar in their responses when they were confident of what would happen next, either in a situation or the outcome of an event, their responses differed when they faced an unpredictable situation or event. As in Dweck's (2000) theories, where there were different responses to problems and failure that resulted in different types of goals being selected, here the different responses to uncertainty contributed to the type of goal selected, but with an emphasis on maintaining certainty and avoiding any ambiguity.

Sorrentino and Roney's (2000) research indicates that there are two main groups of people and once again the realist/relativist status of their beliefs about self is evident. In the first group, people cling to their familiar, predictable and established ways of thinking about the world. These people are described as being Certainty-Oriented, as they strive to maintain clarity and avoid confusion. The second group values working hard, experiments with different strategies, enjoys the challenge of problem solving and expects difficulties to occur and their beliefs are construed as current understandings. This group is described as being Uncertainty-Oriented.

In order to learn, change or develop skills there is normally a risk involved. The outcome is uncertain and it is in these ambiguous and uncertain situations that someone who strongly links their self-worth to their

performance will want to restore certainty. Certainty-Oriented individuals will select a performance goal, that is an activity where they are fairly sure they can perform well and so validate their intelligence. Where they are unsure of the outcome, they may avoid the activity or situation completely. In contrast, Uncertainty-Oriented theorists do not associate their self-worth so closely to their performance which allows a space for a them to be a 'beginner,' to make mistakes, develop skills and gain an understanding of new information without threatening their self-worth. They are more likely to choose a task, which involves learning something new - a learning goal.

Before the role of goal-orientation is explored any further, there is another area of self-theories that needs to be covered. In order to maintain clarity and the ability to accurately predict outcomes, the certainty-oriented person needs to find a way of dealing with new and possibly contradictory information, which might challenge their established construing. How information about self, others and the world is organised into categories highlights the different focus that people have, depending on whether their goal is to sustain certainty or to increase their understanding of the world.

### **Certainty/uncertainty orientation influences category construction**

The next studies to be reviewed show a deeper understanding of the role of categorisation in creating and sustaining beliefs about self. Previously it had been thought that everyone employed a complex style of evaluation in important situations and a simple style in less important situations and probably used heuristic or mental short-cuts to arrive at quick decisions (Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman, 1981). More recent researchers (Roney and Sorrentino, 1987) have investigated the extent to which participants' categories provide them with relative clarity or absolute certainty and this was determined by assessing how connected or not their categories seemed to be.

Roney and Sorrentino (1987) investigated the function of rigid and fluid categories by giving participants a list of categories of people such as student, housewife, executive etc and on a different page a list of attributes.

The participants were asked to list the attributes they thought described each category of person. Roney and Sorrentino (1987) were interested in how distinctive an attribute was considered to be, so if students had attributes which no other group were given, then the participant's categories were evaluated as high in distinctiveness.

As they had anticipated, certainty-oriented participants had much more distinctive categories with clearly defined category attributes. By clearly defining category attributes certainty-oriented participants show a preference for clarity in their cognitive structures and a motivation to seek confirming information. In contrast, uncertainty-oriented participants were interested in inconsistent information that challenged their existing categories and offered the possibility of learning something new.

#### **Categorisation influences the kind of information that is sought**

Driscoll, Hamilton and Sorrentino (1991) found that uncertainty-oriented participants' categories often had 'fuzzy' boundaries where what defined a student could be blurred at the edges so that a specific student could also be construed as a hard-working part-time web designer. The 'fuzzy' boundaries of categories allowed these participants to absorb disconfirming information and adapt their categories on a person-to-person level, while sustaining the broader generalisations for use in less specific or important situations.

In contrast certainty-oriented participants had very clearly defined 'black and white' categories, which clearly identified people as being in a specific category and so reduced ambiguity. For certainty-oriented participants the attributes ascribed to students were very distinctive from other categories of people and this served the function of allowing a high degree of certainty about what people are like based on category membership. Whether categories are constructed as distinctive and separate from each other or with 'softer' boundaries seemed to depend on whether the individual was motivated by a desire to gain new knowledge or on a desire to avoid ambiguity.

The kind of categories each participant employs, whether fluid or rigid, provides an indication of the kind of information they will look for, with a likelihood that a certainty-oriented participant will have a desire to avoid ambiguous information and an uncertainty-oriented participant will focus on finding things out. The desire or motivation to seek out information that would elaborate categories and enhance understanding has been an area of interest to persuasion researchers who have investigated when participants are thoughtful in evaluating information and when they use superficial cues, sometimes called heuristics (Hovland, Janis and Kelley, 1953).

Earlier research into how people are persuaded to change their beliefs had suggested that people were motivated tacticians who chose to seek out information, evaluate it and consider alternatives before reaching a conclusion in situations of importance (Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman 1981). These researchers thought that people in situations of low importance would seek to make a decision more quickly and would use available shortcuts or heuristics. However, when Sorrentino, Bobel, Gitta, Olson and Hewitt (1988) conducted two studies to test out these theories, they reached a different conclusion.

### **Self-theories influence the level of evaluation employed**

While established theory suggested that everyone would employ a more complicated evaluation in important situations, Sorrentino, et al (1988) found that this was exactly what certainty-oriented participants did not want to do as it would increase their uncertainty and confusion. In a situation of importance certainty-oriented participants do not want to increase their anxiety with contradictory or ambiguous information. Sorrentino, et al (1988) found that in these situations certainty-oriented participants employed their characteristic way of dealing with the world and used simpler, heuristic ways of thinking to reduce the complexity, ambiguity and increase certainty. There was also a reliance on expert opinion in situations of high risk or great importance as this again negates the need to evaluate in a complex way. In situations of lower risk or importance these participants would employ complex thinking and evaluations.

In contrast, the uncertainty-oriented participants focused on disconfirming information in high risk or important situations and employed complex evaluations to fully explore the situation before making a decision. In low risk or unimportant situations they used simple thinking and heuristics to make quick decisions. Careful information processing increased as personal importance increased. This approach suggests that participants will use their characteristic way of dealing with the world in more important situations. As importance increases the desire to find out about an issue one is uncertain about would presumably also increase, leading to more careful consideration of available information by uncertainty-oriented participants. For certainty-oriented participants an important situation is when they do not want to experience confusion and uncertainty and seems to lead to them employing simpler ways of evaluating.

These studies changed the previous assumptions about where complex and simple evaluation occurred. Instead of assuming that everyone used a complex level of thinking in high risk situations, for example when changing job or buying a house and a simpler level of thinking in low risk situations, for example when buying a toaster or choosing a movie to watch, there were variations. Within this study there are many examples of these ways of thinking but one of the most interesting is on page 174 where one of the respondents, Lara, describes elaborating how she evaluates so that she begins to employ complex evaluation in situations of importance.

Inherent within the reviewed literature is the issue of the type of feeling generated by each orientation. For certainty-oriented theorists the stress and anxiety of resolving the question of whether a given task will confirm them as either intelligent or unintelligent entails an ongoing evaluation of their self-worth. There are several dilemmas for certainty-oriented theorists to resolve.

- How to maintain clarity and reduce ambiguity in situations of importance to them but which present a high risk to their self-worth.
- How to reduce the risk of not being able to perform well.
- How to deal with disconfirming information.

- How to predict where and when their self-worth will be validated.

Each of these dilemmas brings the self-worth of the certainty-oriented theorist into question and this has consequences for how they feel about their self. For uncertainty-oriented theorists the challenge of working on difficult material generates positive emotions, which further enhance their self-worth. Both Dweck (2000) and Sorrentino and Roney (2000) have indicated how an individual's orientation towards a theory of intelligence or to certainty/uncertainty influences goal selection. The next area of literature to be reviewed expands this connection further.

### **1.5 Self-theories influence goal selection**

If you strongly associate your self-worth with your performance then you are likely to select what Dykman (1998) of Washington State University has called a 'Performance Goal'. According to this argument, you attempt to have your ability recognised and, implicitly, your self-worth validated. Alternatively, if you are able to separate your intrinsic worth from your performance, then you are freer to pursue a learning goal. Consequently you are more likely to try new subjects, hobbies or activities with the aim of learning or growing more, without the burden of having to prove that you are capable, intelligent or worthwhile. Essentially,

A person seeking validation chooses a performance goal.

A person seeking to learn/grow chooses a learning goal.

Dykman's (1998) notion of contingent self-worth means that when a person seeks validation they feel worthy when they succeed and unworthy when they fail. He investigated the kinds of self-conceptions that were likely to create a sense of contingent self-worth. He found that believing in fixed traits that are readily judged from your behaviour and performance goes hand-in-hand with both validation seeking and a sense of contingent self-worth.

Dykman's (1998) findings support those of Dweck (2000) and when these pieces of research are combined, an overall picture appears of how self-

theories affect the individual's ability to deal with setbacks. An entity theory linked to a validation-seeking goal tends to result in self-blame and disengagement in the face of difficulties, as self-worth and performance are strongly linked. There are also reports of self-esteem loss when difficulties or failure are encountered. Dykman (1998) found that validation-seeking was a highly significant predictor of depression and also predicted high levels of social anxiety, fear of failure and anxiety about unfamiliar situations. In contrast an incremental theory linked to a growth-seeking goal tended to result in active constructive coping in the face of setbacks. A growth-seeking goal also made experiencing depression less likely and low levels of anxiety were connected to social situation and the possibility of failure.

### **Connecting goal-orientation and feelings**

Dykman's (1998) study showed that where self-worth was strongly linked to performance, the individual was likely to experience low self-worth in the face of failure and high self-worth in the face of success. This is what Dykman called contingent self-worth. When an individual links their self-worth to their achievement, they tend to select a goal that will confirm their ability and thus validate their self-worth. Dykman (1998) and Dweck (2000) refer to this choice as a performance goal. These researchers maintain that individuals who are able to separate their intrinsic self-worth from their performance are freer to pursue a goal, which is based on their desire to learn, this is also referred to as a learning goal.

These research findings indicate that the particular beliefs about self that are employed by an individual influence or determine how contingent self-worth is on performance, the type of goal selected, the degree of certainty/uncertainty that can be tolerated and ultimately the feelings which are experienced. Beliefs have consequences for how the individual feels and for how they choose to act. For example, if it is believed that some aspects of self can't change, or that a specific ability is not present, then a situation requiring that skill will present a threat to self-worth. The focus for the individual can slowly become one of avoiding situations where they are not sure they can cope. In some cases, it is not the situation itself that is

avoided, so much as the strong negative feelings associated with it. Baldwin and Sinclair (1996) and Lazarus (1991) investigated how feelings come to exert such a powerful role in self-theories. There seem to be different consequences for individuals who construe their self-worth and performance as more or less connected.

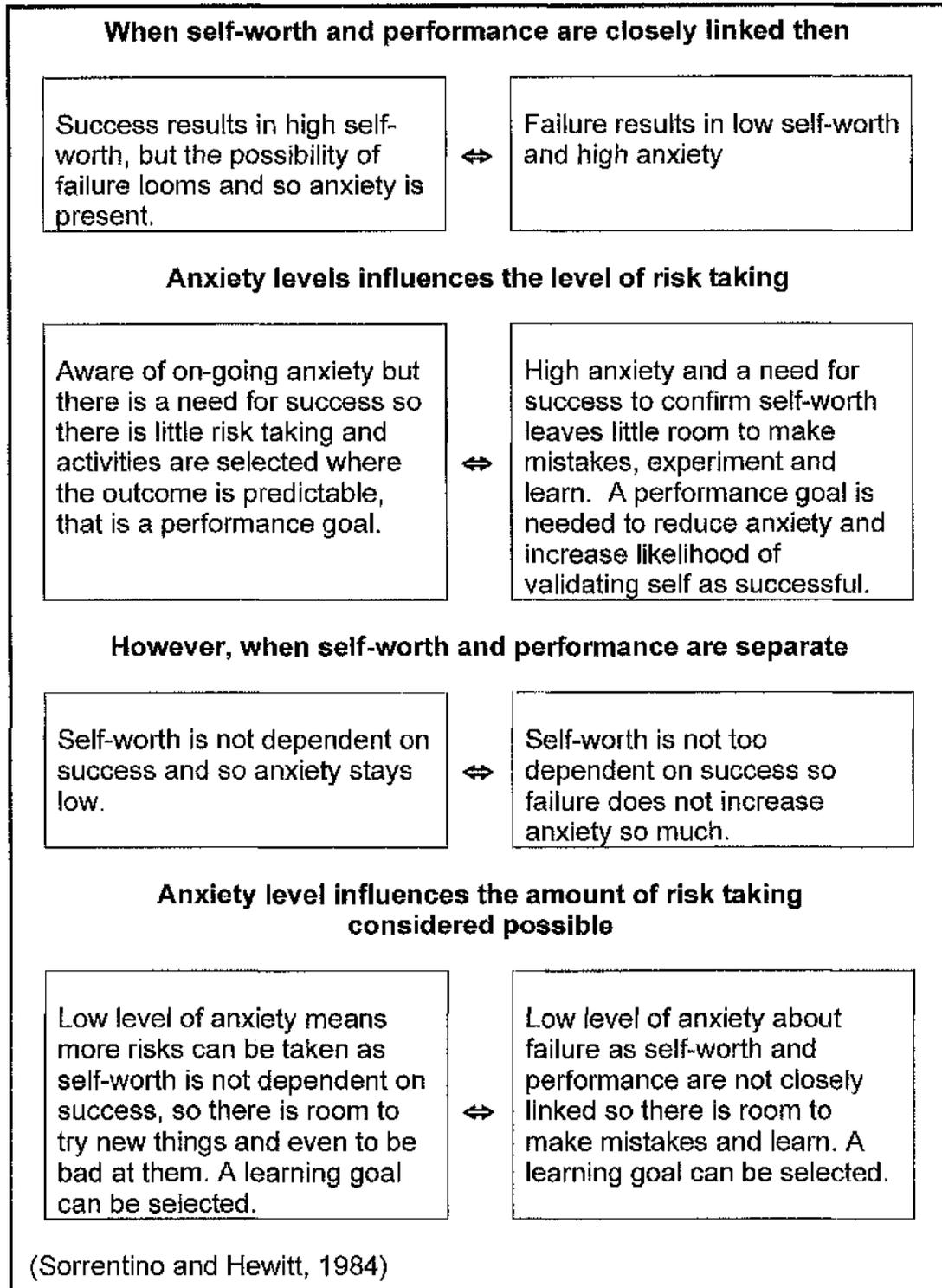
### **The consequences of construing self-worth and performance as more or less connected to each other**

When self-worth and performance (achievement) are construed as mostly separate then failure does not generate a state of high anxiety. This allows risks to be taken and the individual can try new experiences, activities or new ways of doing things without a potential threat to their self-worth, should they find that they are not good at making pottery or speaking French. This creates a space to experiment, to make mistakes and to learn and develop new skills and knowledge. Each experience can be embraced without a specific standard having to be attained. Indeed enjoyment can be experienced even when skills are lacking. Participating in new activities and trying out different ways of doing things can generate positive feelings and result in more of life being viewed as a 'challenge to embrace'.

However, it is a very different outcome when self-worth and performance are closely linked, as success brings high self-worth and low anxiety but failure brings low self-worth and high anxiety. This combination seems to result in only low-level risks being taken. This means that a performance goal is selected so that there is a good probability of a successful outcome. In practice, activities and ways of doing things will be chosen which have been successful in the past and there is little likelihood of new activities or ways of doing things being tried. A lack of risk taking combined with a need to be successful doesn't leave much room to make mistakes, experiment or learn. Table two shows how self-worth, performance and anxiety are seen to combine to create goal orientation. Indeed, high anxiety levels seem to influence or provide the motivation to only engage in activities with predictable outcomes. The threat of failure, accompanied by high levels of

anxiety, seems to result in the individual's construing and decision-making process being dominated by their emotions.

**Table 2 - How self-worth and performance are linked to goal orientation.**



## **1.6 Self-theories as neural connections**

A neuroscientist, Gerald Edelman (1987), investigated the hidden consequences of our familiar emotional responses. He proposes that our habits-our most familiar ways of thinking, feeling and reacting take shape at a neural level through the impact of simple repetition in the connections between brain cells. The more often a particular circuit is used the stronger the connections become. So some connections strengthen while those for alternatives weaken, making a review of beliefs unlikely. As a result, a strong emotional connection in the brain can react before any other connection is fired. This has consequences for anyone attempting to change.

Daniel Goleman (1996) expanded this theme further in his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, where he describes the impact that established schema have on our thinking and lives. People can be scared of feeling their emotions and a schema can act as a barrier by quickly initiating a habitual response that allows them to deal with the threatening situation or feelings it arouses. These can be self-defeating strategies as they reinforce ways of responding, which appear to enable people to avoid strong feelings, but they also eliminate the opportunity to reflect and consider alternative responses.

People can become trapped in their responses and in a cycle of behaviour based on avoidance. Schemas can take us away from the present into the past. Philip Zimbardo (2001) investigated whether people located their sense of self predominantly in the past, present or the future. He suggests that you cannot make changes in the present if events have taken you, emotionally, back into the past. The experience of a strong negative emotion can activate a schema which links a current experience with a memory from the past. The inherent problem is that it can be a very tenuous link with a minor detail from the present being connected to a strong negative emotional memory in the past.

Within the findings chapters of this thesis there are examples of participants referring to their past experiences or abilities to evaluate how they will perform in the present. For example, an adult faced with calculating how

much new carpeting they will require could refer back to primary school for information about their arithmetic skills and find themselves lacking. This kind of evaluation can significantly influence their approach to the calculation and they may be completely unaware that they are feeling nervous based on information that is twenty or thirty years old! The participants who tended to do this were the Maintainers, who construed themselves as largely unable to change. Their historical 'selves' were employed to reinforce their beliefs about what was possible and to provide a sense of continuity concerning who they are and what they can do, but there were consequences in terms of how they felt. Historical selves reflect realist beliefs and while they provide an opportunity to clearly define self they also serve to confine both thinking and actions. In limiting what is considered possible there is increased anxiety about how well they would be able cope or perform with the new task or situation.

### **Schema Activated Responses**

Goleman's (1996) theory of Schema Activated Responses suggests that strong emotional memories can influence an individual's thinking and their subsequent actions. All information coming into the brain first goes to the thalamus before being distributed to other parts of the brain. It is nicknamed the 'scanner' as it scans the environment for information. When it recognises patterns of experience that led to previous emotional reactions, it relays this information to the hippocampus within the emotional centre of the brain.

The hippocampus functions as an evaluator as it assesses context, comparing current information with what has been seen before. The amygdala has a role in storing emotional memories and is a kind of memory bank, which determines the emotional significance of events and compares the threat with past events. If there is a match with an earlier memory it may initiate the 'fight or flight' response, which speeds up heart rate, increases blood pressure and starts the body sweating. This happens very, very quickly and while this response was designed to protect us it can impair the ability to hear, think and speak clearly. Problems occur because the hippocampus, which evaluates information, is imprecise in matching current situations to

memories. If there is no match the information is sent to the cortex, the thinking cap responsible for rational processes. There was clear evidence in the second and third studies of participants being emotionally hi-jacked and as a result, tending to increasingly avoid situations which generated 'trigger' feelings.

### **Emotional hi-jacking**

Strong emotions can be triggered from a relatively minor event, which the hippocampus connects to a previous event. An example, provided by a female colleague, helps to explain this process. A woman, who had been physically abused as a child by her father, is asked out for a coffee with a colleague and while she is thinking about a suitable time finds she is experiencing physiological responses. As her heart rate speeds up and her heart rate increases, she is also aware of sweating and these physical changes create anxiety, as she becomes aware that all is not well. As she tries to determine exactly what is wrong, the high level of anxiety makes rational thinking difficult and she may well decide not to have the coffee because on some level she does not feel 'safe'.

In fact the connection the hippocampus had made was that her father and the colleague were both male. However, as a result of the 'hard wiring' in the brain which was created from reactions based on 'old information and experiences' and which is largely automatic, the woman is unaware of what 'triggered' the physiological response. Consequently she does not have an opportunity to explore her thinking and evaluate whether there is a danger in meeting with her colleague or whether she would be safe. This is an example of what Goleman (1996) calls emotional hi-jacking. It is evident from the above example that emotional memories play a significant role in determining the importance given to different events in individual biographies and can influence the decisions made in similar situations in the future.

### **1.7 The experience of disjuncture/disorienting dilemmas**

Emotions are also a factor when there is a gap between previous experiences and the demands of a new situation. Jarvis (1999) gives the

example of meeting someone new at a party, and stretching out his hand for a hand shake, this is done automatically and unthinkingly, only to discover that the other person does not reach out their hand. This creates disjuncture as his usual automatic reactions and behaviours were not appropriate. The flow of his subconscious responses was interrupted by this unusual event which he calls disjuncture. Mezirow (1990) called this kind of unusual event a 'disorienting dilemma' which required conscious consideration and not a habitual response.

It is in these small moments that the opportunity for evaluating the effectiveness and suitability of current beliefs and responses is present, as well as the opportunity to consider alternative ways of responding. However, if the sensation of 'not knowing' creates sufficient anxiety, it is likely that, the individual will act to reduce the negative feeling being experienced, and not consider either the unusual situation or an alternative response.

It seems that feelings have a significant effect on the individual's ability to respond to the experience of disjuncture. For some individuals strong negative memories about events and situations have the potential to trigger schema activated responses, and so generate even more anxiety. They can also limit the opportunity for evaluating a situation and possibly responding differently. In comparison, where anxiety levels are lower, then the possibility of evaluating current responses and considering alternatives is available and these reflections may result in change occurring.

### **Different theories of self lead to different feelings about self**

The reviewed literature highlighted the connection between beliefs about self and how people felt about 'their self'. In particular there were frequent references by participants to the status of these beliefs as reflecting essential truths about self, which reflects a realist discourse of self or as representing their current thinking, which reflects an interpretative discourse of self. Where self-theories were construed more as 'truths' and they combine to create a self which is vulnerable to failure (Dweck, 2000), anxious about the future, (Zimbardo 2001), and uncertain about their worth as people

(Sorrentiono and Roney 2000). The negative emotions generated by employing these beliefs limit the individual's ability to embrace challenges (Goleman 1996) and tend to lead to validation-seeking goals that are attempts to confirm self-worth (Dykman, 1998). As a result, many responses to situations and challenges are actually helpless-oriented responses, which confine the person within their self-theories and change remains illusive.

Incremental theories create a self, which has separated self-worth and performance and can therefore embrace challenges because self-worth is not at risk (Dweck, 2000). The type of goal chosen is usually a learning or growth based goal where the person can extend their knowledge and skills by undertaking a more challenging activity where mastery of the material confirms intelligence (Dykman 1998). The feelings which these theories generate are more positive and the responses are more mastery-oriented and serve to allow the person to explore and grow (Goleman, 1996).

### **1.8 The relevance of Personal Construct Theory (PCT) for this study**

PCT offers a theoretical framework from which to explore self-theories. It provides a methodology that allows constructs to be identified and the relationship between constructs to be investigated. PCT construes people as meaning making beings, whose nature it is to anticipate what the future holds by referring to their understanding of their experiences to date. This understanding is represented in terms of dimensions of meaning, referred to as personal constructs. Each person is viewed as a scientist who builds his or her personal theory of self, and constantly tests this out, and revises or refines it. The self, therefore, is understood in terms of the construct dimensions employed. In other words, PCT allows each individual to define their own "self" and there are many potential selves within this model.

In an era where behaviourism held sway, Kelly presented a theory that was radical, revolutionary and reflexive. Radical in that it proposed a view of man as an active agent -

**“continually contemplating in his own personal way the stream of events upon which he finds himself so swiftly borne” (Kelly 1991:3).**

Revolutionary in that it challenged notions of a stable, knowable reality which could be discovered, measured and tamed; and reflexive in its view of self as both the knower and the known. For Kelly the metaphor of man as ‘scientist’ defines what man should be, or aim to become. The aspects of a scientist that he seems to value as being of worth are the scientists’ ability to be creative, inventive, curious, exploratory and risk takers. Kelly’s analogy of ‘man as scientist’ refers to all man-kind, not merely a particular class that have attained public status as scientists.

#### **Man (or woman) as a scientist**

**“The aspirations of the scientist are essentially the aspirations of all men,” (Kelly 1991:30).**

This is the main metaphor which Kelly uses when describing the nature of man. But the values inherent in his metaphor are not those of knowledge and discovery in quantitative terms, nor are they the values of logic and precision. Rather they are the values of man’s potential to interpret, create and invent - to view the world from multiple perspectives, to make progress through understanding, to exercise choice and to take responsibility for these choices. Implicit in this stance is the value of equality - what is true of the scientist is also true of the subject - there are no ‘experts’ - all mankind are engaged in the process of making sense of their world. The equality inherent in this view makes the relationship between the researcher and the participant a collaborative endeavour, which is appreciative of the participants’ insights into their own construing. It does not presume to measure aspects of self in a reductionist manner, but rather embraces the complexity and diversity of individual construct systems.

The question of what man **should** be is answered in PCT by the notion of the **good** scientist whose goal is to gain a better understanding of self and others. For Kelly, a good scientist is always testing out his theories - he makes sense of life by testing out hypotheses. Within Kelly's theory is the implicit assumption that,

**“some of the alternative ways of construing are better than others,”** (Kelly, 1955:45).

Kelly seems to value courage, open mindedness, creative thinking and risk taking. There is also a valuing of intellectual curiosity, of the refusal to be satisfied with the status quo and the constant reaching out to what is not known. It seems clear that, for Kelly, being actively engaged in exploration and meaning making was of high value so a useful question to ask is what prevents us from being good scientists?

The answer to this question is best answered by considering the opposite pole of those values, which define a good scientist. It could be that one of the most significant barriers to being a good scientist is the need for us to protect our sense of self against invalidation. To be a good scientist involves significant risk taking and a capacity to cope with change - and change inevitably involves cost.

**“Men change things by changing themselves first, and they accomplish their objectives, if at all, only by paying the price of altering themselves,”** (Kelly 1966b:16).

### **Change within Personal construct theory**

Each person's construct system reflects the meanings they have attached to events. A construct system is made up of constructs and each one is a dimension with two 'poles' with one being the opposite meaning (subjectively speaking) to the other. A fictitious example (not related to the study) would be of a teacher who described herself as 'shy', and described the opposite pole as being 'confident.' The dimension of 'shy to confident' helps to explain

what 'shyness' means to the teacher by providing the contrasting meaning. However, not every construct is so clearly defined as they can refer to vague feelings or hard to explain thoughts. For this reason the opposing pole helps to clarify what is meant.

**'me as a shy teacher' ←————→ 'me as a confident teacher'**

Each person's construct system helps them to predict what may happen and Kelly's fundamental postulate says,

**"A person's processes are psychologically channelised by the way they anticipate events,"** (Kelly 1991:32).

There are eleven corollaries which elaborate this postulate, but this notion is perhaps best explained by taking the example of the shy teacher and then working through Kelly's theory of change. When the fictitious primary school teacher construes herself as 'shy', she is employing a core role construct in an attempt to predict outcomes and control events. Employing this construct affects both how the teacher behaves and what she perceives. For example, if the teacher was required to give a short talk to all the teachers in her school and she employed this core role construct, she would probably predict that she would struggle to speak to her colleagues.

However, there is always room for the teacher to choose another construct from within her construct system or to elaborate her construing of shyness and in this way it is not an overly deterministic theory. She could interpret the situation as 'me as a shy teacher, but able to give a talk to my colleagues', although nowhere else. If the teacher's prediction about giving the talk leads her to the anticipated outcome then what she predicted is validated. If the outcome fails to live up to the anticipations, then it is invalidated.

**"Validation represents the compatibility (subjectively construed) between one's predictions and the outcome he observes.**

**Invalidation represents incompatibility (subjectively construed)**

**between one's predictions and the outcome he observes,"** (Kelly 1991:110).

When the teacher tests out her predictions of events and of how others will react to the self she presents, she gathers evidence for the accuracy or success of these predictions. When her predictions are not validated, she can modify, change or abandon her construct; when they are validated they are more likely to strengthen the predication and be employed again in the future.

Kelly's personal construct theory gives agency to people, as he construes everyone as able to act and to influence their lives and there is always room to formulate a new theory and try it out. Kelly views people as able to interpret and reinterpret meanings, there are always choices, though sometimes they can be undesirable. While the possibility of reinterpreting self exists for the teacher she cannot act out with her current construing. If the teacher had been asked to give a talk out with her own school she might not have been able to imagine herself doing this, as her constructs were not sufficiently developed to allow her to construe, 'me as able to give talks outside of school'. Kelly's notion of constructive alternativism means that the teacher has the opportunity to reinterpret her construing of self as shy, to elaborate this construct and so expand what she predicts she can accomplish.

**'me as a shy teacher who gives talks to colleagues'**  **'me as a confident teacher who gives talks anywhere'**

There are however endless alternatives for the teacher to experiment with as she could also choose to elaborate her construing to 'me as more confident than I thought.' Bannister describes a 'self' as,

**"not a haphazard collection of autobiographical data; it is what you believe yourself to be, the story you tell yourself, the meaning you attach to your life,"** (1985:39).

When constructs are viewed as components of the stories we tell about selves, then the potential for change is much more obvious. PCT offers the possibility of changing or developing the story as we go through life, indeed we are not expected to remain the same but to be adaptive.

**“No one needs paint himself into a corner; no one needs to be completely hemmed in by circumstances; no one needs to be the victim of his biography,”** (Kelly, 1955:15).

While each individual can reconstrue their story of self, they cannot be something that is out with their current construing system. For example, as long as the teacher chooses to construe herself as shy, she will not be able to construe herself as a public speaker. If she chose to elaborate her construing and move along the dimension towards herself as sometimes confident, she would be able to include public speaking. The potential to consider possible future roles is only limited by the risks we are willing to take and the ventures we are prepared to engage in. Kelly saw people as active participants in their own growth and with a capacity to adapt to changing demands in life.

### **1.9 Changing self by elaborating the range of a construct**

An important corollary in understanding how a sense of self is formed and expanded is the **Range Corollary** and Kelly's **range of convenience**. Kelly points out that each construct used by a person has a limited range of convenience - outside that range, the person does not find the construct relevant to the event.

**“A construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only,”** (Kelly 1991:48).

For the teacher, construing herself as, a 'shy teacher' who can only give talks to her colleagues, has a limited range of convenience and restricts what she considers possible.

The elaboration and extension of the range of convenience is an important concept in PCT. It explains how - and indeed whether - new and perhaps conflicting experiences are incorporated into the construct system. The capacity to admit new experiences is limited by the permeability of the construct (modulation corollary) and this permeability (or impermeability) will determine what meanings and elements will be admitted to its range of convenience. Increased permeability allows the range of convenience to expand and thus allows the person to construe a wider range of events.

The teacher with her construct of self as shy and only able to give talks in her own school has a less permeable system than someone whose construing of self involves the exploration of new options. To the extent that the teacher needs to preserve the image of her self as shy, she will be reluctant to allow information into her system that would contradict or question this image and so she will not elaborate her construct system. Bannister (1975) claims that all personal problems are ultimately failures to elaborate one's personal construct system, so a system that is not growing, progressing and developing is in trouble. The opposite of elaborating your construing system is to constrict it and this serves the function of possibly avoiding invalidation that might result in anxiety, guilt, hostility and threat.

There can be a security in clearly defining who you are and are not and what you can and cannot do. However there is a cost as you are also defining the situations, tasks, relationships etc that you may want to avoid due to the limitations of your construing of self. If the teacher is very aware of where she can and cannot give a talk, then her range of convenience restricts her choices. When constructs are impermeable they do not allow new information to enter the construct system. In the teacher's case, she may have been able to give a good enough talk to her colleagues, but not have allowed that information to influence her construing of self as shy. This will result in her not elaborating her construing to include the possibility that, having given a talk to colleagues in school, she might be able to give one in another school.

Considering change can threaten your identity (your core role construing), which can lead to experiencing negative feelings and increased uncertainty about self. For this teacher, considering the possibility that she may be more confident than she thought is unsettling, as she is unable to predict how this confident self will behave. Kelly described the feelings which arise when core role constructs are invalidated, as the 'constructs of transition' and they are guilt, anxiety, threat and hostility.

### **The constructs of transition**

Within PCT there are four constructs, which are experienced when existing constructs are not proving sufficient and they indicate where transition to other constructs might be possible. The constructs of transition are anxiety, hostility, threat and guilt. The first of these constructs is anxiety. For Kelly, this is awareness that the individual's constructs have not equipped them to predict the events with which they are confronted (i.e. they don't have a frame of reference). The experience of anxiety in PCT is linked to a lack of ability to construe the "unknown". For example, the shy teacher may experience anxiety when she considers giving a talk to teachers from another school, as she may not be able to predict how she will cope/perform.

A threat, according to Kelly, is the awareness of an imminent comprehensive change to one's core structures. When major beliefs are invalidated this tends to be construed as a threat. It is the sudden realisation that, if we continue along this path, we are going to become a person we do not know well enough to be e.g., the confident teacher who can give talks in many contexts.

The third construct of transition is guilt, defined here as the awareness of dislodgement of the self from one's core role structure. For example, a woman whose core construing of self includes 'self as a caring mother', will experience guilt when she is then angry with her child.

The final construct of transition is hostility and whereas the other feelings are based on the individual's construing of the world, hostility is connected to their actions. It is defined as,

**“the continued effort to exhort validation evidence in favour of a type of social prediction which has already been recognised as a failure,”** (Kelly, 1992:375).

When a person experiences invalidation it is an indication that one of their predictions has failed and they are then presented with three options. The person can recognise that their prediction was inadequate and elaborate it. Secondly, they can decide that perhaps they did not evaluate the evidence correctly and repeat the experiment. The last option is to try to pretend that their prediction was correct. This last option has a goal of validating their current construing. It is not concerned with increasing understanding of self and the world and requires the pretence that they were 'right' after all, which is frequently accompanied by hostile behaviours. The desire to avoid uncomfortable feelings and uncertainty can be stronger than the desire to enhance understanding. Acknowledging invalidation and the experience of uncertainty that this brings may be too threatening to consider and this can have an immobilising effect.

### **How events are anticipated**

Reconstruing in daily life is often rooted in disconfirmation of our anticipations. When the teacher anticipated being able to give a talk to her colleagues she was predicting a fairly positive outcome. However, if she had received many positive comments about her presentation her initial prediction would be invalidated as she had given an excellent talk and not just an average one. Invalidation of our predictions can be a disturbing event and it is in these circumstances that the constructs of transition may be experienced.

As the name suggests, these feelings indicate where it is possible to make a transition towards elaborating the range of convenience for the construct so

that it includes more possibilities. Feeling anxious, threatened, guilty or hostile may prompt the person to consider an alternative construct by evaluating the effectiveness of the established one. Within PCT, the creativity cycle is crucial to the development of new constructs, as it is here that established constructs are reviewed and evaluated.

### **The creativity cycle**

The creativity cycle is a way of explaining the process of change in personal construct theory. The creativity cycle is a cycle that moves between 'tight' construing (makes unvarying predictions) and 'loose' construing (makes varying predictions), for example, the shy teacher who has been making unvarying predictions about the contexts in which she can give a talk. The 'tightness' or 'looseness' of a construct reflects what the teacher considers possible. It is the teacher's inability to elaborate her construct system that limits her alternatives. Constructs are described by Kelly, as being tight or loose in connection to the kind of prediction that is being made. For example,

- Very tight construing is a prediction that something will, **always** happen.
- Tight construing is a prediction that this **will** happen.
- Looser construing is a prediction that this **might** happen.
- Very loose construing is a prediction that this will **never** happen.

When the teacher employs very tight construing of self she is predicting what will **always** happen and there is little room for elaboration or change. The teacher is using her past experiences of being uncomfortable while giving a talk to predict that all similar events in the future will be the same. Her tight construing could be, 'I'm always nervous and hardly able to breathe when I have to talk in public' and implicitly she is assuming that this is permanent. To loosen this prediction the teacher would need to consider situations where she has spoken and felt more comfortable, perhaps spontaneously speaking to the assembled teachers in the staff-room during a coffee break. This would allow her to elaborate the very tight construct to one with a wider range

of convenience such as, 'me as able to give talks to teachers in school settings'.

Implicit within PCT is the potential for elaborating construing as events change during life. However, the awareness that a core role construct has been invalidated is an uncomfortable one. In order to elaborate a construct, the teacher needs to cope with some/all of the constructs of transition and the increased uncertainty that creating and considering alternatives raises. It is therefore not surprising that sometimes choosing to return to familiar ways of construing seems less unsettling, as it reduces complexity and uncertainty.

While the reviewed literature has identified specific self-theories and their implications for the individual's ability to learn and change, this study was interested in investigating how people used their personal self-theories to account for change in their lives. Would there be similarities in how people talked about the process of change? Are there commonly applied strategies, which either facilitate or hinder change? In what ways do feelings effect the ability to change? Do people change their self-theories? And, if they do, how is this accomplished?

## **Chapter 2: The research methodology**

### **2.0 Qualitative research design**

As the research questions were concerned with exploring and understanding individual meanings, a qualitative research design was employed. Within this study the term *qualitative* implies an open, relatively unstructured approach, sufficiently flexible to capture the unexpected and unusual and a commitment to generating a deep, respectful understanding of how the world is constructed and perceived by the participants in the inquiry. Since this was an exploratory enterprise into the meaning and influence that individuals' beliefs and feelings about self have on their ability to change, a qualitative paradigm was the most appropriate and logical approach.

A qualitative paradigm allows a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of human behaviour than a questionnaire or survey method and provides an opportunity to generate new ideas and new theoretical orientations. Qualitative research encompasses a wide and flexible range of approaches. For this study a constructivist paradigm provides an ontological and epistemological framework, which is consistent with the aims of the study and congruent with the research questions (Denzin and Lincoln 1998).

Rejecting the notion of a structuralist 'real' world and objective truth, constructivism maintains that reality is socially constructed, there are no objective facts to be discovered or enduring truths to be substantiated. A constructivist paradigm encompasses multiple realities construed by participants and therefore it places a high value on participant's perceptions and opinions, seeks to discover them and relies on them as primary data. The epistemological position which follows from this stance states that, since there are no real facts to be verified, the knower cannot discover any pre-existing independent real world outside his/her own mind. Indeed, any knowledge which the researcher might come to will necessarily be limited to his/her construing of events.

Such an epistemology makes no claims for the objectivity of its research findings, but aims to give a thorough and substantiated account of the phenomenon in question through an exploration of the ways in which the subjectivity of the researcher has structured and designed the study in the first place. Subjectivity is considered a resource, rather than a problem to be overcome, and it is recognised that researchers will always produce subjective accounts of their explorations. A phenomenological perspective on the research questions is particularly compatible with this research study as it involves the exploration of the beliefs and feelings about self and how they influence the ability to reconstrue and change. The approach argues that we all impose meaning on our world, and that all human beings have an innate capacity to make meaning. This suggests that the objects and concepts we perceive exist through the meaning we give them and the researcher's task is to identify these meanings and draw out their implications for understanding, (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

### **2.1 Choice of approach - personal construct theory**

George Kelly's (1995) personal construct theory is an example of constructivism. An important feature of PCT is that it allows people to define themselves. They are the active agents in their own construing, where the possibility to reconstrue exists in the present moment. Personal constructs are a system laid down by past experiences, but whose job it is to anticipate the future.

Personal constructs can be described as the fundamental structures through which we interpret, predict and evaluate the events that we encounter in our lives. They begin to be formed early in life, often being passed from one generation to another and are essentially bipolar - so the construct of self also implies the opposite pole or what is not self. Constructs are our way of discriminating our world, of making it manageable and of forming the basis for behaviour and action. Although each construct we create enables us to make sense of our world, they remain our personal creations rather than proven realities or unquestionable truths. An important feature of PCT is its

emphasis on the notion of the self as an evolving construction based on the meanings that the individual places on their experiences and relationships.

### **Construing equals experiencing**

PCT is a theory of experiencing. The construing of our world is what we are experiencing. When a person is upset at a funeral their construing (experiencing) of that event will most likely be different than their construing (experiencing) of peeling potatoes.

**“Construing does not just go on in the head. We are construing, making sense of our world, at some level of awareness whether we are doing mental arithmetic, meditating or performing acrobatics...there is a growing erroneous belief that personal construct theory is only about *what* we think. It is, of course, also about *how* we think and *what* we experience...Kelly also equated learning with experience. Learning takes place as we successively reconstrue events. We learn as we successively reconstrue - experience,”** (Fransella and Dalton, 1990:10).

Implicitly, to reconstrue and learn involves changing and each individual will experience this differently. While constructs are personal to each individual, there can be some shared meanings, as social interactions, environments and cultures also influence construing. Cohen and Manion (1989:38) noted that,

**“the interpretative paradigm, in contrast, to its normative counterpart, is characterised by concerns for the individual.”**

Personal construct psychologists value research which includes the participants' insights and understandings. Indeed Denicola and Pope (2001:55) go so far as to suggest that qualitative research should be re-named qualitative-interpretative research.

**“Qualitative-interpretative research is predicted on the principle that one engages with participants (not subjects). Our**

**participants are active meaning-seeking individuals whose views of the world are valued.”**

The connection between constructivism and interpretativism has also been identified by Schwandt (1994:118),

**“Proponents of these persuasions share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. This goal is variously spoken of as an abiding concern for the life world, for the emic point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor’s definition of the situation, for verstehen.”**

Kelly’s repertory grid offers a way of understanding how the participant experiences the phenomenon under investigation. Repertory grid based interviews allow the participants to describe and interpret their own constructs related to change, as there is no meaning inherent in the grid, the meaning is a matter of interpretation. A conversational and interactive approach is required as this gives the participants the role of expert in their own construing. The analyst requires the ability to describe and interpret the construing of others and to articulate tacit knowledge in a way that enhances understanding of the experience being explored.

### **The ‘self’ within PCT**

Kelly’s hypothesis is that each of us has a theory about ourselves, about others and about the nature of the world. He refers to these theories as patterns which compose our personal construct system and maintains that it is from this system we make predictions about ourselves, others and the future, which form the basis for our behaviour. The direction of our movement – hence, our motivation - is towards a better understanding of what will happen. In this way we seek to establish a degree of control and predictability over an otherwise chaotic world.

Kelly refers to constructs which are central to the self as superordinate, or core role constructs - those which govern large areas of our lives and help define and maintain our sense of ourselves. Given that the self is a construct like other constructs, it is therefore also our own creation. So a Kellian understanding of our 'selves' would suggest that, rather than 'discover' our 'selves', we invent our 'selves.' This implies that we are neither more nor less than our way of understanding our universe and central to our understanding is the interpretive choices we make in locating ourselves within that universe.

**"A permanent self is merely an illusion we cling to, a narrative developed in relation to others over time that we come to identify as who we are,"** (McNamee and Gergen 1996:71).

### **Epistemological assumptions**

Kelly's theory was introduced at a time when science and scientific methods were regarded as a means of discovering and establishing objective truth. The predominant assumption was positivist - there was a real world and a real truth 'out there' to be discovered, captured and tamed by applying the correct scientific methods. Within that context, his theory of constructive alternativism was both radical and challenging, as it advocated alternative visions of the self, the truth and of knowledge.

**"We assume that all our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement,"** (Kelly 1991:11).

Kelly challenged the prevalent positivist epistemological assumptions of his day - belief in a knowable world and a knowable self-and proposed a theory of **constructive alternativism**, which assumes that all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement.

**"Whatever nature may be, or howsoever the quest for truth will turn out in the end, the events we face today are subject to as**

**great a variety of construction as our wits will enable us to contrive,” (Kelly 1966:1).**

In other words, although there may be an independent reality 'out there', Kelly's assertion was that reality could never be apprehended, but only construed and interpreted by placing meaning on it – thus making our grasp of it approximate only. So for Kelly, the world was a world which would be forever largely unknown and any knowledge we could expect to have of it was constructed by man's attempt to place meaning upon it. In response to the question of 'how do we know what we know?' Kelly would maintain that the world is known only through man's perception of it. To the extent that we are prepared to consider the creation by our own construing, of something that is not already there, we will expand our knowledge of the world. A personal construct approach allows research to be a more explorative enterprise where claims regarding truth give way to a tentativeness which incorporates, rather than avoids consideration of the diverse, the different, the contradictory and the complex.

### **Kelly's ontological stance**

While epistemology addresses the question of how we know what we know, ontology addresses the nature of the world and the nature of human beings. Fundamental to Kelly's ontological stance is the notion of man as one who makes sense of his environment by placing his own constructions upon it and anticipating future events in the light of these constructions. People are regarded as agents who do not merely react to the world, but act on it. Kelly extols the individual's capacity to determine how his life should be understood and lived, and sees man as a construing being, continually forming his own theories (constructs) in order to make sense of the world and then testing out these theories in everyday activities.

One of Kelly's main premises about the nature of man is his ability to make choices. The choice corollary states:

**“A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomised construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system,” (Kelly 1991:45).**

For Kelly, the essential nature of man is displayed in his capacity to make choices - to proact rather than react to a given situation - even when these choices appear to others to leave a lot to be desired. Kelly espoused man as having the capacity to understand as well as the capacity to choose. Indeed the capacity to choose would also presuppose the capacity to evaluate. Kelly continually stresses man's ability to interpret and reinterpret his circumstances and thus maximise control over his life.

**“Whatever exists is open to construction. Many alternative constructions are possible, some better, other worse. The ultimate meaning of even the simplest thing is never settled,” (Kelly 1959:3).**

#### **The repertory grid as a method of eliciting construing**

At the heart of PCT are the ways of finding out the constructs that a participant has in their construing system, such as interviews, self-characterisations, pyramiding, laddering and repertory grids. Each of these methods affords the opportunity to subsume the participant's construing system. Kelly describes the process of finding out an individual's constructs as putting ourselves 'in the shoes' of the other person and this requires the researcher to suspend their own construing system and to engage in the participant's construct system.

**“However, subsuming is more than seeing the other person's point of view and having some experience of what the client is experiencing: it is more than empathy. You actually strive to move along those inner pathways of the other's experience for short periods of time. You struggle to put yourself in the client's shoes and look at the world as the client is doing,” (Fransella and Dalton, 1990:11).**

As this study is based within a constructivist/interpretative paradigm, the method of analysis needed to reflect a concern with understanding the experience being explored from the perspective of the participants (this is discussed further on page 76). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is concerned with understanding,

**“what the particular respondent thinks or believes about the topic under discussion,”** (Smith, 1996:263).

## **2.2 Interpretative phenomenological analysis as the unit of analysis**

A distinctive feature of IPA is its focus on gaining an understanding directly from the participants. In order to do this the researcher seeks to describe and interpret participants' accounts of what the experience is like for them. Interpretivists maintain that in order to understand the participant's world, the researcher must engage with the participant in their world before actively interpreting it.

**“IPA aims to go a little further than description, however, because it allows the researcher to produce a theoretical framework which is based upon, but which may transcend or exceed, the participant's own terminology and conceptualisations,”** (Larkin, 2004:4).

Michael (1999) describes IPA as an emerging paradigm in psychology which is influenced by the theoretical perspectives of social cognition, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and social constructionism. This new paradigm is distinguished by epistemological eclecticism and **“is ready to encompass the real and the constructed,”** (Michael, 1999:58) and for these reasons is a suitable method for analysing both the interviews and grid-based interviews.

### **The development of IPA**

IPA is phenomenological as it is concerned with the participant's understanding of self and the world and attempts to gain an 'insider's' view of

the phenomenon being explored. IPA was developed by Jonathan Smith who describes it as,

**“an attempt to unravel the meanings contained in ... accounts through a process of interpretative engagement with the texts and transcripts,”** (Smith, 1997:189).

The researcher employing IPA attempts to enter into the participant's view of the world by immersing themselves in the data. There is an implicit assumption that the participant's accounts reflect their beliefs and feelings and that these explain how they construe experiences. However, IPA does not presume to fully understand how the other person experiences the world, but rather the researcher is offering their interpretation of the participant's construing. The researcher's own construing will influence their interpretation of the data, but this is not considered a problem, rather it is viewed as a resource as the researcher reflects on their own and the participant's construing. Understanding the construing of another person requires interpretation and the ability on the part of the researcher to be aware of their own assumptions, beliefs, feelings and values etc., and how these are influencing the analysis.

Just as, constructive alternativism in PCT describes how one event can be construed in multiple ways by the people who are present, IPA is concerned with the participant's subjective experience. It is interested in how the participant's beliefs, feelings, judgements and values etc influence their construing. IPA focuses on the person's experiences of an event, rather than asking if a specific account is true or accurately describes the 'real' world.

While IPA aims to gain an understanding of the participant's construing from the researcher's engagement with the data, it also realises that this will be an interpretation. The researcher is a part of the analysis and there is no expectation that the researcher can set aside their construing system and analyse in an objective or value free manner. As a result, while IPA is

phenomenological in its aim of understanding the participant's world, it is also interpretative as the researcher's construct system will influence the analysis.

IPA is congruent with PCT, in that both have as their focus the individual participant's construing of the experience under investigation and embrace the variety of ways that events can be experienced and construed. Both share a phenomenological concern with exploring and understanding individual construing. In a similar way they are idiographic, as they begin with single case studies and then try to develop theory across cases by identifying themes and looking for similarities and differences, which might link the individual case studies.

**“The personal construct theory method allows us to make our understandings, our constrictings, of the world clear to others so that we can identify shared meanings,”** (Aldridge & Aldridge, 1996:226).

As well as sharing a phenomenological and idiographic stance they are also aware that what the researcher reports is an interpretation of the data, as it is not possible to fully understand the construing of someone else. Having described the theoretical framework for this study, the research methods will now be explained.

### **2.3 How the study developed**

In order to provide an account of the decisions made in the three studies, tables three, four and five make explicit the decision making process and allow the quality and plausibility of the study to be assessed. The tables give detailed descriptions of how the focus of the study shifted and was clarified as a result of the themes that emerged during the ongoing analysis. This was an inductive research design and the decision making tables reveal how the purpose of the studies was refined as the constant comparative method assimilated each participant's construing.

**Table 3 - Decision making in study one**

Study	The research questions being explored	Outcome of the study
Study 1a (Pilot)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To begin to identify self-theories which seem to facilitate or hinder change.</li> <li>2. To begin investigating if and when self-theories have been elaborated and how this was accomplished.</li> </ol>	<p>Five teachers participated in semi-structured interviews, which explored how they construed their experiences of change. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using IPA. Initial codes showed the teachers were describing their beliefs and feelings about self in relation to change. Two of the teachers Lynn and Vikki seemed to have self-theories, which hindered change while Jill, Joy and Lara appeared to have self-theories which facilitated change.</p> <p>Jill, Joy and Lara gave examples of elaborating their beliefs and feelings about self and explained a little about how this was accomplished.</p>
Study 1b (Pilot)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To identify further the self-theories which seem to facilitate or hinder change.</li> <li>2. To investigate further if and when self-theories have been elaborated and how this was accomplished.</li> <li>3. To begin to determine if these self-theories can be learned.</li> </ol>	<p>Five non-teachers participated in semi-structured interviews which were transcribed and analysed as before. Initial summary sheets were loosely organised under headings of fixed or fluid beliefs about self. These showed evidence of different beliefs and feelings about self, which influenced responses to change. The fluid to fixed beliefs formed a dimension along which the participants are located, they are divided into three categories to ease descriptions and to clarify similarities and differences in construing. The groups are called Explorers, Changers and Maintainers. Scott and Nicola are described as Maintainers, as their self-theories seem to hinder change. Gordon and James are described as Explorers, as their self-theories seem to facilitate change.</p> <p>Anne is described as a Changer, as she is clearly explaining how she has elaborated some beliefs and feelings. The two Explorers also explain the process of elaborating their beliefs and/or feelings.</p> <p>The Changer and Explorers describe becoming aware of how to elaborate their beliefs and feelings and increasingly do so as a strategy. In these descriptions of elaborating they also explain the difference it has made to their feelings.</p>

**Table 4: Decision making in study one and two**

Study	The research questions being explored	Outcome of the study
Studies 1a/1b		<p>A summary at the end of study one shows that I have begun to answer the three research questions but more data is required. There is a need to decide how to focus the interviews on beliefs and feelings about self in relation to change and to find a way of helping the participants to identify these. Repertory grids would enable participants to do this and provide a framework for a more focused discussion. Considered the possibility of creating double grids which would allow the connections between beliefs and feelings to be explored and clarified. Contacted Fay Fransella about this idea and decided to go ahead and try something new which could enhance the quality of the interviews by making explicit any connections between beliefs, feelings and actions.</p>
Study 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To gain further understanding of the self-theories which seem to facilitate or hinder change.</li> <li>2. To investigate further if and when self-theories have been elaborated and how this was accomplished.</li> <li>3. To determine further if these 'optimal' self-theories can be learned.</li> </ol>	<p>20 participants completed double rep grids and then they took part in grid focused interviews which were transcribed and analysed onto the evolving summary sheets. Differences in construing were much clearer in the stories that were told. Fixed and fluid headings are changed to exploratory and sustaining responses as this represents the data better. A summary sheet is completed for each participant. The Explorers are predominately employing exploratory responses, which facilitate change, the Maintainers are predominately employing sustaining responses, which seem to hinder change and the Changers are employing a mixture of both kinds of responses.</p> <p>The participants who were categorised as Changers and Explorers are giving much more distinct accounts of elaborating their beliefs and feelings as a result of having constructed the grids. A significant feature is that the participants are describing elaborating their feelings.</p> <p>The Explorers seem to be aware of what beliefs and responses make a difference when they have to change and they predominately employ them as strategies. The Changers have elaborated to different amounts with some Changers describing one or two instances of elaborating their self-theories which have had positive benefits and others who are increasingly excited by their awareness that they can influence their responses to change.</p>

**Table 5: Decision making in study two continued**

Study	The research questions being explored	Outcome of study
Study 2	<p>Summary after completing the grid based interviews and analysis with study two participants.</p> <p>Study two participants complete goal-orientation inventories as a self-characterisation.</p> <p>1. To identify the self-theories which facilitate and hinder the ability to change.</p>	<p>The grid based interviews have developed understanding of the emerging theory. However, in order to fully answer the research questions, the next participants need to be from each of the three categories to aid exploration of the differences in self-theories. I think there could be a link between goal-orientation and construing of beliefs about self, so I evaluate different questionnaires and select a goal-orientation inventory, which consists of validation and growth oriented statements. The inventory is given to the same 20 participants. I experiment with separating the statements into two groups for assessment so that the proportion of validation and growth statements which are used to characterise self are identified.</p> <p>Unexpectedly there are striking patterns in the assessment sheets, which highlight and confirm, that there are similarities and differences in the self-theories being described (see table 12-17). 18 out of 20 of the self-characterisations are congruent with the descriptions of self in the grid based interviews. There are two participants whose self-characterisations are not congruent with their grid-based interviews and these highlight the difficulty that participants with fixed beliefs about self may have in characterising self as validation-seeking. However, two cases does not seem significant. 100 inventories are given out and 76 are returned and analysed. In addition to the patterns on the score sheets for the inventories, there are also distinct differences in the total number of points the participants are awarding to growth and validation statements.</p> <p>Most of the Maintainers were awarding twice as many points to validation statements as to growth statements. That is a ratio of 2:1. Most of the Explorers were awarding four times as many points to growth statements than to validation statements, that is a ratio of 1:4 in favour of growth statements. There is clear evidence that fixed beliefs and validation seeking hinder the ability to change and fluid beliefs and growth seeking facilitate the ability to change.</p>

**Table 6: Decision making in study two and three**

Study	The research questions being explored	Outcome of study
Study 2		<p>Summary at the end of study 2. Using the goal-orientation inventory will be a suitable way of selecting participants who are likely to be construing their self-theories in the ways which have been identified. 18 participants are selected, I hope that six will currently be construing in ways which are representative of each of the three categories of participants.</p>
Study 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Further investigation into which self-theories facilitate and hinder change.</li> <li>2. To investigate if and when self-theories have been elaborated and how this was accomplished.</li> <li>3. To determine if these 'optimal' self-theories can be learned.</li> </ol>	<p>18 participants are selected and complete double repertory grids and then grid based interviews which are transcribed and analysed as before. Different beliefs about self influence what is considered possible or not, where self is believed to be unable to change in some way there is increased anxiety in many situations as this 'fixed' self may be found lacking. Realise that many of the responses on the summary sheet could be renamed as 'beliefs' which helps to clarify the differences between the themes. Different beliefs and feelings combine to create self-theories which facilitate and hinder change.</p> <p>The meaning of feelings at the point where elaboration could occur, influences actions. For beliefs to be elaborated, feelings need to be acknowledged first to provide a space to consider alternatives. Feelings are put on 'hold' for elaboration to occur. Whereas strong negative feelings lead to avoiding situations and employing established beliefs to reduce uncertainty.</p> <p>Once all the transcripts have been analysed, the final summary sheet is used to reanalyse all the interviews to determine 'fit'. When all the Changers and Explorers are reanalysed there is evidence of these participants, to varying degrees, strategically employing exploratory beliefs and responses to respond to change. The benefits of these beliefs and responses is clearly described by the Explorers and there seems to be a reinforcing aspect with the benefit in terms of more positive feelings about self motivating the Explorers and, to varying extents, the Changers, to make use of these strategies.</p>

The sample can be described as homogenous in that all the participants had experienced the phenomenon under investigation. The participants in the pilot study (1a) were all teachers as this was the initial context from which the defensive, aggressive or hostile responses were identified by the tutors. However after analysing these interviews there were several codes which seemed to form a theme which focused on the participant's beliefs and feelings about self and how these influenced their ability to elaborate their construing and change. Consequently the sample expanded to include non-teachers to ascertain whether similar beliefs and feelings about self, in relation to the experience of change, were employed out with the teaching profession, and this seemed to be the case with the study 1b participants.

Participants in study two were approached by me, my family and friends on the basis that they might be willing and interested in participating in the research. The difference in self-theories that emerged in study one/two, specifically how feelings were being construed and how they significantly influence actions, merited further exploration. In order to more fully investigate these issues, participants who were currently employing the different self-theories would be required in study three and so consideration was given to how core role construing could be identified prior to the grid-based interviews.

#### **2.4 Selection of research tools**

It seemed likely that construing beliefs about self as 'truths' to be validated would be linked to a validation-seeking goal and that construing beliefs about self as hypotheses to tested could be linked to a growth-seeking goal. Several questionnaires were examined, but Dykman's (1998) goal-orientation inventory, which was originally used to identify the likelihood of depression in adults, appeared to be the best option. The inventory offered a way of exploring the potential connection between goal-orientation and beliefs about self and, more importantly, of identifying core role construing prior to interviewing.

In order to determine if the goal-orientation inventory would reflect core role construing when used as a self-characterisation method, it would need to be compared with another description of the participant's construing. The participants in study two had already completed repertory grids and described/interpreted their meaning in interviews and they offered a potential way of evaluating the relevance of the inventories. The participants in study two had been asked if they would be willing to contribute further in the research if necessary and everyone had agreed to, and so the inventories were sent out and completed.

### **Goal-Orientation Inventory**

The goal-orientation inventory uses a Likert scale format and consists of thirty-six statements divided between eighteen growth-oriented and eighteen validation-oriented statements. These were mixed up in the inventory but were separated into two sections for evaluating how the participants were characterising self. A copy of the goal-orientation inventory can be found in appendix one. Each participant identified the statements which they construed as characterising them and also how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statements. When the total number of points they had awarded to either validation or growth seeking goals were counted they were significant differences between the participants. A strong orientation to validation seeking was connected to construing self-theories as truths and at the other extreme a strong growth orientation was linked to construing self-theories as hypothesis.

Eighteen out of the twenty participants in study two characterised their goal-orientation in a way that was consistent with their construing of their beliefs and feelings about self in their repertory grids and with my interpretation of their beliefs from analysing the interviews. The two incongruent cases highlighted the difficulty that some participants might have in describing their beliefs about self, as this process would make implicit their current construing, and may prove to be unsettling.

With such a clear link between goal-orientation and beliefs about self, one hundred inventories were given out to willing participants and seventy-eight were returned. This high return was due to wonderful colleagues and friends who took responsibility for five inventories each. They each asked people if they would be willing to not only complete an inventory but possibly to take part in a grid-based interview. Clear information about the study and how to contact the researcher were attached to each inventory and each of the distributors did a great job of keeping track of their five inventories. Once the seventy-eight inventories had been characterised for goal-orientation a further eighteen participants, six from either group, were asked to give grid-based interviews. This number was chosen as being the most that could be completed in the time that was left. The concept of saturation was not employed as it was thought that there could always be someone who would add something new to the study. The self-characterisation of the eighteen study three participants was very effective as a method of indicating their current construing of self.

### **2.5 Introducing the participants**

The participants selected for study 1a were teachers as the Scotia tutors had noted the strong responses to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) with teachers. The next group of participants were non-teachers and this was a purposive sample selected to allow comparisons to be made between teachers and non-teachers. At the start of this research it was impossible to determine what kind of samples would be required and so decisions about each subsequent sample were made after analysing data in the previous study. A diverse sample of participants was thought to allow the broadest investigation of how beliefs and feelings about self influenced the ability to elaborate and change.

There were forty-eight participants in the three studies and the following three tables provides information about them. The category that each participant was allocated to is also given and, while this is actually data, this seems an appropriate place to identify category members. Despite describing locating the participants in categories, the positions were actually linear and table

twenty-one shows the participants arranged along the dimension. In order to facilitate descriptions and comparisons, the participants are described as belonging to categories.

In each of the tables the first column has the participants' pseudonym, then the study in which they took part and then their age. The final three columns give a number, which represents the strength of their agreement with the validation-seeking statements and then the growth-seeking statements. In order to compare and contrast these orientations I expressed the strength of the orientation as a ratio, for example, the Explorers tended to be characterising the strength of their growth orientation as four to seven times stronger than their validation orientation. This is written as a ratio of 4:1, 5:1, 6:1 or 7:1. The most significant features on this table are the strength of agreement with growth-seeking statements and the lack of characterising self as validation-seeking which are the key features of the Explorers.

**Table 7: The Explorers from the three studies**

<b>Study name</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Validation Scores</b>	<b>Growth Scores</b>	<b>Ratio of scores</b>
Gordon	1b	22	-	-	-
James	1b	21	-	-	-
Fred	2	30	21	118	1:5
Reece	2	33	19	107	1:5
David	2	21	19	119	1:6
John	2	22	18	102	1:6
Katie	3	48	23	93	1:4
Jay	3	46	22	105	1:5
Alice	3	19	22	124	1:6
Tod	3	64	18	113	1:6
Iain	3	33	18	126	1:7
Avril	3	54	19	113	1:6
Carol	3	43	24	113	1:5

In complete contrast to the Explorers most of the Maintainers are strongly agreeing with the validation-seeking statements and less with the growth-seeking statements. Although Pam and Jane have almost equal scores for both, these participants' scores are described as equal. However in their grid based interviews the frequency with which they employed sustaining beliefs and responses and the stories they told about their experiences of changes indicated that while they may have conceptual information about change it was not always integrated into their construct systems. Joan was one of the two participants whose inventory was not congruent with either the repertory grid or the summary sheet, she really struggled to characterise herself as validation seeking when she completed her inventory.

**Table 8 – The Maintainers from the three studies**

<b>Study name</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Validation Scores</b>	<b>Growth Scores</b>	<b>Ratio of scores</b>
Lynn	1a	46	-	-	-
Vikki	1a	40	-	-	-
Scott	1a	48	-	-	-
Nicola	1a	37	-	-	-
Suzy	2	46	92	46	2:1
Ross	2	25	96	49	2:1
Joan	2	43	77	90	No match
Holly	2	37	104	38	2:1
Peter	2	48	98	36	2:1
Liz	3	71	122	71	2:1
Steve	3	50	99	42	2:1
Paul	3	21	104	34	3:1
Pam	3	46	75	78	Equal
Jane	3	22	98	96	Equal
Eva	3	17	88	53	2:1
Molly	3	23	117	58	2:1

The four Changers in study one did not complete goal-orientation inventories and the other Changers were characterising the strength of their growth and validation seeking as more level. Ben did not characterise himself in a way that congruent with analysis of his interview as he described himself as strongly growth-oriented but in his interview he only gave one example of changing, which had occurred twenty-seven years previously. While he described being interested in the process of change this seemed to be more conceptual.

**Table 9 – The Changers from the three studies**

Study name	Study	Age	Validation Scores	Growth Scores	Ratio of scores
Joy	1a	44	-	-	-
Jill	1a	53	-	-	-
Lara	1a	53	-	-	-
Anne	1a	46	-	-	-
Grant	2	30	42	87	1:2
Nathan	2	31	47	74	1:2
Elaine	2	61	33	107	1:3
Carly	2	37	61	75	HG
Linda	2	52	31	92	1:3
Mary	2	23	33	105	1:3
Cara	2	46	41	117	1:3
Ruby	2	50	55	82	HG
Kiera	2	44	69	74	HG
Ben	2	45	28	112	4:1 (No match )
Mark	2	24	37	126	3:1
Bob	2	37	69	106	1:2
Lucy	2	40	57	74	HG
Matt	2	18	41	86	1:2
Chris	2	46	39	103	1:3

## **Ethical issues**

As a practitioner/researcher with a small private counselling/mentoring practice there was a familiarity with many of the ethical issues that a qualitative, participant-based, study would involve. In 2001 when this study began, the University of Glasgow was reviewing their ethical consent policy and so the British Psychological Society (1991) ethical guidelines employed in private practice were chosen to guide the study.

Essentially, the quality of qualitative research is dependent on the participants' willingness and ability to share their thoughts and experiences with the researcher. However the researcher's responsibility is firstly towards the welfare of the participants and a maxim from counselling training, 'first do no harm', formed the basis for ethical decision making. Elmes, Kantowitz and Roediger (1995) suggests there are five ethical issues to be addressed; informed consent, no deception, a right to withdraw, provision of debriefing and confidentiality and these were addressed within this study.

- Prior to the interviews the participants were sent information about the study and this was reviewed and elaborated before each interview took place. I was honest about how I would use the grids and interviews.
- Permission was sought and gained to tape-record the interviews and assurances given that once transcribed the interview would be erased. The participants were assured of anonymity as any names or places or identifying features mentioned in the tapes would be changed. They were not assured of confidentiality as extracts of their interviews would be used in the thesis.
- I informed each participant at the start and the end of the interviews that they could send a brief letter saying they wished to withdraw without having to give reasons and this would be honoured.
- In recapping on the interview in the debriefing, care was taken to highlight sensitive areas of the conversation to the participant. This was done to provide an opportunity to edit the interview as I recognised that, while being absorbed in the task of describing their beliefs and experiences, the

participant might not be aware of the amount of personal information they had shared. However, no participant wanted to do this.

- Ryen (2004) describes the components of informed consent as including giving sufficient information to the participants, not coercing participation or asking vulnerable individuals to ensure that participants are protected. Once the above stages had been completed, informed written consent was requested. A copy of the consent form is provided in appendix two and the information given to potential participants is given in appendix three.

In addition, my experience of working with clients highlighted other areas to be addressed and these are listed below.

- I took care to present myself as a collaborator in the interviews and not as an expert and this included dismissing notions of mind-reading abilities and any connection to 'Mystic Meg'. This meant clarifying that while the I would be able to identify where change had occurred on the repertory grids, because the numbers would change the meaning of the changes and circumstances surrounding them would be unknown. In this way the role and contribution of the participant was made clear and the collaborative nature of the relationships was established.
- Concern for the participants' welfare both during and after the research encounter meant ensuring that I emphasised before the interviews and during the debrief that the participant could edit their interview. I was aware that the participants would probably become very involved in creating their grids, looking for changes on them and in identifying the circumstances surrounding them. The process of exploring the grid and looking for connections between beliefs and between beliefs and feelings is an unusual activity and in their absorption with the task they could divulge more than they normally would. Indeed, many of the participants described completing the grids as an insightful experience, however it was important to ensure that the participants' were aware that they could edit their interview, 'pass' on any questions or 'opt out' of the study without having to explain their reasons, (King, 1996:179).

- Each participant was given a choice of where to meet me. Some interviews were conducted in the participant's homes and some in my dining room as I thought this would be more neutral than my study. Tea and coffee were offered and time was taken to chat with the participant and to explain in person what the study was about and what the process would involve in an attempt to put people at ease.
- Examples of what a repertory grid looked like were shown during each interview. This demonstration grid had names beside the elements and had corrections which the participant had added as they clarified their beliefs and feelings. They were also shown a typed up version which had the names removed. In the same way a few pages of a transcript which had all identifying features removed was provided. These examples had been made for this purpose with a colleague and were the basis for asking the participant to give informed consent. My interest in the participant's beliefs and feelings about self was explained and linked into an account of how the analysis would be completed.
- The participants in study two had completed grid interviews, but were later asked if they were willing to complete a goal-orientation inventory, and at this point they were again asked if they wished to take part. Munhall and Boyd (1993) called this process consent, as it confirms that the participants are willing to continue in the study and it demonstrates care for the participants over any benefit to the study.

In addition, the way in which the data was used in the study was respectful of the participant's experiences and willingness to share their personal beliefs and feelings and care was taken to not devalue any contribution.

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between a qualitative and quantitative researcher is in their construing of their own role in the research process. A quantitative researcher is more likely to assume a distant stance where they construe their role as an objective observer of the participants. In comparison, it is the qualitative researcher's ability to engage with the participants and to quickly create a relationship, based on what Carl Rogers (1951) called the core conditions, that encourages the depth of

communication that is crucial to gaining rich data. The core conditions Roger's advocated as the basis of a therapeutic relationship, seem pertinent to the researcher-participant relationship. The researcher's ability to be genuine, offer unconditional positive regard and total acceptance, along with communicating a deep empathic understanding seem relevant to creating a supportive environment where the participant can share their construing of the topic under investigation. Creswell (2003:181) suggests that,

**"Qualitative researchers look for involvement of their participants in data collection and seek to build rapport and credibility with the individuals in the study."**

The qualitative researcher is closely involved with the participants and this requires a flexibility that allows the researcher to adapt to the very different frames of reference presented. The ability to listen to a wide range of beliefs about self and the world in a non-judgemental manner is crucial to ensuring that participants have a positive experience of being involved in research. In this study it quickly became apparent that the participants with very rigid beliefs about self and the world required the researcher to be really alert during the interviews so that they did not inadvertently challenge a core belief and leave the participant unsettled. The interviews with these participants tended to focus on clarifying their beliefs and feelings and determining the consequences of employing these constructs.

There is a need for the qualitative researcher to cope with uncertainty in many areas of the research process. In deciding to explore a specific area there is uncertainty regarding whether any new theme or understanding will emerge.

**"This way of working requires being willing to give up control, going along for the ride, not always having hold of the steering wheel,"** (Kidder and Fine, 1997:37)

There is also uncertainty when meeting each participant in determining what an appropriate level of discussion will be. Perhaps the greatest source of uncertainty is the changing nature of qualitative data as each interview can potentially highlight some new theme, which alters the previous understanding of the data. Periods of confusion and puzzling are a part of the process of analysing and understanding the data and require the ability to 'not know' as part of the research process and not to construe this as personal failure (Sorrentino & Roney, 2000, Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A crucial component of qualitative research is the ability to be reflexive as a way of undertaking research and not just as a facet of the process. Jennifer Mason describes reflexivity in this sense, as a means of:

**“thinking critically about what you are doing and why,  
confronting and often challenging your own assumptions,  
and recognising the extent to which your thoughts, actions and  
decisions shape how you research and what you see,”**

(Mason, 2002:5).

As a practitioner/researcher who already had a counselling supervisor it seemed appropriate to make use of this relationship to facilitate reflection on the research process and the content of the study. The purpose of reflection is for the researcher to be aware of their own construing in terms of their beliefs, feelings, assumptions, judgements, values etc., that could be influencing their interpretation of the data. This kind of reflecting allows the researcher to evaluate how they are influencing the research process (Cresswell, 2003). Aldridge and Aldridge (1996) also suggest there are benefits for the researcher of reflecting on self throughout the research process. They suggest,

**“qualitative self-inquiry where the researcher continually checks  
out her understandings throughout the study period,”** (Aldridge &  
Aldridge, 1996:235).

I kept a written record of my construing and of how ideas emerged and developed in several notebooks. These notebooks were invaluable when it came to tracing how and when decisions had been made. Again, my previous experiences of keeping records of client sessions and their progress greatly enhanced the ability to keep track of what the different participant's believed about self. Additionally having an experienced counselling supervisor to read the interviews and discuss the analysis provided a way of checking the plausibility of the interpretation of the data as it developed.

The main debate over when to review literature focuses on whether or not to review the literature prior to beginning the study or not. The benefit of reviewing literature before starting is to clarify what has and what has not been explored in the area of interest and to stop the researcher from re-inventing the wheel. The drawback to this early review is that it could focus the researcher's attention on what is already known and distract them from fully engaging with the data.

In this study the literature was reviewed once the first five pilot interviews were transcribed and analysed in an attempt to explore the data free from any preconceptions. However, my previous knowledge and experiences of the research topic were recognised as influencing factors during the interviews and in their analysis. Once the initial themes were identified the literature began to be reviewed and was used as an ongoing resource throughout the collection and analysis of the data. The review of literature was treated as additional sources of data and was read, analysed, categorised and linked into the themes emerging from the analysis of the interviews. In this way the literature helped to provide a context for the emerging themes, to increase understanding of the themes, to indicate possible connections between themes and to highlight how the study's findings might contribute to expanding existing theories, (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

## **2.6 Introduction to data collection**

Despite the initial format of the data (whether it is a video, an interview, or a diary, or a transcription of a focus group discussion) interpretative phenomenological analysis uses the participant's accounts once they have been transcribed into a written format. In this study the data was collected and analysed simultaneously, but these topics will be described separately for clarity. There were two methods of data collection employed and these were semi-structured and grid-based interviews.

Structured interviews with a formal list of questions, which the researcher follows with each participant, were rejected as they did not allow the exploration of individual meaning to the extent that this study required. The balance of power within a structured interview favours the researcher and the participant's contribution can be limited to answering questions without there being an opportunity to elaborate or respond with individual meanings. Additionally, the structured interview does not allow room to follow up areas of interest that unexpectedly emerge.

Phenomenological analysis is dependent on gaining rich accounts of beliefs, feelings and experiences from the participants and semi-structured interviews were a suitable way of doing this. In semi-structured interviews meaning can be explored in depth and understanding can be clarified. Such an interview also helps to make explicit what is implicit, and provides a context where tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings can be articulated and explored in depth. The choice of semi-structured and grid-based interviews as sources of data also reflects the linguistic and interpretative focus which has taken place in research during the last decade. This position claims that conversation (from the Latin 'wandering together') is the basic mode of human interaction through which we get to know other people, learn about their experiences, hopes, feelings, beliefs and values.

Silverman (1985) suggests that semi-structured interviews are ideal for qualitative research as the participants have significantly more control than in other styles of interviews and so they can influence the directions of the

conversation and express their own unique construing. However, there are difficulties in trying to explore participant's construing of specific topics as they may not be able to clearly identify what they believe or to provide articulate descriptions of their construing. My own recent experience of being a participant in a study exploring psychologist's values highlighted how difficult it can be to identify what you believe and then to explain it. For these reasons grid-based interviews seemed to be an ideal method of gaining rich personal data about participants' construing of self and how this influenced their ability to change.

### **Repertory grids as a data collection tool which focuses the interview**

A repertory grid is a way of finding out how a person construes an aspect of their world, experience or, most importantly their biography. Each person interprets their life events and experiences and these are usually connected to each other and influence how future events will be anticipated. It is not possible to understand how a person construes their life without learning something about how they construe others and repertory grids are ideal for this endeavour. Repertory grids can form the basis of a conversation which focuses the participant's attention on the phenomenon under investigation.

Originally, Kelly developed the grid as a way of applying numbers to the constructs, but statistical and mathematical processes are not necessary to gaining rich information from grids. There is much to be understood from 'eyeballing' the raw data on the grid and inviting the participant to describe and interpret their own construing of the phenomena.

**“The purpose of grids is to inform us about the way in which our system of personal constructs is evolving and its limitations and possibilities. It is a way of standing in the shoes of others to see the world from their point of view, to understand their situation, their concerns, (Beail, 1985:2).**

In everyday life we begin to understand how another person construes their world as we converse with them and discover what they consider to be

important or not, what they value, how they evaluate themselves, others and experiences. After employing semi-structured interviews in both parts of study one it emerged that the participants' beliefs and feelings about self were an important facet of their construing of change. These initial themes were incorporated into the grids and explained to the participants so that the purpose of the grids and the study was clear, in this study the focus was on exploring how the participant's beliefs and feelings about self influenced their ability to elaborate and change.

The repertory grid is a procedure used to help gain an understanding of how the phenomenon is experienced by the participants. Denicola and Pope (2001:68) highlight that,

**“Many practitioners are now adopting the repertory grid as a means of entering the phenomenological world of an individual by exploring the nature and inter-relationships between various elements and constructs elicited by the method.”**

Individual grids were created as a way of enabling the participants to identify their current beliefs and feelings about change and these enhanced the subsequent interviews. Two benefits of creating grids are that they enable the participants to articulate their construing and allow the researcher to gain an understanding of the personal constructs that the participant is currently using to impose meaning on the world. Secondly, the process of articulation may help the participant to clarify their thoughts, recognise how they influence their actions and reflect on potential avenues for change, (Denicola and Pope, 2001).

Indeed, the grid-based interviews took the same time as the semi-structured interviews and provided far richer data. An additional benefit was that many of the participants explained how the process of creating grids and then explaining their construing had helped them to clarify how they dealt with change. The grid-based interview with its exploration of similarities and differences, provided a structure within which reflection on the experience of

personal change, could be developed and discussed with me. Smith, (1995:177) employed single repertory grids in a similar manner,

**“to illustrate an approach which sees repertory grid scores, not as the endpoint of the study, but rather as producing data for discussion with the participant whose grid has been elicited. This way the participant plays an active role in a dialogic research exercise where researcher and respondent attempt, together, to come to understanding of the participant's personal construct system.”**

While the overall time spent with each participant remained between one hour and one and a half hours, the quality of the data that came from the grid-based interviews was far more focused, detailed and interconnected than that from the semi-structured interviews. It also allowed the participants an opportunity to interpret their own grids and to link their constructs together, which further enhanced the conversation between us. This was a collaborative relationship, which was congruent with an interpretative and phenomenological approach.

Two trial interviews were carried out with friends to allow me to familiarise myself with a different role (i.e. not as a therapist). While Leininger (1994) believes that pre-testing is unnecessary as each participant's interview will be unique, the process was useful for me. It later transpired that conducting grid-based interviews with participant's who had tight construing systems required me to remain detached and not to engage in 'therapeutic thinking' and the practice interviews helped with these interactions. In addition the trial interviews provided an opportunity to experiment with seating plans and how these affected the quality of tape recording. Several trial versions of repertory grids were developed and completed with colleagues to determine the most effective elements to explore the participant's experiences of change.

The relationship between the researcher and the participant during the creation of a repertory grid is one of equality there is no expert professional in this endeavour. The participant is respected as being able to identify the relevant constructs and able to provide a description, and possibly an interpretation, as to what any changes in the constructs represent. The discussion between the participant and me tended to centre on clarifying the meaning of what had been said, or on asking relevant questions that provoked further reflection for the participant. Smith (1994:168) suggests that,

**“Encouraging the participant to engage in this form of self-reflexivity is rare in academic psychology.”**

These discussions were recorded and then transcribed and analysed using IPA. The interviews were all conducted at times and in places, which suited the participants. The locations tended to be the participants' homes or my dining room. In my home care was taken to ensure privacy and refreshments were offered on arrival as this offered an opportunity to talk informally and establish a relationship. A copy of the topics guiding the pilot interviews can be found in appendix four.

Time was taken to recap on what the research was about and the role the participant would play. Examples of all documents were shown and any questions were answered before informed consent was obtained. The grid-based interviews took place at a table and the collaborative nature of the interview was highlighted. Each interview focused on the participants' experience of change and in studies two and three there was an emphasis on beliefs and feelings about self in relation to the experience of change. I reflected back what was being described to ensure understanding. When the grids were being created there were many instances when participants were employing words in distinctive ways and I clarified the meanings and made notes on their grids so that they would be remembered (Charmaz, 1986).

### **Constructing the grids.**

Elements of the grid need to be homogenous, that is, belonging to the same category. The elements chosen to help identify relevant constructs were people who had changed to varying degrees, including self in the past and the present. Denicolo and Pope (2001:113) suggest that,

**“The anticipatory power of constructs lies in the past. In order to come to an understanding of the present we need to compare and contrast it with experiences we have had previously and use these to predict the future.”**

In order to include this historical aspect the elements were;

- self in the past
- self in the present
- someone you admire as it was hoped this would highlight what their ideal self would be like
- someone who had changed a little
- someone who had changed a lot and
- someone who had stayed the same, in a ‘stuck in a rut’ sense.

These headings were typed onto six cards and the participant wrote down someone’s name under the headings and I wrote them on the top of the grid. After the interview when the grid and conversation were transcribed the names were removed for anonymity. Each participant’s constructs were elicited by the triadic method of elicitation. In order to involve the participant fully in the process they were asked to select three cards at a time and to consider in which way two of the people were alike and the third was different. While the participant could choose which cards to combine they were asked to use each card at least once. An example of the top of a repertory grid is given below.

**Table 10- An example of part of a beliefs grid.**

Left pole (1)	Past Self	Present self	Some- one you admire  Susan	Changed a little  Michael	Changed a lot  Jake	Stayed the same  Helen	Right Pole (7)
Born with Abilities Or not	2	6	6	4	6	2	Can learn new things with effort

For example, in considering an important difference between self in the past, self in the present and the person who stayed the same, the participant may have described self in the present as believing they can learn something new with effort. The participant would then be asked to describe the opposite belief, which might be that you are born with certain abilities, or not. The double repertory grids developed for use in these studies are versions of rating grids, which means that each construct on the grid is treated as a scale. Using the construct in table 10, born with abilities or not/can learn new things with effort, are positioned at the left and right poles of the table. Each of the people represented in the elements are then rated on the scale. In study two, the scale was from one to ten, as I thought this would allow finer discriminations to be made, but in study three this was reduced to one to seven as the larger scale seemed to be too broad for the participants. Table ten is using a scale of one to seven.

By rating each person on each construct it is possible to determine how the participant's belief has changed or not. In the above example the participant rated self in the past as believing they had been, 'born with abilities or not, at 2, this is a low rating that indicates they believed this quite strongly. In comparison, self in the present is rated at 6 out of a possible 7, for believing they can learn new things with effort. The ratings in the grid allow differences to be identified and discussed. A rating of 4 would mean the element was rated as average on this construct. The numbers do not have any inherent meaning or value but provide an indication of the relative strength of beliefs and where they have change.

In this example the participant's belief has changed and they would be invited, on completing the grid, to describe how this occurred and to link it to any other constructs. In this way the participants are fully involved in the process of describing their beliefs and feelings about self and interpreting their experiences of change.

While there are computer programmes which can analyse the grid data i.e. Principle Component Analysis and Factor Analysis, the basic 'eyeballing' of the grid by both the participant and myself was employed. Given the goal of understanding how participants' beliefs and feelings about self influence their ability to change, a participant-led approach was congruent with the research design. The participant could also compare and contrast their own construing over time with that of the other people (elements) on their grid. Most of the participants found the experience of creating grids very interesting and many felt they had gained understanding of how they construed and responded to change through the process of articulating their construing.

### **2.7 Trying something new.**

While PCT would construe both beliefs and feelings as constructs, the ten participants in study one differentiated between them and often assumed a causal link between them. This was considered to be an important feature of the data. After communicating with Dr. Fay Fransella it was decided to experiment with double grids which meant having one grid for beliefs and another for the associated feelings.

**"I see no problem with using two grids. There are well practised ways of doing grids. But if no one ever used them creatively we would never have got beyond Kelly's original",**

(Private correspondence with Dr. Fransella, 2003).

Under the 'beliefs about change' grid there was another one to record the participant's 'feelings about change'. Using the previous example there was now more information about the participant's experience of change.

**Table 11- An example of part of a feelings grid.**

	Past Self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Changed a little	Changed a lot	Stayed the same	
			Susan	Michael	Jake	Helen	
Anxious (may not be able to cope)	1	5	7	3	6	2	Hopeful (can probably cope)

With the addition of this grid, the participant was now identifying their feelings and describing how their different beliefs made them feel. In the example the participant describes her beliefs and feelings in the past.

**Past self believed that** - you are born with abilities or not.

**Past self felt** - anxious that they may not cope.

In comparison the present self believes and feels differently.

**Present self believes** - that with effort they can learn new things.

**Present self feels** - hopeful that they can probably cope.

Having completed the grids by identifying their beliefs and associated feelings, the participants then had a guide to their core role construing of change over a period of time, and in comparison to other people. An explanation of the distinct features in the grids is provided in chapter three.

### **Evaluating the double grid-based interviews**

This experiment of employing double grids was successful in both focusing the participants' attention on identifying their beliefs and feelings and also seemed to trigger stories about their experiences of change. The benefit of identifying relevant constructs in the grids was obvious in the interviews as the participants had a visible framework from which to describe their experiences of change. The grid-based interviews were extremely focused and participants quickly described their beliefs in stories, which included the meaning of their associated feelings and how these influenced their actions.

There were different styles of story-telling and the Maintainers, who construed their beliefs as truths to be validated, gave what is best described as factual accounts. While they looked for connections between beliefs and feelings on the grids and for differences over time, there was a distinctive certainty about what they described.

In comparison, the Explorers, described their beliefs and feelings in the past and present and then gave accounts of how these had come to change. There was an agency in their stories and a sense of increasing awareness and understanding of the consequences of certain beliefs. These participants were keen to examine the grids for new insights about their construing and this was congruent with construing their beliefs as hypothesis to be tested. While the grid-based interviews were very helpful it is recognised that the format did shape the interview. However the connection between beliefs and feelings about self had emerged from the participants in study one and so this seems to be justified as a data based decision.

## **2.8 Data analysis**

The process of analysing data in PCT and IPA follow similar formats, which begin with the individual grid or interview, before looking across accounts for shared meanings. They have inductive approaches to theory-building. In both these methods the researcher is actively seeking to understand how the topic under investigation is experienced and understood by the participants and their words are initially used to frame the analysis. There is a recurring pattern in IPA, which moves from the single to the general. Whether this is a single code, which develops into a cluster of codes, which form a theme within an individual participant's construing, or a theme which occurs in several different participants' accounts; the movement is from the single to the general. IPA employs a process of thematic analysis, which begins by creating codes, then themes and which moves from descriptions to interpretations and finally to integration.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe an audit trail as comprising everything a reader needs to know in order to understand the findings. A second function

of the audit trail is to provide a sufficiently detailed account of the process of the research so that it is possible to determine if the findings actually flow from the data. The contents of an audit trail include notes about the process of the investigation, the questions which were asked, and how the decisions were made. By tracking the steps which were taken, the process of investigating is transparent and enhances credibility. Inclusion of examples of early codes which developed into themes, again documents the grounded nature of the findings (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory and construed comparison as being the heart of their theoretical approach. Tesch (1990) construed comparison as being the fundamental intellectual activity that occurs during analysis. It is possible to read accounts of ways of analysing data which make the process of coding sound simple. The term 'emerging' is frequently employed to describe how codes and themes are discovered. However, this term seems to imply a simple process, as if words and phrases will suddenly appear in different coloured inks, as opposed to being identified by a process of comparison and then constructed into clusters of similar codes which are eventually classified as a theme. It is through endlessly comparing and contrasting codes and then themes that definitions are clarified. This process requires a systematic approach and the ability to remember multiple themes while deciding what makes each distinct. Glaser (1978) suggests that comparison leads to creating levels of abstraction which are necessary for moving beyond describing the findings, to interpreting them and into developing a theoretical framework.

The constant comparison of codes and their themes is the most challenging and exciting part of the analysis, as initially how the different self-theories function is not clearly understood. The researcher needs to be able to set aside their desire for certainty, and to persevere with 'puzzling' and 'playing with' alternative versions of what might be happening, until the pieces again make sense as a coherent whole. This is an invigorating and fundamental element of the analysis, which is integral to the process of interpreting the data, but not for the fainthearted.

## **Stages of analysis**

Analysing the data involves the process of coding, which is a way of identifying the patterns within the text and of organising them in a systematic way. Carla Willig (2001) suggests five stages in this process and these formed the outline for the analysis. While the process of analysis has been described as having five stages, it was not carried out linearly, but rather as an iterative process.

### **Stage 1: The researcher's initial encounter with the text is descriptive.**

This stage involves reading and re-reading the transcript to become familiar with the participant's account. The aim is to identify and summarise key features and concerns related to the experience under investigation in the participant's own words. These descriptions are noted in one margin.

### **Stage 2: Identification of themes is interpretative.**

After describing the participant's experiences and concerns, IPA moves into an interpretative phase by starting to consider the meaning of the participant's concerns and experiences. First, codes can be constructed which identify key features of the participant's experiences and begin to organise the data. This interpretative work can be written in the other margin, or using another colour of ink, to distinguish the interpretations from the descriptions.

### **Stage 3: Clustering of themes develops explanations.**

As codes are identified they are clustered into groups, which have features in common and these become themes. Themes are a way of grouping codes together, which enhances and elaborates areas of shared meaning. Reviewing themes, writing definitions, linking themes, clarifying connections and ranking them in terms of their importance all help to create a structure.

### **Stage 4: Production of a summary table begins integration.**

This stage produces some form of summary table which includes relevant quotations as examples of the different codes and themes, along with references, and further structures the analysis. Once examples of themes

and their constituent codes are collated the relevance and meaning of each often becomes clearer. It also makes it easier to identify shared themes, and to move towards integrating themes across the data, while ensuring that the analysis is grounded in the participant's own words.

#### **Stage 5: Integration of cases.**

Willig (2001) suggests two ways of integrating cases, the first is by creating individual summary tables, which are then integrated into a list of master themes, that is reflective of all the participants' experiences. The other method, and the one employed in this study, is to construct a summary table for the first participant and to use this as the basis for analysing the next interview. In this way the list of identified codes is adapted with each participant and the researcher is aware of frequently occurring meanings.

Codes can be clustered into themes and new codes can either be included in an established theme or a new one begun. This method of analysing individual transcripts, while integrating them into previous codes and themes, allowed me to develop an interpretation of what the experience of change seemed to mean to different participants throughout the process of analysis. It also made reviewing relevant literature and using it to further understanding of different themes and interactions easier. Themes could be developed with the inclusion of psychological concepts such as self-worth and self-discrepancy theory. In addition, what I thought was the major theme altered as the analysis progressed but this still allowed me to keep an overview of the whole analysis while working with individual transcripts.

Once the last interview was analysed, the evolving summary sheet was then used to review all the interviews in an effort to evaluate how representative the themes were of the participant's experiences. During the review process further changes were made, largely as a result of me gaining further understanding of earlier analysis in the light of working through all the interviews. Examples of the summary sheets used in this study are given in appendixes five to seven and, once again, there are distinctive patterns which show the different beliefs and responses that each group employ.

The summary sheet, with its master and constituent themes, represents my interpretation of what the experience of change seems to mean to the participants. The integration of the constituent themes into master themes and then a core theme offers a way of generalising across the accounts to form a plausible account of the experience of change for a range of participants. Lincoln & Guba (1985:123) suggested that the classic idea of generalisation be replaced by the notion of a working hypothesis -

**“Any generalisation is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion.”**

This emphasis seems highly appropriate for this study, as it reflects both the interpretative nature of the analysis and constructive aspects of the hypothesis. It is recognised that this is one account of the data and alternative constructions are possible, however steps were taken to assess its plausibility as an account.

An example of how a theme developed will help to clarify the process of analysis. In this abbreviated example three different codes, which were being employed by three different participants, seemed to be referring to similar evaluative processes. These were initially recorded as separate codes and then interpreted them as describing similar evaluative processes and formed into a cluster of codes that referred to evaluation. As the analysis of each transcript progressed and more and more examples of this cluster were identified it was redefined as a theme. This theme became an important distinguishing feature of the Explorers' construing and was later called an exploratory belief which was eventually defined as, Believe that evaluating alternatives is helpful.

**Early code for 'realising' was employed by Iain as a kind of evaluation often with a cost-benefit aspect**

“I **realise** that other people's opinions are worth listening to and worth learning from,” (82/84).

“to **realise** that in fact I have got quite a lot to offer,” 211/212.

"I've **realised** that I can still be rigid," (26).

"I **realised** that I didn't want to live like that. I needed to find a balance," (189/190)

**Early code for 'process' was employed by Alice as a sort of evaluation with a cost-benefit aspect**

"It's kind of been like a **process**" (51/51).

"It's not been as easy **process**, it's been, been a painful **process**," (23/24).

**Early code for evaluating and analysing was employed by Jay and was explicitly about evaluation**

"now I'm **evaluating all** the time," (128).

"sort of **analysing** quietly in your head when things happen," (100/101).

## 2.9 Evaluating qualitative research studies

Traditionally the criteria for evaluating qualitative research have focused on the issues of reliability and validity, but these are being questioned because of their roots in positivist philosophy. There is little agreement among qualitative researchers as to what suitable alternative criteria would be (Smith, 1996). Another difficulty is that researchers often employ different terms when referring to the same concept, which further confuses the criteria. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four criteria for evaluating qualitative research and these are; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Leininger (1994) has six criteria she recommends; credibility, confirmability, meaning in context, recurrent patterning, saturation and transferability. What these lists of criteria have in common is the belief that asking participants to review the data and the researcher's interpretation provides validation or proof of the account's accuracy. This is also called member checking.

In a similar way, there seems to be a belief that transferability and credibility can be evaluated and assessed by outside validation. This involves non-participants, who are perhaps also researchers, reading the transcripts and the findings to determine if the account is accurate (Glasser and Strauss, 1967). When the findings are identifiable to non-participants it is thought to add credibility to the researcher's account. However, this concern with validity seems to belong more to a scientific approach where a formula can be definitively evaluated (Barbour, 2001, 2003). Depending on the content of the experience being explored and the researcher's interpretation, it could actually be upsetting for participants to read an analysis of their construing. With these thoughts in mind a version of both member and outside validation were developed which seemed to be more congruent with the methodologies employed in the study.

#### **Member validation/corroboratorion**

Member checking is a feature of qualitative research which entails checking with the participants who gave the data, but it is not always appropriate. Care has to be taken to assess whether reading the transcript and analysis would upset the participant in some way (Punch, 1998). In this study six participants were asked if they would be willing to read a copy of the transcript and determine its accuracy and also to read a profile of their construing. This would contain the my description of their beliefs and feelings from the transcript and, additionally, an interpretation of how they seemed to be used in regard to change.

There was a concern that the Maintainers who were currently construing their beliefs about self as truths to be validated could find such a profile disturbing, as they seemed the least aware of how their beliefs influenced their responses and the quality of their lives. As a result, instead of fuller profiles, a careful description of their beliefs were given, along with a simple account of associated feelings. While this was interpretative in a limited way it was not the depth of profile that the other four participants were given. This was to ensure that the participants were not unsettled by my interpretation. The participants in the other two groups read fuller profiles of their beliefs and

feelings about self and how they related to experiences of change. The feedback about my interpretations were positive in that the profile was thought to reflect most of what the participant had been trying to describe.

### **Outside validation/corroboratorion**

For Silverman (1993), having other researchers analyse the data is a useful source of external validation. However others disagree and argue that it is impossible to gain sufficient understanding of the data without going through the whole analysis process. Cook and Campbell (1979) suggest that it might be more appropriate to construe validation in a broader way, for example by saying tentative validation or approximate validation, as opposed to declaring the findings are valid and implicitly true. In this study, my counselling supervisor who was providing a reflective space for me and who was really familiar with the participants' data, as she had been reviewing profiles and discussing their construing throughout the analysis, was given a sample of the transcripts and grids to analyse herself. She thought my account to be a plausible one and reflective of the data. Another researcher also read the findings to determine if she could recognise something of her own beliefs and feelings about change in the findings and she identified herself as a 'Changer'.

**“Deviant cases play a significant role in the validation of findings as they are often the most analytically and theoretically informative,”** (Hepburn and Potter 1979:190).

It is tempting to define negative or deviant cases as problems but they can provide crucial information about what is happening in the data. By addressing the discrepancies, new questions are asked and exploration of potentially important areas begins. Negative cases are useful in expanding the developing theory (Morse, 1991), however, it takes courage to embrace the unusual and to construe it as a new source of information and not as an indicator that something is wrong. Neither life nor research comes in neatly defined categories and approaching exceptions in a spirit of inquiry enriches the findings and the conceptual framework. Lincoln and Guba (1985)

suggest that identifying and exploring negative cases actually improves credibility by demonstrating a willingness to address what was unclear or difficult to understand in the findings.

### **Evaluating the research methods**

While the benefits of employing IPA and PCT have been highlighted, their limitations have not been identified. There are several conceptual issues connected to using IPA that cause concern and three of these, which are relevant in this study, will be reviewed. Willig (2001) raises the question of the suitability of participants' accounts for phenomenological analysis. Phenomenological analysis seeks to explore the experience under investigation through the participant's accounts of what it was like for them. Implicitly, the success of this endeavour depends on the participants' ability to identify their experiences of the topic which is being explored, and then to be able to describe their experiences in sufficient detail to capture their unique understanding of them. These tasks require the participant to have a level of reflexivity, awareness and story-telling skills that cannot be taken for granted.

I became aware of this problem during the semi-structured interviews in studies 1a/1b when I realised how difficult it was for the participants to identify experiences of change in their lives. These interviews were exploratory in nature but when I reviewed them later they were very vague and in a similar situation I would use vignettes about change as a starting point for the participants and to offer a context for the conversations. I tried to compensate for this difficulty by employing repertory grids with the study two and three participants. This gave the participants time to focus on identifying their beliefs and feelings about change in the past and the present and to compare them with other people's experiences of change. Once the double-grids were completed they provided a framework for the participants' experiences of change and the conversations were significantly more focused as a result.

The second limitation of IPA, which is relevant to this study, is raised by Coolican (2004) and, concerns how themes are developed. This limitation is in the context of the coding process where he describes how the researcher is required to discard a significant amount of each participant's data when they create their own interpretation. The researcher's interpretation constructs themes and attempts to identify the relationships between those themes and this necessitates focusing on some aspects of the data and ignoring others. Essentially, Coolican (2004) is implying that there is an inherent bias in the researcher's interpretation.

This issue cannot be fully resolved as the function of the coding process is specifically to identify how the participant construes the experience which is being explored and, implicitly, this requires the researcher to discriminate between aspects of the data. However, the selective nature of the coding process does need to be acknowledged by the researcher and care taken to remember that the account of the data, which the researcher creates, is only an interpretation. In order to balance the subjective and selective nature of my interpretation and theorising, the participants' goal-orientation inventories, which were used as self-characterisations, and their repertory grids give the participants their own voice and allow readers to evaluate for themselves the plausibility of my interpretation.

The last limitation to be reviewed was raised at a tutorial, at the IPA conference in Nottingham in 2003, by one of the delegates and concerned the small sample size advocated by IPA. Smith and Osborn (2003) suggest that five or six participants are sufficient for an interpretative analysis. This raised concerns among many of the delegates who were working on doctoral research studies, as their supervisors and/or department heads did not consider the sample size to be sufficient. Within my study, six to ten participants would not have been a large enough sample for me to gain enough variety in the data to fully explore the participants' experiences of change. In order to identify the specific beliefs and feelings, which were facilitating and hindering the participants' ability to change, I initially required participants with different self-theories and then I needed sufficient

participants in each category to adequately develop the different aspects of my theory. Given the newness of IPA as a research method, this issue will no doubt be a topic of considerable debate in the years to come.

In identifying the above limitations in IPA, especially the concerns about the data that researchers discard when creating their interpretations, I am reminded of both the complexity and strangeness of many of the tasks associated with conducting a research project. Every piece of research begins with a broad area of interest, which is narrowed down to specific research questions and in these initial stages the focus of the researcher is directed to certain aspects of the topic. Making choices about what to focus on and what to ignore permeates the research process. It is impossible for the researcher to attend to all that is happening and so selecting what seems most pertinent from all that is available is an inevitable part of conducting a study but one which can be taken-for-granted.

PCT also has areas of concern and three of these are particularly relevant to my study. The first of these concerns Kelly's focus on the individual's construing. Kelly is sometimes criticised for ignoring the environment, relationships and culture in which an individual's construing takes place and how these influence the meaning-making process (Jahodi,1988). Construing does not happen in a vacuum and when people are trying to make sense of their experiences then the number and quality of choices that are available to them are a part of their decision making process. Even when researchers recognise that people are construing within contexts they still have to choose their area of interest. While a researcher employing an ethnographic approach might emphasis the role and influence of context, I have chosen to focus on the participants' self-theories, which are connected to their experiences of change.

The last two concerns about PCT are going to be categorised as strange expectations of PCT practitioners. For those of us who employ PCT it is easy to forget how demanding and/or unattainable some of these expectations are, for example, to subsume another's construing or to

suspend our own construing and values. Kelly's suggestion that PCT practitioners, whether counsellors, researchers or other users can fully subsume someone else's construing is a demanding expectation (Tindall, 2002). Within PCT, subsuming is construed as more than being empathetic and involves the researcher in trying not only to see the world through another's eyes but in attempting to employ their constructs to differentiate and make sense of their experiences. Essentially, this is not possible and can easily be evaluated as a limitation of PCT.

However, I think it is possible to utilise the concept of subsuming to indicate where a specific type of thinking is necessary. In interacting with participants I am very aware of having to engage with this kind of thinking. I became aware in this study that I was not understanding how the Maintainers were construing their beliefs and feelings about self. It required considerable time and effort to identify enough of their beliefs and responses, and how they were being used, to even begin to subsume their construct systems. I did find it helpful to recognise that the Maintainers' ways of construing were making sense to them and to actively seek to look through their eyes in an attempt to understand. While it seems reasonable to recognise that fully subsuming someone else's construing is impossible, it is useful to have subsuming as a concept, which defines a specific kind of thinking.

The other 'strange' expectation concerns the possibility of the researcher being able to suspend their own construing and values in order to subsume the participant's construct system. Fransella and Dalton (1990) were describing 'suspension' as a necessary skill for counsellors to develop but it is equally relevant to researchers who are interacting with participants. 'Suspension' suggests that it is possible for a researcher to set aside their construing. I think this concept is better expressed as an intention than as an achievable goal. In these terms the researcher would try to sustain awareness that they are filtering the participant's construing through the lens of their own construing system and to remember that this will distort their understanding. In all of these endeavours the researcher needs to remain aware of the subjective and interpretative nature of the research process.

## **Chapter 3: An overview of the findings in the study**

### **3.0 An introduction to the findings chapters**

It is my intention to demonstrate from the data that how the participants construe their beliefs and feelings about self and their self-theories, either facilitates or hinders their ability to reconstrue and cope with the demands of change. Table twelve encapsulates the findings from this study. It should be noted that the master themes form a dimension along which the participants were located at the time of their interviews and they may well have elaborated their beliefs and feelings further since then. Throughout the reporting of the findings, participants will be described as belonging to a category. This will be done as a method of identifying different beliefs and the categories indicate similar sorts of beliefs, rather than suggesting that everyone has identical beliefs. The three categories of participants were called Explorers, Changers and Maintainers.

The Explorers construed their beliefs as hypothesis to be tested and elaborated as necessary, which reflects an interpretative discourse of self. They believed they had a 'good enough' self and employed predominately exploratory beliefs and responses. At the other end of the dimension the Maintainers construed their beliefs as 'truths' which they sought to validate, which reflects a realist discourse of self. They believed in an 'ideal' self and employed predominately sustaining beliefs and responses. In between were the Changers, who had elaborated some truths into hypothesis and were beginning to construe self as 'good enough.' They employed a mixture of beliefs and responses, depending on how many beliefs they had elaborated.

While table twelve presents the findings in a coherent manner, there were several significant periods of confusion during the analysis. I experienced prolonged periods of deliberation before appreciating that there were different sets of beliefs being described.

1. The participants talked about their construing of their beliefs, as hypothesis to be tested and elaborated as necessary, all the way to beliefs as 'truths' that they sought to validate.
2. They also had core beliefs about what kind of self they had, which ranged from a 'good enough' self to an 'ideal' self.
3. And finally, they employed supporting beliefs and responses, which were either exploratory or sustaining in nature.

Analysing qualitative data is an iterative process and on many occasions I had to return to the data and interrogate it further to clarify what the different sets of beliefs were comprised of and to determine what their functions seemed to be. Even when the analysis was thought to be complete and the process of writing the findings began, there was another period of deliberation as it became apparent that the master category for the Maintainers was not representative of the data.

During the analysis the Maintainers had been identified as describing a self who was lacking in some way, whether self was described as lacking in intelligence, lacked the right retirement plan or was lacking an immaculate home. These had been encompassed into a master theme called the deficient self. However, the initial shape of the category did not fully 'fit'. It took time to discern that the Maintainers were actually describing 'ideal' selves and the reported lack which they talked about was the result of their not achieving their 'ideal' standards for self. With this new understanding the whole core theme became significantly clearer. In addition to the themes I constructed there were two other sources of data, the goal-orientation inventory and the repertory grids, which highlighted unexpected patterns in the data.

**Table 12 - The Emerging Themes**

<i>Core Theme</i> <b>Beliefs about self</b>		
<p>Master theme 1</p> <p><b>Explorers' beliefs are hypothesis to be tested and elaborated as necessary. They believe they have a 'good enough' self and employ an interpretative discourse of self.</b></p>	<p>Master theme 3</p> <p><b>Changers elaborate some truths into hypothesis they are developing a 'good enough' self.</b></p>	<p>Master theme 2</p> <p><b>Maintainers' beliefs are truths to be validated and they believe in an 'ideal' self. They employ a realist discourse of self.</b></p>
<p><b>Constituent themes were called,</b></p> <p>Exploratory beliefs and responses and were predominately employed by the Explorers</p>	<p>Changers employ a mixture of both sets of beliefs and responses.</p>	<p><b>Constituent themes were called,</b></p> <p>Sustaining beliefs and responses which were predominately employed by the Maintainers</p>
<p>Believe they are 'good enough' as seen in their positive self-statements.</p>	<p>Some beliefs are construed as truth. (Ideal self is one such truth)</p>	
<p>Anticipate the need to elaborate their beliefs and change in the future.</p>	<p>Believe that performance indicates their worth.</p>	
<p>Believe that effort is effective.</p>	<p>Believe there are standards to attain.</p>	
<p>Believe that evaluating alternatives is helpful.</p>	<p>Experience strong negative emotions.</p>	
<p>Believe that the past and present are separate.</p>	<p>Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal self'.</p>	
<p>Can identify what made a difference.</p>	<p>Seek validation.</p>	
<p>Can identify their beliefs and feelings.</p>	<p>Employ loose construing/vague</p>	

### **3.1 Striking differences in the participants' characterisation of self**

The experiment of using the goal-orientation inventory as a self-characterisation tool, that would enable a purposive sample of participants to be selected for study three, was described in chapter two. What had not been anticipated were the striking visual differences in the patterns of self-characterisation assessment sheets. This difference quickly became apparent when the validation/growth statements were separated into two groups. Tables thirteen and fourteen are examples of assessment sheets, which show the distinctive pattern for growth seeking participants. The Explorers strongly agreed with growth-oriented statements and strongly disagreed with validation-oriented statements. This was congruent with construing self as able to grow and change.

In contrast, tables fifteen and sixteen show the pattern for the Maintainers, who strongly agreed with validation-oriented statements and strongly disagreed with the growth-oriented statements. This was congruent with construing a 'real or essential' self, which they sought to validate as 'true'. Finally, the Changers tended to be slightly to moderately agreeing with both orientations which was congruent with being involved in evaluating and elaborating their beliefs and feelings. Tables seventeen and eighteen show the third pattern, which is down the middle of the sheet.

These visual patterns had not been expected, but reassured me that the participants were construing self in different ways but within the categories there were similarities. The participants' characterisation of self as validation/growth seeking provided an indication of their core role construing that was independent of my interpretation. It was also interesting to discover that there were three distinctive patterns for goal-orientation which seemed to confirm that the three categories which I had created, were representative of the data. In addition, I found it really helpful to have some prior sense of the participant's beliefs about self, particularly those who construed their beliefs as truths, as it alerted me to be careful not to inadvertently challenge their construing during the interviews.

**Table 13** - Fred (study 2 and age 30) characterised himself as growth-seeking in the inventory which is representative of an Explorer. Note the distinctive pattern of scores in the top left-hand corner and bottom right-hand corners.

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V	1						
6 V		2					
7 V		2					
9 V	1						
12 V	1						
15 V	1						
16 V	1						
18 V	1						
21 V	1						
22 V	1						
24 V	1						
26 V	1						
29 V		2					
30 V	1						
32 V	1						
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G							7
3 G							7
5 G						6	
8 G							7
10 G						6	
11 G							7
13 G						6	
14 G							7
17 G						6	
19 G							7
20 G							7
23 G							7
25 G						6	
27 G						6	
28 G						6	
31 G						6	
33 G							7
35 G							7

Characterises himself as strongly growth-oriented at 118 and not very validation-oriented at 21.

**Table 14** - Reece (study 2 and age 33) characterised himself as growth-seeking in the inventory which is representative of an Explorer.

Question Number		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	V	1						
4	V		2					
6	V							7
7	V	1						
9	V	1						
12	V	1						
15	V	1						
16	V	1						
18	V	1						
21	V	1						
22	V	1						
24	V	1						
26	V	1						
29	V	1						
30	V	1						
32	V	1						
34	V	1						
36	V	1						
2	G						6	
3	G					5		
5	G							7
8	G						6	
10	G						6	
11	G						6	
13	G							7
14	G						6	
17	G					5		
19	G						6	
20	G						6	
23	G						6	
25	G						6	
27	G							7
28	G					5		
31	G					5		
33	G					5		
35	G							7

Characterises himself as strongly growth-oriented 107 and not very validation-oriented at 19.

**Table 15** - Peter (study two and age 47) characterised himself as validation-seeking in the inventory which is representative of a Maintainer. This time the pattern of the scores are in the top right-hand and bottom left-hand corners of the sheet.

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V						6	
6 V						6	
7 V					5		
9 V						6	
12 V						6	
15 V						6	
16 V						6	
18 V						6	
21 V				4			
22 V					5		
24 V							7
26 V				4			
29 V					5		
30 V						6	
32 V						6	
34 V					5		
36 V					5		
2 G				4			
3 G		2					
5 G		2					
8 G				4			
10 G		2					
11 G		2					
13 G		2					
14 G		2					
17 G	1						
19 G		2					
20 G		2					
23 G		2					
25 G	1						
27 G	1						
28 G		2					
31 G			3				
33 G				4			
35 G		2					

Characterises himself as strongly validation-oriented 98 and not very growth-oriented at 36.

**Table 16** - Holly (study 2 and age 37) characterised herself as validation-seeking in the inventory which is representative of a Maintainer.

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V						6	
4 V						6	
6 V					5		
7 V						6	
9 V						6	
12 V						6	
15 V						6	
16 V						6	
18 V					5		
21 V					5		
22 V						6	
24 V						6	
26 V					5		
29 V						6	
30 V						6	
32 V						6	
34 V						6	
36 V						6	
2 G		2					
3 G		2					
5 G		2					
8 G		2					
10 G		2					
11 G			3				
13 G		2					
14 G		2					
17 G		2					
19 G		2					
20 G		2					
23 G		2					
25 G		2					
27 G			3				
28 G		2					
31 G		2					
33 G		2					
35 G		2					

Holly characterises herself as strongly validation-oriented at 104 and does not characterise herself as growth-oriented 38.

**Table 17** - Ruby (study two and age 50) characterised self as oriented towards both growth and validation. This is the third pattern, which has a scattering of scores down the middle of the page and is distinctive for a Changer.

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V				4			
4 V				4			
6 V						6	
7 V					5		
9 V				4			
12 V					5		
15 V		2					
16 V			3				
18 V			3				
21 V			3				
22 V	1						
24 V					5		
26 V	1						
29 V	1						
30 V		2					
32 V					5		
34 V	1						
36 V					5		
2 G			3				
3 G					5		
5 G				4			
8 G			3				
10 G			3				
11 G		2					
13 G					5		
14 G			3				
17 G			3				
19 G		2					
20 G					5		
23 G					5		
25 G					5		
27 G							7
28 G						6	
31 G			3				
33 G						6	
35 G							7

Ruby characterises herself as more balanced in orientation with growth orientation at 82 and validation-orientation at 55.

**Table 18** - Carly (study two and age 37) characterised herself as currently seeking both validation and growth and the pattern of numbers is down the middle of the page.

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V					5		
4 V			3				
6 V					5		
7 V				4			
9 V					5		
12 V			3				
15 V					5		
16 V			3				
18 V					5		
21 V			3				
22 V			3				
24 V				4			
26 V			3				
29 V					5		
30 V					5		
32 V			3				
34 V			3				
36 V				4			
2 G				4			
3 G			3				
5 G					5		
8 G				4			
10 G					5		
11 G					5		
13 G				4			
14 G					5		
17 G		2					
19 G				4			
20 G				4			
23 G				4			
25 G				4			
27 G					5		
28 G				4			
31 G				4			
33 G				4			
35 G					5		

Carly characterised herself as slightly more growth-oriented at 75 and her validation orientation was 61, so these are again more balanced.

### **3.2 Participants describe positive and negative changes in their repertory grids**

The format of the grids employed in studies two and three are different and this was the result of piloting the grids with highly articulate friends who were psychologists. The psychologists were used to describing their beliefs and feelings in session with their counselling supervisors and did not have any difficulty thinking of six constructs which described their beliefs about change. However, the participants in study two began to struggle to find the fifth and sixth constructs and so, in study three, the number was reduced to four and the participants were able to think of these fairly easily. This change did not seem to affect the quality of the interviews but actually to enhance it, as the participants' did not have to think of so many differences in beliefs between the people they selected for the elements.

The range of scores in the study two grids was from one to ten, which was an experiment to provide a wider scale along which to differentiate people. However, this seemed to provide more range than was necessary and so in study three it was reduced to the more familiar range of one to seven. The actual grids that the participants completed were much larger, but due to the format of the thesis they have had to be considerably shrunk to fit onto one page, as this is the best format for viewing both grids at once. The elements (past self, present self etc,) have been turned vertically for the same reason. The double grid format seemed to facilitate descriptive narratives about specific experiences of change. There was a tendency for the participants to then interpret the grids and to make connections between different constructs. For many of the participants there was new understanding of how they construed change and of the consequences of their construing.

The most significant difference between the Explorers' and the Maintainers' grids is the tendency for the Maintainers to describe negative changes in their lives, while the Explorers describe positive changes. In table nineteen, Holly, who typifies the Maintainers, is describing only negative changes. This was the most extreme of the Maintainers' grids, and emphasises the difference. Each of Holly's beliefs is linked to the associated feeling so that

the connection between the two is highlighted. From this example the success of employing double grids can be seen as the participants make connections between their constructs, then describe, and often interpret, how the changes occurred.

Holly believes that she is more **unsure about learning** and is feeling more **anxious** than in the past.

Holly believes she needs to **only try easy things** and feels more **nervous** than in the past.

Holly believes she can only **make necessary changes** and feels more **unsure** than in the past.

Holly believes she is more of a **team player now** and feels a **little less confident** than in the past.

Holly believes **that mistakes reflect on you** whereas previously she didn't get so upset by mistakes and she feels **less competent** than before.

Holly believes she is **always busy now** and feels **less relaxed** in the past.

As usual the Changers are in between the Explorers and Maintainers and are describing a mixture of positive and negative changes.

**Table 19** - Holly was thirty-seven at the time of the interview and a study two participant. Since she became a mother Holly had become fearful about life. All of her beliefs have changed in a negative way, which has left her feeling increasingly anxious, nervous and unsure. Holly feels a little more tense and rushed and also a little more inadequate. Not surprisingly she is unwilling to try new activities, unless she is positive they will be easy. She happily described performing very well in an incredibly easy test for a recent computing course. During our discussion she realised that she was only trying easy activities and decided that she would have to think about that. Since having children she is very anxious about anything negative happening to her, as **'three children need'** her.

### Beliefs Grid

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Unsure about learning	8	3	9	6	10	6	Enjoys learning
Will try easy things	9	3	9	7	9	9	Tries lots of new things
Only necessary changes	9	4	8	5	9	9	Embrace changes
Team person	9	5	8	8	9	9	Independent
Mistakes reflect on you	9	5	9	7	9	7	Don't get upset by mistakes
Always busy	8	4	8	7	8	7	Take time out

### Feelings Grid

	Past self	Present self	Someone you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Anxious	9	3	9	8	9	9	Stimulated
Nervous	8	4	8	6	8	9	Excited
Unsure	8	4	8	6	9	7	Challenged
Tense	8	6	9	7	9	8	Confident
Inadequate	9	6	9	8	9	7	Competent
Rushed	8	6	7	7	7	7	Relaxed

**Table 20** – Jay was a study three participant, aged forty-six and an Explorer whose grids show only positive changes. As a child, with a domineering and often absent father, who constantly compared him to his sister, Jay had a self that was lacking in many areas. He described himself as a very angry child who did not do well at school. It was not until later in life that he decided he wanted to become a social worker and, as he persevered in learning situations, he began to realise that he was not a failure. He says, “**until at some point you realise that no, I’m not a failure. I may have failed at something but that doesn’t make me a failure, you know,**” (259/261). Once he came to this conclusion he dramatically elaborated his beliefs, he was very surprised to find that he had scored himself slightly more positively than the person he admires.

### Beliefs Grid

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Changed a little	Changed a lot	Stayed the same	
Rigid opinions	1	6	7	5	7	1	Extremely flexible
Having own way	1	7	5	5	7	1	Willing to listen
Compulsive competitiveness	1	7	4	6	6	1	Focused achievement
Apathetic	1	6	4	5	7	3	Grim determination (persevere)

### Feelings Grid

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Changed a little	Changed a lot	Stayed the same	
Threatened	1	6	7	5	7	2	Relaxed
Fear	1	7	6	5	7	1	Contentment
Angry	1	6	6	4	6	2	Satisfied
Pathetic	1	7	7	5	7	1	Strong

**Table 21** - Chris is a forty-six year old Changer and was a study three participant. His grids reflect mostly positive changes with one instance of a negative change in feelings, where he feels more frustrated than in the past. Chris was categorised as a Changer because in his interview he expressed huge frustration with his situation. While he believes he can now see more opportunities than in the past, he construes himself as accomplishing less, and this discounting of his progress and successes, leaves him experiencing huge dissatisfaction.

### Beliefs Grid

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Changed a little	Changed a lot	Stayed the same	
Apathetic outlook	2	5	7	4	5	2	Energetic outlook
Submissive	4	6	6	3	6	3	Assertive
Inflexible	3	5	7	5	5	2	Aspirations
Self-centered	2	4	4	7	5	5	Compassion-ate

### Feelings Grid

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Changed a little	Changed a lot	Stayed the same	
Frustrated	4	3	6	5	6	4	Content
Useless	3	5	7	4	5	3	Valuable
Discontented	4	4	6	5	5	3	Fulfilled
Irrelevant	3	5	7	4	6	2	Appreciated

### 3.3 Creating categories of participants

The analysis of the study one transcripts seemed to be showing that both teachers and non-teachers were describing their beliefs and feelings about self in relation to change. The study two participants completed repertory grids based on the codes and themes which had appeared significant in study one. In addition, the study two participants had also reported positive and negative changes in their beliefs and feelings between the past and the

present. The study three participants clarified that self was being construed on a dimension, which had a "good enough" self at one pole and at the other pole self was construed as lacking in comparison to "ideal selves". These differences seemed to offer some criteria for separating the participants into loose categories.

<b>Study 1</b>	Self as able to change	↔	maybe not able to change
<b>Study 2</b>	Positive changes self as growth seeking	↔	negative changes self as validation seeking
<b>Study 3</b>	'Good enough' self	↔	self is lacking in comparison to their 'ideal self'

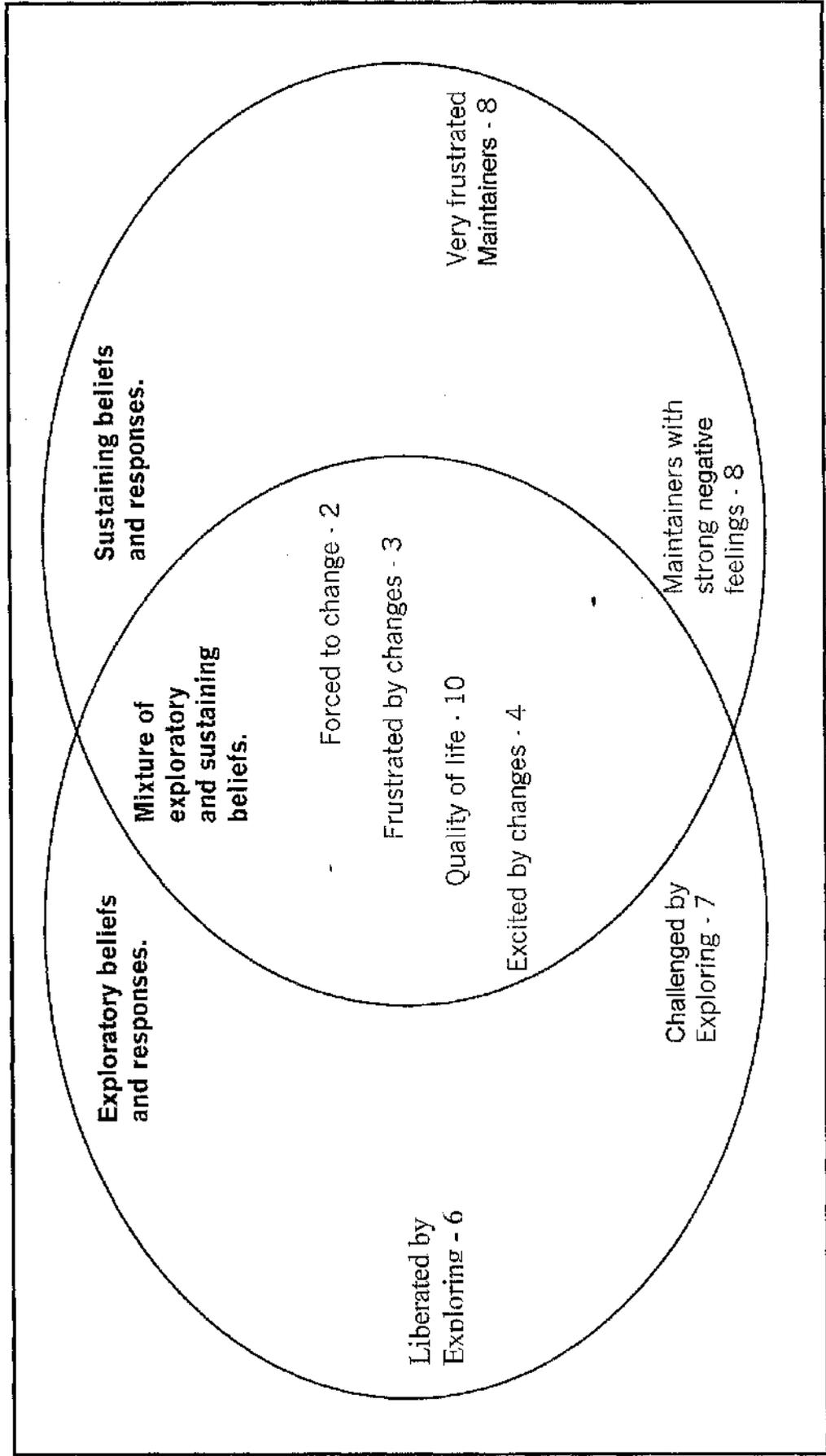
It is important to appreciate that each of these dimensions has consequences for the participants in terms of how they feel about 'self'. At the extremes of the dimension, an Explorer would be describing a fluid system of construing where beliefs were hypothesis that they anticipated elaborating as necessary, a self who was 'good enough', a self who was able to change and a self who was validated intrinsically. In addition there would be evidence of them employing predominately exploratory beliefs and mostly making positive self-statements which reflected positive feelings.

In complete contrast a Maintainer, at the other extreme of the dimension, would be describing a self who possibly could not change, a more impermeable construct system where beliefs were construed as truths and rarely reviewed or evaluated. They would employ predominately sustaining beliefs and responses which reflected an 'ideal' self that they sought to validate. There would be many negative self-statements and feelings as the Maintainers unfortunately failed to attain their ideal standards. The Changers would be located across the middle of the dimension.

Table twenty-two reflects the kind of beliefs and responses the different categories of participants were employing. All forty-eight participants were located on the dimension and, although sub categories were identified and

will be described later, in broad terms there were thirteen Explorers, nineteen Changers and sixteen Maintainers, within the three studies. Details of which participants were in each sub category can be found in table twenty-four for the Explorers, table twenty-five for the Maintainers and table twenty-seven for the Changers.

Table 22 - Locating the sub categories of participants on the 'change dimension'





room to experiment, to be a beginner and to learn. Consequently they experienced significantly more positive feelings than the participants who were located at the other end of the dimension. These fluid beliefs about self seemed to result in a stable sense of worth that was not dependent on their performance and so allowed a space to try out new activities, ways of being or to acquire skills and knowledge over time. Failure was construed as being more about giving up, than about a standard which they had failed to reach, and problems were a challenge to embrace and solve by finding appropriate solutions. There was an orientation towards growth-seeking goals and an excitement about life.

At the other end of the dimension were participants whose beliefs about self were construed more as 'truths' to be validated and they were called Maintainers. Perhaps the difference between the Maintainers and the Explorers can be encapsulated by choosing a bicycle for each category. The Explorers would have high 'tech' mountain bikes and would be considering how they could be adapted for use in the snow or by adding a parachute to increase speed and reduce the effort required on a steep slope. They would be confident of their current ability on the bike and looking for ways to adapt it for better performance in an ever-increasing range of situations and road conditions.

The Maintainers would be sitting on stationary exercise bikes and, while they require effort to use, there is little risk involved in using one as you are unlikely to fall off and the conditions are always the same. The effort exerted does not take them forward, which is frustrating, and this seems to describe the Maintainer's experience as they continue to employ established beliefs and responses.

The Maintainers employ a realist discourse of self which is seen in their transcripts where many of the beliefs about self, such as their beliefs about intelligence and personality, are construed as innate, genetic and hereditary and largely not expected to change as these are tight constructs. In practice this seemed to mean that if they found learning maths in primary school

difficult then this represented a lack of mathematical ability that would be constant throughout their life. In a similar vein, if they had been shy as a young child and not very comfortable about speaking out in class this would be construed as a stable aspect of self. As a result, any situation, which required them to talk in a group was linked to their early construing and still evaluated as something they were not good at, or comfortable doing. For these participants, experiences or abilities in the past represented their 'actual self' for all time. While these truths about self very clearly define what self can and cannot do, and therefore make self predictable, they also create boundaries about what is possible.

Many of the Maintainers' beliefs about intelligence make success difficult to achieve and result in some of the participants feeling that they are not intelligent or able to understand theory and instead they describe themselves as 'practical people'. In addition, there is a tendency to live 'as if' one or more of their beliefs is true, which means that they do not evaluate these beliefs but endlessly seek validation for them. Returning to the bicycle metaphor, they are peddling furiously but still not moving forward. All of the Maintainers described living 'as if' one or more of their beliefs was true and spent enormous amounts of time and effort trying to validate the belief and ultimately their self. The Maintainers frequently refer to a realist discourse of self which includes self being described as 'real, natural and innate'.

Much of their focus is on validating their worth and they have clear and very high standards for everything they do. There is a fear of failure which does not leave room to make mistakes, to learn over time and consequently there is constant anxiety about their worth. Each new activity or situation represents a possible threat to their worth. These participants predominately employed sustaining beliefs.

Somewhere in the middle are the Changers who could be described as just beginning to ride mountain bikes. They have stabilisers on their bikes and are wearing varying amounts of protective clothing just in case they wobble or fall. They are becoming increasingly excited at being able to move forward

and at the possibility of being able to cycle over rough ground and to go up hills instead of around them. While the Changers' experience a level of anxiety about their ability to ride the bike there is also excitement about moving forward. The Changers employ a mixture of both exploratory and sustaining beliefs with more exploratory beliefs being used as they moved across the dimension towards beliefs being hypotheses to be tested. In personal construct terms, the Changers are beginning to loosen some of their tight core role constructs and to consider the possibility that there might be alternatives.

### **3.6 Disorienting dilemmas as opportunities to elaborate construing**

How each participant responded when a core role construct was challenged is an indication of their beliefs about self. Some participants realised that their 'as if' belief was limiting their life in some way and, after generating alternatives, debating the costs and benefits, they selected one option and carried out an experiment. That is, they acted on the possibility that there were options for their life and tried one out to see what would happen. The participants who undertook this process began to gain insight into the possibilities available and, to one degree or another, they elaborated their construing of self. In asking for accounts of change the participants tended to describe how they responded to disorienting dilemmas.

Jarvis (1999:38) believes that learning begins with the experience of disjuncture.

**"I do not learn from my experience if I can presume upon it and act in a taken-for-granted manner. But if there is disjuncture between my biography (the sum of my experiences, both conscious and unconscious) and a particular experience, I might seek to learn to close it."**

Another term for this experience is what Mezirow (1990:14) calls a "disorienting dilemma". This term seems to fit with the experiences of the participants better than disjuncture and will be employed in the findings. A

disorienting dilemma will refer to a situation where a participant's expectation was not fulfilled, where something unexpected happened or where they were asked to do something they construed as out with their ability. Participants' responses to disorienting dilemmas seems to be an important indicator as to whether or not they believe that they are able to elaborate their beliefs and feelings. This kind of experience often happens when a core construct is invalidated. All the Explorers and Changers could identify where they had been living 'as if' something were 'true', which reflects tight core role construing in the past.

For some participants, only one or two beliefs were elaborated but these changes served to qualitatively alter their daily lives by providing alternatives, which increased their choices and reduced their negative feelings. Other participants seemed to gain confidence from the affect of elaborating beliefs and this provided a catalyst for considering how else they might elaborate their construing by considering alternatives. There is a definite continuum for the degree of change undertaken by participants.

The participants who believed 'self' could change (loose core role construing) described very different responses to disorienting dilemmas than the participants who believed that some aspects of their 'self' could not change (tight core role construing). In personal construct terms what they predicted as being possible were very different. The following table is an attempt to highlight how core beliefs about self define what is considered possible or not, how this gives meaning to the next activity/performance and affects anxiety levels, which in turn affect how worthwhile the participant feels.

**Table 23: Two core beliefs about self**

<b>Two core beliefs about self</b>		
<p>The Explorers employ an interpretative discourse of self where self is able to change and so they are able to construe alternatives.</p>	↔	<p>The Maintainers' self is construed within a realist discourse and may not be able to change so there are few, if any, alternatives.</p>
<p>Can elaborate beliefs and so there is room to learn and manoeuvre.</p>	↔	<p>Core belief defines what is possible or not. Every performance reflects their worth or their 'lack'.</p>
<p>Attempt most activities as self-worth is not dependent on performance.</p>	↔	<p>Need to be careful about activities as self is lacking in some areas.</p>
<p>Self-worth is fairly stable and not too dependent on performance – room to make mistakes.</p>	↔	<p>Self-worth is unstable and dependent on next performance.</p>

It would seem that core beliefs have significant implications for participants' construing systems in general and for the meaning of their next 'performance', or activity, when it is construed as indicating their worth. In contrast, believing that self-worth and performance are separate lowers anxiety as self-worth is not at risk and creates a space to try new activities or solutions by making space to be a beginner, to make mistakes and to develop knowledge and skills over time. Believing 'performance' to be directly reflective of worth requires instant mastery to validate worth and generates pressure to always perform well.

### **3.7 The meaning of feelings at the pivotal point**

The metaphor of a person standing in the middle of a seesaw is a useful way of visualising what is happening when a disorienting dilemma is experienced. On one end of the seesaw are the participant's beliefs and at the other end are their feelings and elaboration occurred when these were balanced. If more importance is given to either the beliefs or the feelings the seesaw will tip and this will influence whether elaboration seems possible or not. For most of the participants there was a phase when they gave more importance to their feelings and this gave the impression that elaborating a belief was a risky endeavour. However the Explorers and the Changers have elaborated their feelings and this has allowed them to keep the seesaw balanced. When there is balance, elaborating a belief does not seem so uncertain or unfamiliar. The meaning of feelings is therefore very important in keeping balance so that elaboration can occur. The pivotal point is when beliefs and feelings are identified and their meaning determined.

The meaning of feelings at the pivotal point can either increase or decrease anxiety levels and this has significant implications for whether elaboration will occur or not. To elaborate a truth into a hypothesis includes a period of uncertainty as alternatives are considered and evaluated. If this uncertainty and unfamiliarity is construed as either 'not being' the participant or too unpredictable, then the meaning of their feelings will tip the balance of the seesaw and elaboration will be construed as too risky. The consequence of focusing on feelings is a desire to reduce the level of anxiety by returning to their familiar and established beliefs and responses.

For example, if the actual self is construed as being shy and the situation requires public speaking then 'self as a public speaker' may well be construed as 'not me'. This evaluation will create anxiety and how it is construed is of vital importance in determining whether elaboration of beliefs will occur. If the anxiety is construed as further evidence that they cannot speak in public then this will give weight to the feelings end of the seesaw. It is likely that the participant would return to their established beliefs and

responses to reduce their anxiety by employing what is familiar to them. In contrast, if the anxiety was elaborated to mean the individual was about to do something unfamiliar, and not as an indication that they were lacking it is more likely that they will elaborate their beliefs.

It would be easy to assume that the Maintainers' life events were more demanding than the other groups but this does not seem to be the case. The Explorers have had to cope with being a child carer, living with an abusive father, being bullied at school, having teachers who ridiculed them, mental abuse within a marriage, traumatic suicide of a close friend as a child and sexual abuse as a child. Despite, or perhaps because of, these critical life events they have developed ways of elaborating their construing of self, which allows them to cope with unexpected events or demands.

### **Rational for using the first person**

Given my choice of a qualitative methodology, the interpretative style of analysis and the construing of the findings as my interpretation of the participants' construing, it seems appropriate to write in the first person, as I am implicitly involved in every stage of this study (May, 1999). The decision to write in the first person shows an awareness that the emerging theory is one possible interpretation of the data and as Seale (1999) suggests it reinstates the researcher as the author.

### **3.8 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity permeates all of the research process in different ways and in varying levels of subtlety, all of which need to be acknowledged by the researcher. The more obvious aspects of how the researcher can influence their study include being aware of their own perspective, in terms of identifying their own assumptions, beliefs and values and how these will shape the study (Elliot, Fischer and Rennie, 1999). However, there are more subtle influences that need to be addressed, for example, when creating a repertory grid with a participant, the researcher needs to be aware that the completed grid is the product of a specific interaction between them and the participant. It is unlikely that the same grid would have been constructed had

another researcher been working with the participant (Tindall, 2002). In a similar vein, it is important to recognise that the themes, which are constructed from the data, reflect the individual researcher's interests and a researcher with a different stance, would perhaps have focused on another aspect of the data, for example the participants' values (Seale, 2004).

In the actual writing up of the study the individual researcher's use of language, in terms of their choice of metaphors, use of culturally available discourses etc., create a unique version or interpretation of the study (Wilkinson, 1986). Another issue within the writing up stage are the researcher's biases and prejudices, which can subtly influence the direction and conclusions that are reached (Coolican, 2004). It is easy to forget the complexity of your own part in the research process, to be aware on a simplistic level that you are interpreting the data, but to be unaware of how involved you actually are in each stage of the process (Wilkinson, 1988). Everything from participating in the first semi-structured interviews, completing the repertory grids, scoring the self-characterisations, analysing the interviews and writing up the research report are filtered through your own construct system and implicitly colour the research process. Reflexivity is a resource to be used and the researcher's response to the data alerts them to what is unusual in it. Reflexivity is a necessary part of every research activity if you are to even begin to address how your own construing is shaping the process.

In an attempt to address these concerns I kept several note books where I reflected on what I had been reading, the emerging theory, the aspects I was finding of most interest and other relevant issues. My counselling supervisor provided a reflective space where we could review my progress each month and try to sustain my level of awareness in terms of how I was influencing the direction of the study.

## **Chapter four: The Explorers' self-theories facilitate change.**

### **4.0 The first master theme**

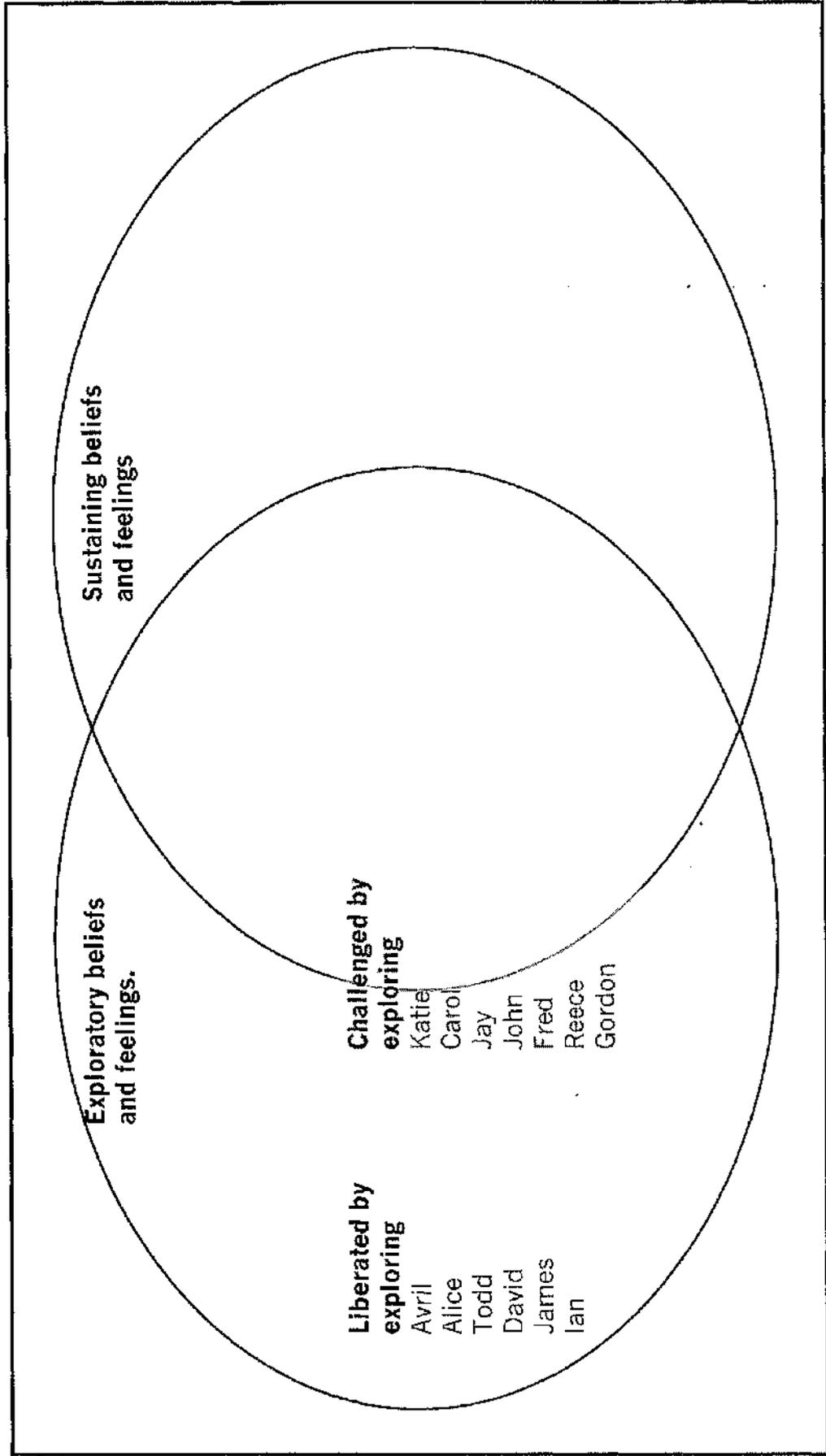
There were thirteen Explorers whose beliefs about self were construed as hypothesis to be tested and then elaborated as necessary. This belief constitutes the first major theme and reflects the Explorers' use of an interpretative discourse of self. The Explorers all characterise their self as growth-oriented and described only positive change on their repertory grids. Returning to the research questions, the Explorers' core construing of self, seen in the master theme, facilitates change. These participants are aware of elaborating their beliefs and feelings as seen in their use of the exploratory beliefs and responses and they elaborate when they experience a disorienting dilemma. These participants formed two sub-groups:

- Explorers who were described as liberated by exploring.
- Explorers who were described as challenged by exploring.

There were six participants who seemed to be liberated by increasingly employing exploratory beliefs and responses and who now welcomed disorienting dilemmas as opportunities to learn something new. They appeared to have elaborated many of their beliefs about self and to be aware of how to do this and the benefits that accompany elaboration.

The other seven Explorers form the 'challenged by exploring' sub category and all described elaborating their past beliefs about self from truths into hypothesis. For these participants their past truths had resulted in them experiencing negative feelings about their worth as they sought to gain validation for their ideal self and anxiety about how they would manage in the future. In the present all of the Explorers described positive feelings about their 'good enough' self and significantly less anxiety about how well they were able to perform as their self-worth was no longer so strongly linked to their performance. These participants are the closest to Kelly's scientists who employ the creativity cycle to elaborate their beliefs by conducting experiments.

Table 24 Locating the Explorers on the 'change dimension'.



#### **4.1 A review of the exploratory beliefs and responses**

Initially I thought that all of the themes I had constructed were responses but later it became clearer that many of them were actually beliefs. They also enabled the Explorers to elaborate their beliefs and so they were called exploratory beliefs and responses. A complete list is given in table twelve. Each one will be reviewed and examples will be provided to demonstrate that the constituent themes are grounded in the data.

##### **1. Believe they are 'good enough' as seen in their positive self-statements.**

The 'good enough' self is able to learn from mistakes and doesn't have to do things perfectly to be validated. Persevering with problem-solving is also valued. Gordon is a computer programmer and he expresses these beliefs.

**"you can fail and still demonstrate a lot of knowledge, it's like I said people have Ph.D.'s for things that haven't worked in computing because you just know there's an error in there somewhere but you've got the rest of it. It's finding the error, the diagnoses....It's like a doctor, if nobody ever got ill or died the doctor wouldn't know anything," (340/347).**

**Carol, "Em, don't see the connection between my self as a good, decent human being and the fact that I made a mistake. I don't see how any of these have anything to do with each other personally. You know, people screw up all the time um, I'm not ever going to live the rest of my life where I don't make mistakes. I am going to try to live the rest of my life trying to be a good, decent, kind, compassionate human being I can. Yeah, failure is nothing to do with self-worth," (193/202).**

Katie now values her self much more than in the past and has a 'good enough' self.

**"The putting others first was something about not valuing myself. And being tolerant of whatever, I would put up with anything for the sake of**

keeping a relationship and the neediness in me would put up with anything. And now I realise that I've got much more value than what I thought I had and so I am much less tolerant of other people" (83/88).

## **2. Anticipate they will need to elaborate their beliefs in the future.**

This is no longer dreaded as a potential threat to self-worth but construed as a part of the changing circumstances of their lives. Elaborating beliefs and changing is now construed as a challenge, which brings positive rewards in terms of more adaptive solutions and an increased repertoire of strategies each of which provide ways of influencing situations.

Katie

**"I think that I realise that change is inevitable, change is hard work whereas before I used to invest a lot in staying the same because it felt safe. Eh now I embrace change with quite an appetite I think and really eh, think there is something wrong if I'm not changing. And it's, it's something to be celebrated rather than it be avoided and I think that the whole thing hinges from the change of being an avoidant to the change of being a challenger, I think that's it for me," (186/195).**

Carol

**"I'm not a Buddhist, but the Buddhist philosophy that life is a series of challenges to be overcome. And the only time when you stop having challenges is when you die. So if you are looking at it that way then, you would never avoid a challenge. Then change is inevitable, is inevitable," (80/85).**

Iain

**"I sort of pride myself on my ability to deal with a problem and try to solve it for the best outcome and that just eh, boosts your own self confidence quietly. And sort of arms you for the next problem that life is going to throw at you. Eh and see it as a challenge and not as an obstacle," (112/117).**

### **3. Believe that effort is effective**

The exploratory beliefs and responses are interconnected and in the past many of the Explorers had not believed that applying effort would make a difference. This was based on the belief that you are born with certain abilities and cannot really change much and the prediction that trying harder will have little or no effect. In addition the belief that intelligent people learn or understand quickly and easily implies that having to apply effort is an indication that you are not intelligent (Dweck 2000). Within this study there was evidence that as these truths were elaborated effort was construed as making a difference. Many of the Explorers and Changers described their surprise at finding themselves able to understand, learn, pass exams or gain promotion. Jay describes himself as failing in school but he was later able to become a social worker as he elaborated the meaning of effort.

**“And I started to persevere and look at ways of achieving that goal. And um, I think for me to have my father sitting in my graduation ceremony crying because his eldest son had actually persevered and got through was really important. And eh, and ever since then I’ve managed to achieve quite a lot,” (161/166).**

In the next extract Tod is talking about his stammer and demonstrates how his continued effort to speak and to ask questions had benefited him in other areas as he can push himself to achieve.

**“When you are young with a disability and when it’s communication it takes until you’ve got confidence that you can speak do you get rid of a lot of the inhibitions that you had. The confidence has been built up in stages, during working. I would never have asked a question when I went on a course or anything but I forced myself to do it. Not to let how I sounded or how I felt, when I felt anxious about whether I would be able to speak or not, I forced myself to ask questions. And the more you ask questions, you get more confident in your ability to speak and it helps matters dramatically and then you also know that if you push**

**yourself to do things in other areas you'll probably end up being able to do them too," (132/147).**

Tod's strategy for dealing with his stammer involves speaking despite how he sounds. This is an indication that at the pivotal point he elaborated the meaning of his anxiety so that it did not determine his actions. Tod was aware of his anxiety but chose to limit its influence by not believing that only stammer free speech was of worth.

#### **4. Believe that the past and present are separate.**

The ability to separate the self in the past from the self in the present allows these participants to elaborate their beliefs, this reflects increased awareness and as self is largely an interpretation it is open to re-interpretation when necessary. Whereas the Maintainers refer to a past self when they experience a disorienting dilemma and determine their present ability based on their performance in the past, the Explorers, and to some extent the Changers, are able to separate the two. This separation affords the opportunity to assess each situation independently of previous experiences and allows the current 'self' a chance to respond to the demands of the situation with all the currently available knowledge and responses.

Unlike the Maintainers, who still construe their self as largely stable over time, the Explorers now expect to do things differently over their life-time and describe elaborating their beliefs and changing their behaviours. This reflects the Explorers' predominate use of an interpretative discourse of self. Avril had supported her husband while he studied and then when she was very ill, he left the family, he had strongly influenced her construing of herself.

**"In the past I was very eh, I was em, someone who was quite happy to to take second place in everything and didn't eh, think my opinion counted for anything. And since I've changed my life and changed my lifestyle I now find that I'm more comfortable within myself. And my opinions do count and so therefore, I've become a more relaxed and confident person," (7/14).**

Alice is a student who in the past used to push herself to gain top marks, but she is choosing something different now due to the change in her circumstances. She also construes herself as 'good enough' without having top marks which shows that her self-worth is not so linked to her performance and this allows her to develop other areas of her life.

**"Probably going to university was a big, because like you leave home, you live on your own and have to make your own friends and get to know people. So that was a big thing and I had to learn to be relaxed about stuff....(talks about exams) In the past I would have pushed myself so much harder, whereas now I know it's not the end of the world if I'm not top and as I have to balance out all the things I have to deal with. So eh, top marks are not the, everything," (7/11 and 21/26).**

#### **5. Believe that evaluating alternatives is helpful.**

It is interesting to note that the Maintainers rarely evaluate alternatives, as their focus is on evaluating their ideal and actual selves to determine their worth. In this study the amount of evaluation increases as participants elaborate their construing. In moving from referring to beliefs about self as unchanging truths there is room to re-interpret self and this involves evaluating alternatives. Increased evaluation is perhaps the most obvious indication that a participant is beginning to move away from employing a realist discourse of self to a more interpretative one. In the next extract Iain emphasises that he has found that there is a cost to not evaluating how his relationships are functioning and he calls this stressful baggage.

Iain

**"I think evaluation is crucial really, and you can't just muddle on through life, em, expecting things to happen or not. So I think it's necessary to keep a thread on what's happened in the recent past and how your interaction has been with people, and how work is going and also see to maybe improve on that. I'll change things if I feel that something hasn't gone well, and it's with one or other person, maybe to approach them and put it to test rather than to allow things to fester.**

**I'm certainly not a person, if there's a problem I'll identify it and thrash it out there and then so that I'm not carrying baggage around with me, because that baggage is, is warring, it's stressful. And by evaluating eh I think I can travel through life without extra stress em, holding no real enemies and trying to be looked upon as a descent spud by most folk. And if I've upset someone I try to clarify why and even if it's to agree to disagree em, so evaluation is important," (222/240).**

Tod has moved beyond his stammer and can now consider alternative points of view and debate their merits with others. There is evidence that Tod has elaborated his beliefs so that there are many answers as opposed to the 'right' answer that many of the Maintainers seek.

**"I actually think because I can see things in so many different ways, I can stand in different places and see what's going on. In other ways, I don't think there are necessarily right answers and I can get up and spout about different points of view and therefore, basically very few people know what my views are. I like to examine different perspective and see things from lots of positions and now I can talk about them too. But they take it too dam seriously and there's not that much that's worth taking seriously and since I've retired I've decided that even less is worth worrying about," (152/164).**

#### **6. Can identify their beliefs and feelings.**

The Explorers are aware of their beliefs and feelings and can describe a connection between what they are thinking and how they feel. This allows them to evaluate how functional their beliefs are and to assess if the outcome is successful in their terms. Avril had achieved a lot in school but once she was married her husband wanted to return to further education and so she supported the family. He was very negative about her abilities and jealous of any success she experienced, Avril eventually believed his assessment of her. When she was very ill he left the family and in the next extract she is

describing this as the catalyst that made identify and clarify her beliefs and evaluate their accuracy as well as how they made her feel.

**"I think somewhere, I think something does act as a catalyst, I can't honestly say what it is, but something happens in your life and you know that you can no longer go on the way you were, you can no longer try to think that everything is alright. You can't go on doing or being what you've been," (46/50).**

Alice is a nineteen-year old student who was talking about the difference between her and a friend who was also splitting up with boyfriends. Her friend would just end the relationship, whereas she is taking into account how this will affect her boyfriend. Alice can identify her beliefs and her feelings and then evaluates how she wants to respond. She is very specific about her intentions.

**"While I feel a lot of emotions I know I'm not going to act on them, I'll still feel sad and talk about it but I won't act to instantly end things because that would cause him even more hurt so I'll go slower to help him. I chose not to act on my feelings because em, I think it would be wrong and not fair on em, the guy that I'm splitting up with. Em, so I would recognise that that is how I'm feeling and that's what my emotions are. But em, like I suppose there are principles involved. I would choose to use my principles as the guide and not the emotions. I would chose to go with them and instead of just eh, let myself be led by whatever I'm feeling, because that might not be the right thing to do," (59/74).**

#### **7. Can identify what made a difference.**

The ability to identify what made a difference is another significant difference between the Maintainers and the Explorers and again shows an evaluative component. Identifying what made a difference, allows the Explorers to learn from situations and to consciously expand their repertoire of responses, this

begins to answer the third research question as Katie knows how she used to think and is aware that what she does now is different.

**“Sometimes I still get that sick feeling to the pit of my stomach but what happens is that only lasts for a short time but it actually puts me back to where I used to be, it’s the bit that connects with how I used to cope with things. And so once I realise what the connection is I go into eh the mode, the new mode that says, I can do this, I can get over this, I can meet this challenge whatever it is and I don’t need to feel sick about it. And I think it’s something about believing a bit more in myself and in my own abilities,” (46/56).**

John is a youth worker who had spinal surgery when he was younger which really limited his life for a few years and he is aware of how he changed his beliefs and that his new beliefs and responses can be used in other situations.

**“And I was constantly frustrated because of how the world was made up. I, I had this problem and the world didn’t seem to cater for it, I couldn’t go to school, I was tired all the time um. But, eventually I realised if I could change my expectations of myself. Change my, my goal and my orientation ah, then it wouldn’t be so frustrating. If I could set goals that I was able to meet, I would feel achieved and accomplished um, less frustrated, more enjoyment by changing myself. You can’t expect the world to change for you but you can change for the world,” (47/57).**

#### **4.2 The concept of ‘goodness’**

In this study the concept of goodness is important as each participant is attempting to construe a ‘good’ self who will provide a source of worth. There is a difference in how this is accomplished, with the Explorers creating a range of potential selves, each of which is a significant source of worth. In comparison the Maintainers have focused their attention on an ‘ideal’ self,

whose exceptionally high standards define the inherent 'goodness' and implicit worth of the ideal self. This one self would provide so much worth that no alternative source of worth is considered necessary.

A useful analogy to explain this difference is that of two different ways of investing in the stock market. It is as if the Maintainers have found a 'blue chip' company whose high standards of performance make them a great choice for investment. However the Maintainers have been so impressed with the potential of this company to provide a significant source of income that they invest all that they have in this company. There are no alternative companies in their portfolio and so their financial security is dependent on the performance of one company, which means that each day's trading is a stressful event.

In comparison, the Explorers' portfolio comprises a wide range of good companies, which means that they can absorb poor performance in one company, without predicting financial ruin. They anticipate buying and selling shares in response to fluctuations in share performance and do not have a limited view of what a good company involves. By investing in multiple companies, with the expectation of further trading, there is room to adapt their portfolio to changes in market forces. There are many sources of potential profit which means they experience less stress if the value of one company's shares 'drop', as the rest of the portfolio provides alternative sources of income. The risk is spread across the whole portfolio and not dependent on the performance of a single company.

There was also a difference in the participants' sense of agency, depending on whether they construed themselves as a 'market trader', who invested in multiple companies, or as a 'single investor' with a blue chip company. The 'market traders' are predicting that they can buy and sell shares depending on the state of the market on any given day. They can respond to developing situations, secure in the prediction that it is unlikely that all of their companies would perform badly on the same day. This anticipation that they can act and influence the overall content of their portfolio seems to result in them

experiencing less stress over individual performance as they construe themselves as able to adapt.

In sharp contrast the 'single investor', with only one blue chip company is always monitoring their company's performance. They really need this company to always perform well to maintain their financial security. There are no other companies in their portfolio and so there are no alternative sources of income and so there is enormous pressure for this company to perform well. In a similar way, the construing of the Explorers and the Maintainers is very different and these will be clarified further as the process of 'becoming an explorer, is explained.

#### **4.3 Becoming an Explorer facilitates change.**

The process of becoming an Explorer addresses all the research questions as it facilitates change, by increasing awareness of what facilitates and hinders elaborating self-theories and there is evidence of the Explorers actively employing this process when they encounter disorienting dilemmas.

The exploratory beliefs and responses were employed by all of the Explorers and reflected construing systems, which were able to grow and adapt to the demands of each participant's life. The Explorers could construe alternative beliefs, feelings and selves and these alternatives provided a sense of having options that kept their anxiety level lower and allowed them to take more risks. This orientation towards growth meant that solutions could be found out with established construing. There were four steps that the Explorers had in common. They all talked about living 'as if' a belief was true in the past but now they lived as if their beliefs were hypotheses that could be elaborated.

Secondly, they had all experienced disorienting dilemmas, that is, an occurrence that challenged their established beliefs and responses. Instead of responding as they usually did they considered the possibility that there may be another meaning, solution or response.

Thirdly, at the pivotal point, they had elaborated their feelings so that they were not construing increased anxiety as confirmation that their actual self might not be validated, or that they should avoid the situation. But rather they construed the increased anxiety as a prompt to explore their beliefs and consider alternatives.

The fourth and last step involved considering alternatives and experimenting and so elaborating their construing. An important aspect of this elaboration was a more favourable evaluation of the evidence of success in their lives. When this happened often enough it became the adopted style of construing and their beliefs were elaborated from 'truths' to hypotheses to be tested and elaborated as necessary. As they elaborated their beliefs about self and considered alternatives, their construing expanded so that the self who was lacking, developed into a self who was 'good enough'. This is a reinforcing process, which stimulates further elaboration and change. Two examples of this process will be given to demonstrate that it is grounded in the data and these also reflect the elaborating of a realist discourse of self to an interpretative one.

#### **4.4 How Fred became an Explorer**

Fred had grown up with very clear beliefs about his self which he construed as truths. He was also very determined to do things in his own way which he was sure was 'right', these are examples of tight core role construing. Fred described elaborating many of his beliefs over the years and a clear example of this process was given when he talked about changing city to go to university. This different environment and new friends really challenged his existing construing. There were many disorienting dilemmas which provided opportunities to consider elaborating his truths into hypothesis. Fred has extensively elaborated his construing and these extracts are connected to him elaborating his beliefs and feelings about how useful or not his degree would be in gaining a job.

**Stage one living 'as if' a belief is a hypothesis.**

Fred had been living 'as if' there were no options for him once he finished his degree and he felt trapped. His tight construing of what was possible career wise meant that his range of convenience was narrow with few alternatives and, not surprisingly, he felt frustrated at the perceived limitations. As a result he described strong negative emotions including being defensive.

**"But in the past I would say there were situations that I felt I was totally directionless and there were no options at all. And at that point in my life my, my feelings, my emotions were, some went really high and some went completely low em and that's when I had a heightened sense of emotion. And I guess you could say that I would be very touchy, very fragile em, but, but at that point I could also be very defensive and very angry," (126/135).**

#### **Stage two the disorienting dilemma**

The disorienting dilemma took the form of seeing how other people lived when he moved away from home to go to university. The contrast between what he believed about himself and what others considered to be possible challenged his established truth that there were few, if any, alternatives. This led to him loosening his tight construing about his degree and considering that it might be more useful than he had previously thought. With the awareness of possible alternatives, Fred's belief was elaborated into a hypothesis as he considered 'what if' there were options for him once he graduated.

**"Having seen other, em, friends. Having seen the way other people conducted themselves, coming out of my own social circle and own reference frames. Um, and seeing, I've always been very narrow-minded and you have to be open to alternatives to see alternatives to get out of the situation that you were in," (154/159).**

#### **Stage 3 the meaning of feelings at the pivotal point**

In the past Fred described feeling heightened emotions where he felt touchy, fragile and defensive. These resulted in him construing his negative feelings

and anxiety as a potential threat to his fragile self-worth and at the pivotal point, he would tend to avoid elaborating his beliefs. As Fred increasingly elaborated his beliefs he was also elaborating his feelings to the point where he was predicting he had nothing to lose by trying something different.

**“if you are going to change it can’t be any worse than what it was, so consequently it has to be a lot better,” (261/263).**

#### **Stage 4 elaborating hypothesis by asking what if something else is possible?**

The next extract is an example of the creativity circle where Fred elaborated the tight construct of himself as ‘narrow-minded’. This tight construct allowed him to predict what he could and could not achieve and perhaps provided a sense of certainty, but it also reduced his options. When he loosened this construct to consider that, he might be better served by construing himself as ‘open to alternatives’, it broadened his choices and also reduced his anxiety that he might not be able to find a job.

**“I’ve always been very narrow-minded and you have to be open to alternatives, to see alternatives, to get out of the situation you were (in),” (157/159).**

As a consequence of elaborating his beliefs and having a wider range of convenience, he no longer anticipates experiencing the powerful negative feelings of the past.

**“I now know who I am and I know myself reasonably well, enough to know that, I shouldn’t go back to those levels of negativity in the past,” (464/467).**

He is aware of ongoing change.

**“I’m moving on each, each day in a practical sort of term,” (454/455).**

**Being an Explorer**

There is evidence of Fred repeating this elaboration process or creativity circle often enough that he now has the expectation that there are always choices. This is a sign of his beliefs now being construed more as hypotheses to be tested and elaborated as necessary.

**"There's never, there's never a dead-end, there's always some, it might even be a hard alley to get out of but there's always something that you can do to improve where you are," (473/477).**

**"I thought and I recognise that em, trends and negativity has pulled me and so I try to be positive whenever I can. To purposely counteract any negativity from the past," (91/94).**

#### **4.5 How Avril became an Explorer**

##### **Stage one living 'as if' a belief is a hypothesis.**

Avril had supported her husband and family while he studied and then while she was seriously ill he decided to leave the family. Her husband had been very controlling and had construed Avril as not being his equal in any way. Avril had been living 'as if' her husband's construing of what a 'good wife' involved was true (a tight core role construct).

**"I bought into someone else's description or idea of me and what he wanted from me. And, possibly I was a willing victim in a sense. And over time, what he wanted from me was what he got," (204/208).**

##### **Stage two the disorienting dilemma**

For Avril, the discrepancy between how her husband construed her and what he considered her able to do was challenged when he left the family and she was both ill and the breadwinner. She was forced to question her established beliefs about herself and her husband! This is an example of her loosening her core role construct to consider alternatives.

**"I think something does act as a catalyst, something happens in your life and you know that you can no longer go on in the way you were,**

**you can no longer try to think that everything is alright. You can't go on being or doing what you've been," (46/51).**

Essentially, Avril elaborated her truth into a hypothesis by questioning 'what if' she might be able to do more than her husband thought.

### **Stage three the meaning of feelings at the pivotal point**

Avril is similar to Fred, in that she got to the point where she had nothing to lose by considering that what she believed might not be true. Consequently, instead of her increased anxiety being construed as meaning she was lacking, she elaborated the meaning of her feelings, so that she construed them as indicating she should review her beliefs. Avril has continued to do this and, although she is sometimes aware of negative feelings, she believes she can deal with them and they no longer affect her in the same way by so strongly influencing her actions.

**"No, I can still feel them but now I am able to deal with them. Eh, and they never make me feel uncomfortable or worn out for very long. They can still have a certain amount of frustration but eh the discomfort and the rest has gone," (190/194).**

### **Stage four elaborating hypothesis by asking what if something else is possible?**

Avril found herself in a situation where she could have believed that she had no choices and continued to believe her husband's description of her. Instead she chose to elaborate her construing of self and as she did, her feelings about her self also changed to become more positive. Avril describes the change in how she construes herself.

**"I just knew that em, that in the situation that I was in I couldn't stay there and I had to move forward. And so somehow, somewhere I had to change," (38/41).**

**“Since I’ve changed my life and changed my lifestyle, I now find that I’m more comfortable within myself. And my opinions do count and therefore I’ve become a more relaxed and confident person,” (10/14).**

### **Becoming an Explorer**

The change in how Avril construes her beliefs is apparent when she talks about the huge learning curve she has experienced when she had to develop her own opinions. Avril has moved away from the ‘truth’ of her husband’s construing of her as, not knowing her own mind or as having nothing to offer. She recognised that her tight construing was not sufficient for the situation she found herself in and she loosened it to consider alternatives, this is what Kelly calls the Creativity Circle.

Once her husband left their home she could have continued to believe that she had little to offer, which would have left her in a very vulnerable position. Instead she chose to question the validity of the belief and was able to elaborate her beliefs about self and now she construes herself as having opinions and knowing her own mind. This ‘new’ self has been able to respond to being a single parent in a way that has enhanced her quality of life. Once she had elaborated the construct she tightened it again but not so tightly that it became a ‘truth’, but so that it was a working hypothesis, ‘me as able to make up my own mind.’

**“I realised that I, that I didn’t always have to do as I was told. That I could actually think for myself. So it was a huge learning curve, I stopped being eh, somebody who couldn’t make up their mind and always had to wait for someone else’s opinion, to someone who made up her own mind,” (101/107).**

### **4.6 The benefits of elaborating ‘truths’ into ideas**

The Explorers were predominantly using exploratory responses and they were located close to the change as ‘a challenge to embrace’ end of the dimension. Their beliefs about self had been elaborated into ideas and this seemed to allow them to adapt, learn and grow more easily. There was

fluidity to their beliefs about self that allowed them to operate on what they currently construed, with an expectation that their beliefs would be elaborated as they encountered new information, people or events. There was an excitement present in their vocabularies and a real sense of their anticipating setbacks and problems, but construing them as opportunities to review their beliefs, gain a fuller understanding of both themselves and of others and perhaps extend their repertoire of solutions.

The level of awareness they describe is reminiscent of Schon's (1991) example of the jazz players who can improvise. Schon (1991) talks about the musicians' knowledge of music and their individual repertoires of musical phrases, which they can integrate into a piece of music. The Explorers are able to describe what made a difference in a situation and seemed to be aware of their available repertoire of responses. They enjoyed the challenge of both learning alternative responses and working out solutions from their existing strategies.

The vocabulary the Explorers used while constructing the grids contained words which were much more positive, even the words selected for the negative pole were more inclined to be upbeat like, intrigued and artistic. David in particular treated life as an ongoing experiment where each unfolding situation or event might require a slightly different approach. It is worth noting that he is a computer games programmer and a large part of his day is spent finding 'bugs' in the system. His response to 'bugs' and problems or something failing is to construe it as a challenge to conquer or figure out. It is not perceived as an inherent failure in his person. Indeed the ability to problem-solve at a 'high-level' is something he admires and this seems to be accompanied by positive feelings such as challenge and excitement.

These Explorers were comfortable with a fair degree of uncertainty and unpredictability. They did not need to be able to do new things instantly, they could continue to 'puzzle' over a problem for a significant period of time without feeling as if they were failing. Indeed they attributed perseverance at

problem solving as an indicator of their intelligence. The goals they chose involved learning more and putting themselves in the situation of 'not knowing' for a period of time. There was a space to be a beginner and time to learn new skills and to understand new material. They have the most fluid style of responding, they anticipate ongoing change and view this as exciting and challenging, they provide the strongest contrast to the Maintainers who use sustaining beliefs and responses.

The Explorers have a 'good enough' self and report a significant amount of change in their grids, they can identify their beliefs and feelings and describe an awareness of their own process of change. They have an understanding of their feelings and are able to control emotional information and to integrate it into their evaluations. They almost exclusively employ exploratory responses and beliefs. They are excited by the changes they have made and anticipate that they will continue to elaborate their beliefs throughout their lives. There is a sense of agency in their vocabulary as they talk about evaluating, rationalising, acting on their principles, putting effort into things, choosing, or the huge learning curves they have gone through. In addition, the Explorers have a healthy pride/satisfaction in gaining a better understanding of themselves, events, relationships and strategies.

#### **4.7 Creating a varied portfolio**

It seems that the Explorers are construing a wide range of convenience for their 'good enough' selves that provide multiple sources of worth. This allows one aspect of self to be elaborated and the uncertainty that is involved would be absorbed as there are still alternative sources of worth, which remain unchanged. For example, Alice described being a student, a friend, a girlfriend, a daughter, a sister, a worker with a part-time job, a Christian and a flatmate and in all of these she performed to a 'good enough' standard to gain worth. When she became a student who no longer lived at home she had to develop other aspects of herself to meet all the new demands. In order to do this she elaborated her construing of herself as a pupil who always gained excellent marks to include being a student, a part-time worker and a flat mate all to a 'good enough' standard. It seems that having beliefs

as hypotheses allows for an aspect of self to adapt to a new situation. Additionally, having multiple sources of worth from different aspects of self allows experimentation to occur while maintaining self-worth from other aspects of self.

## **Chapter five: The Maintainers' self-theories hinder change.**

### **5.0 The second master theme**

Four of the Maintainers took part in study one and only participated in a semi-structured interview and so they did not complete a self-characterisation inventory. The other twelve participants all completed one and characterised self as strongly validation-seeking. On the repertory grids there were many instances of self in the present being described as more negatively than in the past. For example, on a grid that was rating a construct between one and seven, the construct of introverted/extroverted might show that self in the past was extroverted at five whereas self in the present was rated at four. There was usually a corresponding change in the associated feeling so that, for example, they may have felt confident in the past at six, whereas they feel more anxious at three in the present. From the participants' characterisation of self as strongly validation-seeking on their inventories, evidence of negative changes on the grids and my analysis of their interviews where they were employing predominately sustaining beliefs and responses these participants were categorised as Maintainers. The Maintainers' self-theories hinder their ability to change.

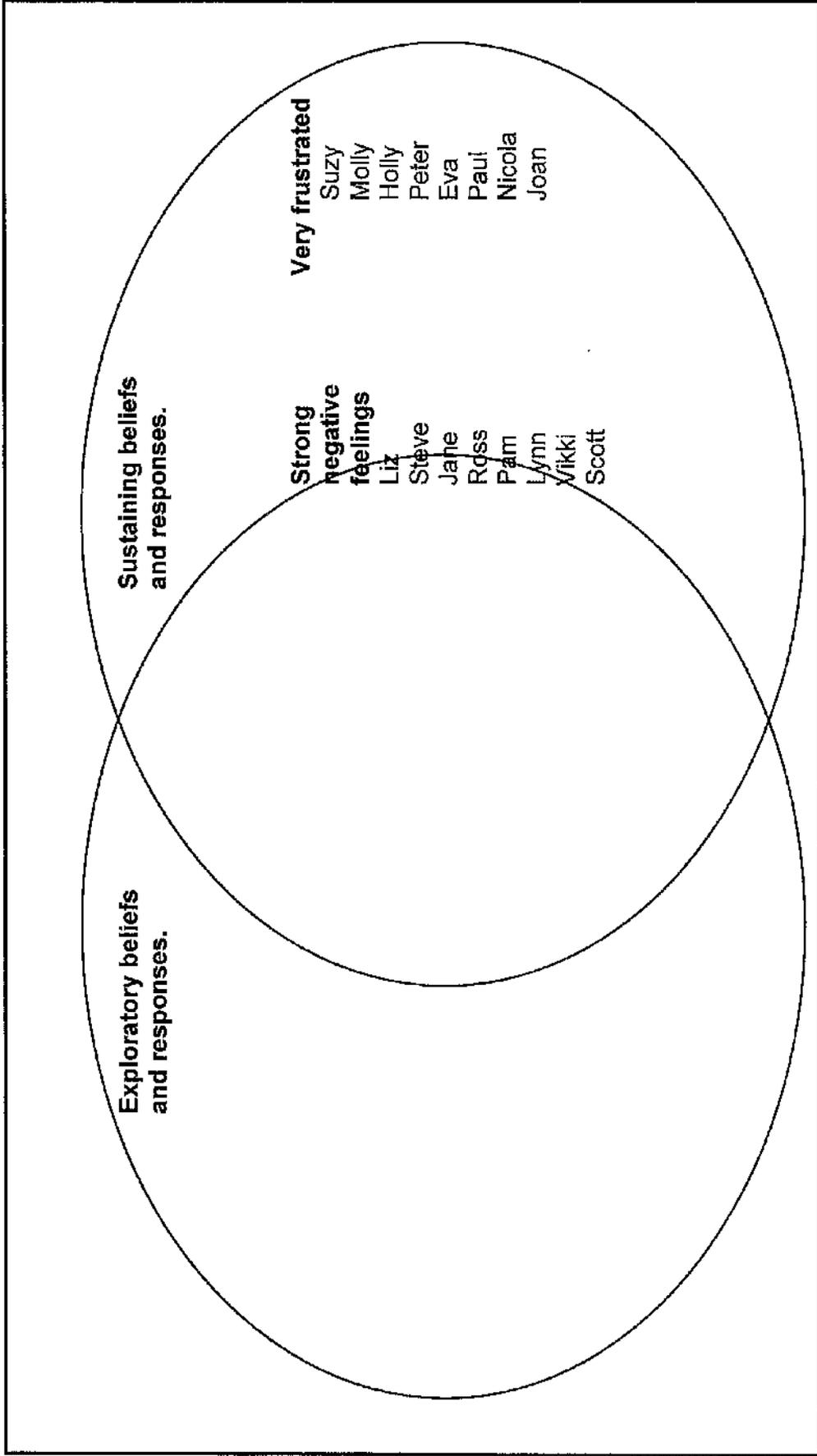
Table twenty-five shows the sixteen participants split into two sub categories of Maintainers who were predominately employing sustaining beliefs and feelings and experiencing either enormous frustration at being unable to reach their 'ideal' standards, expectations or selves, or more general strong negative feelings. Those participants, in the 'strong negative feelings' sub categories, do employ a few exploratory beliefs and responses but rarely evaluate the fundamental 'truth' of their beliefs and so their feelings continue to dominate their construing of self. The Maintainers' subscribe to a realist discourse of self where their beliefs are truths to be validated and one of these truths is a clearly defined ideal self. The goal is to have a 'good' self and what could be better than an ideal self who would provide a significant source of worth? Their effort goes into trying to validate this self despite previous experiences of not being able to attain the necessary high standards. While each Maintainers' ideal self would believe, feel or act

differently, there is an important similarity in how they evaluate self. The Maintainers compare their actual and ideal selves and mostly find that they are lacking when evaluated against their ideal standards. This discrepancy affects how they feel and increases anxiety about their worth, as the only way to gain validation is to reach their ideal standards.

On their repertory grids the Maintainers identified changes in their beliefs but in the interviews the Maintainers tended to discount the changes because they did not meet their ideal standard of performance. This is what Higgins (1987) calls Self-discrepancy theory. In the interviews all the participants described successful aspects of their lives but not everyone gave these achievements the same meaning. A big question is why people do not use the positive evidence of success in their lives? Self-discrepancy theory emphasises a self-evaluation process where how the individual construes their 'actual self' is compared to hypothetical notions of what their 'ideal self' would be like. For example, Vikki is perceived as a confident and competent teacher by her peers but she construes this role as being 'projected' and therefore implicitly not really her. She does not value her success as a teacher because it does not match her construing of the 'ideal teacher' who would be confident. This evaluation of ideal and actual selves always emphasises her lack of confidence and leaves her feeling anxious about her actual self. All of the Maintainers evaluated their actual and ideal selves and then discounted their success because it did not meet their ideal standard. It is not that they do not have success in their lives but rather that they do not value it.

Gaining validation with the Maintainers' combination of beliefs is incredibly difficult. These participants were intelligent people whose critical life experiences (with one exception) had not been as demanding or traumatic as either the Changers or the Explorers. However, their individual beliefs and the interaction between their beliefs combine to reinforce each other and make gaining validation almost impossible. It is doubtful if even an Explorer could gain validation within the restrictions of this kind of belief system.

Table 25 The Maintainers located on the 'change dimension'



### **5.1 The consequences of investing in a 'single company'.**

The Maintainers have complex construing systems where they try to sustain balance or homeostasis. The Maintainers' beliefs are truths which they seek to validate and in order to do so they frequently refer to a realist discourse of self. It was by identifying their sustaining beliefs and responses that it was possible to more fully understand how complex and interconnected their construct systems were. Their individual beliefs reinforce each other so that considering elaborating one belief is very difficult because it is connected to other beliefs. This increases their anxiety and tends to result in the Maintainers returning to established ways of thinking and responding in order to reduce their immediate anxiety and uncertainty.

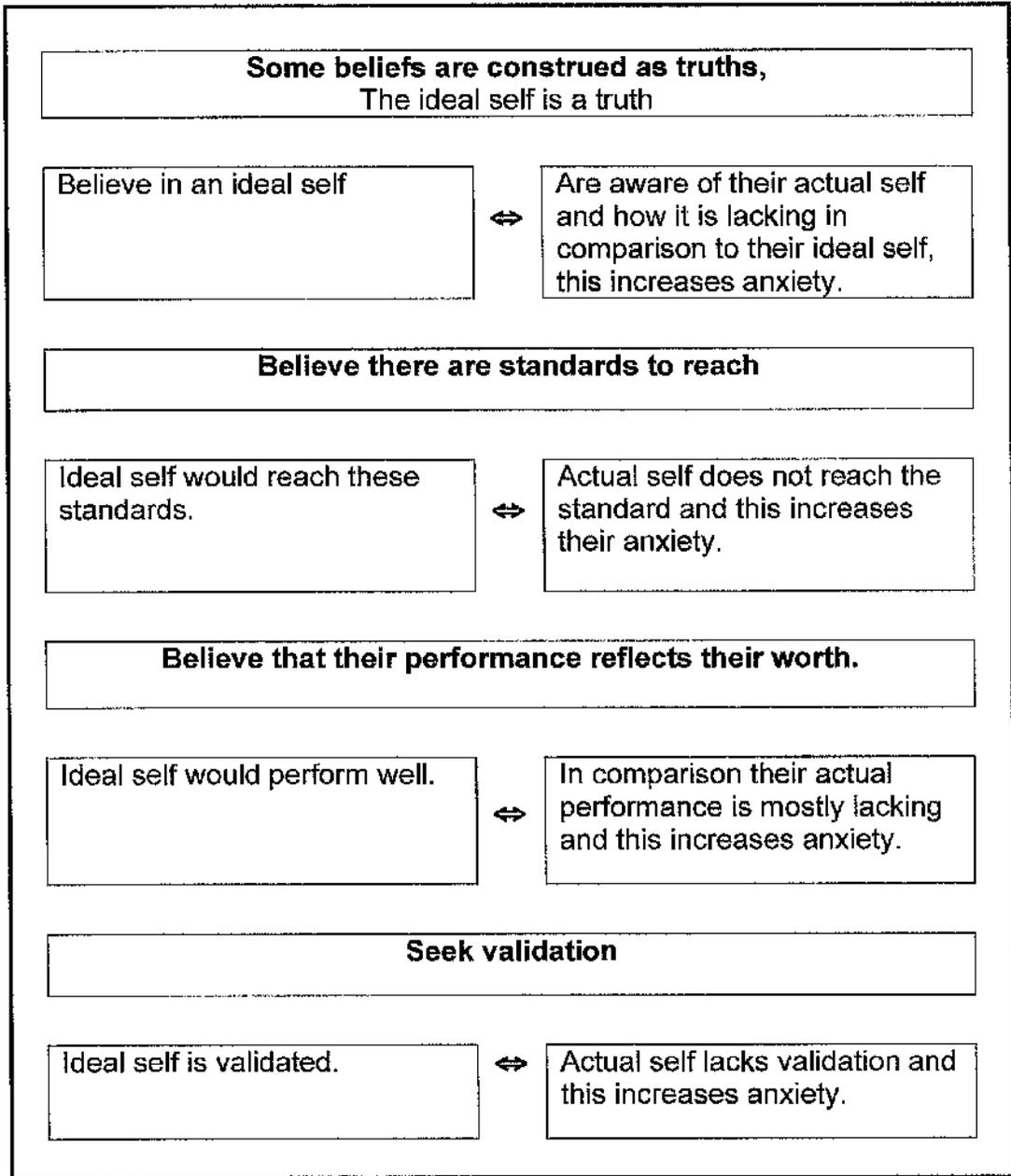
In personal construct terms awareness that current construing is not sufficient to predict the outcome of events is defined as anxiety and in this study it is linked to a lack of viable alternatives. If the analogy of creating an investment portfolio is used to describe the Maintainers' construing then the deliberate selection of an ideal self becomes clearer. The Maintainers are 'single investors' and their portfolio of shares is based on their identification of a single 'blue chip' company, which seems to epitomise the characteristics and high standards of a distinguished company. The single investor anticipates that their careful selection of this blue chip company will provide them with a significant source of income. They decide to invest exclusively in this company.

While this decision offers the benefit of a clearly defined portfolio there is also enormous pressure on this company to perform well as there are no alternative companies to provide income when their performance fluctuates or falls. Throughout the Maintainers' interviews there are examples of them 'investing' in an ideal self and largely excluding any alternatives. The lack of alternatives has consequences as their actual self has to always perform well to sustain their self-worth.

The tight core role construing of self was apparent in all of the Maintainer's interviews and formed the initial themes. These were developed with each

additional interview and were eventually defined as sustaining beliefs and responses. The major theme, which connected all the constituent themes, was the construing of their beliefs about self as truths to be validated. The following table is an attempt to demonstrate how these beliefs reinforce each other and also create anxiety. The Maintainers' employ a realist discourse is clearly seen in their references to truths about self, their defined standards and the belief that their performance reflects their worth.

**Table 26: How beliefs connect to increase anxiety levels.**



Not surprisingly the consequences of the Maintainers' beliefs on their actual self is to highlight, in dramatic terms, their lack of worth. The increase in anxiety, which each belief generates, results in the many negative self-statements that appear in almost all of the interviews. There were three exceptions: a business consultant (Steve) who was mostly able to validate himself as 'top dog' with his clients. A teacher called Lynn who was wealthy and gained validation in some social settings where her belief that wealthy people were those who influence was shared; and Suzy who occasionally was able to clean her home to the immaculate standard of her ideal self. In comparison to the Explorers, the Maintainers made twice as many negative self-statements and half the positive self-statements.

## **5.2 A review of the sustaining beliefs and responses**

Each of the sustaining beliefs and responses will be reviewed and extracts from the interviews will be provided to demonstrate that they are grounded in the data. Inherent in each of these beliefs and responses is an implicit truth or standard, which the Maintainers seek to validate and these reflect their realist discourse of self.

### **1. Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self.**

Suzy's 'ideal' self would have her home immaculate as this would reflect her worth. As Suzy's family do not share her belief this is an ongoing source of conflict in her life as she struggles to validate her belief and her self. Her quest for an immaculate home, which represents her ideal self, creates a constant struggle to perform well and so gain validation.

**"I know I like things just so! And I wish I could accept like that if they're not just so that it wouldn't bother me, but no. And if anyone finds the answer they have to tell me because I would like to know," (187/190).**

She is asked to explain what "just so" means to her and in doing so gives an example of a self who cannot change (tight core role construct). For many of the Maintainers there seemed to be a virtue in aspiring to their high

standards and in some ways a sense that an ideal self may actually be a superior self.

**"Well to me it kind of means that, that's me and that's how I am,"** (199/200).

**"To me it's, it's how I see myself. So to be sort of disorganised and just sort of to have things in a state is just not how I see things or how I want folk to see me,"** (206/209).

Peter's ideal self would have had a vision for his life and his successes would then have had worth. Peter construed his lack of a vision as meaning that any success he has achieved is of less worth, as it was not planned.

**"But I think em, vision is obviously a key thing. It's an indication of, that, you know, what you're doing with your life and that you know where you are going,"** (34/37).

Pam's ideal self would believe she was as good as other people.

**"My father was a person in my life that I loved very much but he just always let me down and I didn't, I didn't feel that I had somebody there that was helping me to feel good about myself. And I grew up with that, with that, it wasn't neglect but I had everything I needed materialistically. But I just, I never felt that I was as good as other people somehow,"** (60/66).

## **2. Believe there are standards to attain.**

A core role construct of the Maintainers is worth by performance and their effort goes into performing as they predict this will result in feelings of self-worth. In this extract Suzy is talking about the need to have her home immaculate as people will assess both her home and indirectly her. Linked to the belief about self is the connection between self-worth and

performance. All of the Maintainers strive to perform well to gain worth. There is an implicit assumption that having high standards makes you a 'good person'. The unquestioned truth of these standards is never reviewed and neither is the assumption that they are shared by others.

**"This is all my responsibility now and folk can assess it, and too. I think when you've got standards and things like that and folk, you don't want to sort of let other folk down. And you've set yourself high standards and you feel that you've really got to hang onto them,"**  
(270/275).

Joan is very aware of her inadequacies and ideally wants to do the right thing. She analyses her life a lot in an attempt to determine if her standards have been met and implicitly her self validated. There is the assumption that there are 'right' ways to act (tight core role construct).

**"I tend to analyse myself and reflect and so I do tend to worry I've not done the right thing. And I'm very conscious I suppose of my (pause) inadequacies and so I can definitely analyse so much that it's healthy,"**  
(197/201).

Liz believes her life should be perfect and this idealised standard influences everything she does (tight core role construct). There is an underlying assumption that she will be validated when this is achieved, however the reality seems to be a life of continuous effort to attain perfection. It is easy to imagine this participant peddling furiously on her exercise bike and being frustrated that she has not moved any closer to her goal of validation. Her quest for a perfect life creates enormous dissatisfaction with her self and despite evidence to the contrary, she continues to maintain the belief that the standards can be consistently met.

**"I was always very much a perfectionist always trying to sort things out in my own way to get my life perfect because I always felt it wasn't,"**  
(14/16).

**"But I still feel that I've got so much to do in the house, I've got to do much to do in the house. I've got to get this done and I've got to get that done. I've got to get the house kind of perfect," (207/211).**

### **3. Seek validation**

Molly was identified at school as a bright pupil and this gave her confidence and validated her worth. She had a core role construct of herself as, 'bright and intelligent with a great future.' However, when she went to university, where she had wanted to meet a wider range of people, she heard confident English accents and attributed increased intelligence to these students. During the four years of her course she continued to believe that their confident speech reflected an equal amount of intelligence. It was not until she graduated that she realised that she had the same level of degree as the 'Yahs.' Sadly her beliefs about looking and sounding confident equalling increased intelligence resulted in her becoming quieter in lectures and tutorials. In changing her own behaviour, by no longer contributing in class, she reinforced a cycle where her own abilities were not recognised and her bright self was not validated.

**"And I was still quite confident all throughout school and then I went to university and I went to a university in a Scottish city. And I went from being like one of the top people at my school, to just being like, one of many, in like top people at university. And there was lots so called 'Yahs' from em, London who were super confident and super em, like em, over the top and a bit in your face. And em, I kind of felt looked down upon, like I was like a Scottish plebe or something. And they, em, then I became more reserved and I didn't feel like, from being at school and from being really bright to just being kind of one of the lowest at university. I didn't feel that my opinions were all that worthy," (20/33).**

Many of the Maintainers' believed that confident behaviours and articulate speech meant that the person was equally intelligent. In a similar vein, possessions could be construed as reflecting worth in some way. Pam had believed she was equal to most people when she was at primary school, as

she had similar possessions to the children in her village, but when she went to grammar school and met children from wealthier backgrounds it threw her beliefs about herself into chaos. Pam equated the quality of her possessions with the worth of the person (tight core role construing where she makes unvarying predictions) and in this new environment she believed that her possessions, and implicitly her self, were lacking.

**“When I went to grammar school that was a big change as well, because I met lots of young girls like myself, but they were from different backgrounds and they had a lot more than me. They had nicer houses and just, it was like going up a social class really and it kind of sucked me in and I just realised then that what I thought was ok, wasn’t ok, there was a lot more out there that was much better than I had. And so I started to feel that everyone around me had better things than me. And it just gave me this low self-esteem. I just, I didn’t really feel very good about myself,” (66/79).**

Most of the Maintainers seek validation of their worth in comparison to other people, which makes them vulnerable when they enter new situations or relationships, as their worth is dependent on the next comparison. This fluctuating validation increases their anxiety about their worth. In the next extract Pam is describing what would need to happen for her to have higher self-esteem. While she is able to describe what would need to change for her to evaluate herself more favourably, her other beliefs keep this information in the conceptual category. It is worth noting that feeling confident is a part of the solution for Pam. Other Maintainers were also waiting to feel confident as a sign of meeting their ideal standards.

**“I think just em, a real sense of my own worth compared to other people. That I don’t see other people as better than me, but em, I feel equal and confident about myself and my own abilities and not always looking at other people and thinking that they are better or that they do things better than me,” (250/255).**

**4. Respond with loose construing/vagueness.**

The Maintainers' beliefs seem to make anticipating what they are able to achieve difficult to predict. Most are aware of the gap between their ideal self and their actual selves and this gap or discrepancy increases their anxiety about their ability to perform well, to reach their standards and so gain validation. It is not surprising that when they have to anticipate either, how they will perform in the future or what they will do in the future, they employ loose construing or become really vague. It is almost as if they expect the knowledge of what to do to be provided from some external source.

Nicola

**"I, I think, this goes back to the underestimating yourself, you know putting yourself down. I, I think oh I couldn't do that and I couldn't do this, and, and, em, and I keep thinking well I'm not qualified enough to do this and you know. I couldn't do that because I don't you know, I don't have whatever is required. But by the same token I think well there's something out there that I'm good for, you know," (388/392) and, "But I really believe that there is something out there for me and that it will jump up and grab me at the right time," (423/425).**

What the Maintainers need is often construed as external to them with other people or organisations needing to change or provide them with something. As a result they have little influence or control of events. Scott would like to have the 'right' retirement plan and his tight construing seems to reduce his options to either the right or wrong plan. With a limited range of convenience there are few choices and the pressure is there to find the 'ideal' one.

**"You know, where I don't feel that I have the, well it is in my power as to what I'm going to do, but I want to do the right thing and I don't know what the right thing is yet," (89/92).**

Holly is a wife and mother and she is talking about returning to her career in the future. However she expects this change to happen without any planning or her part.

**"I'm sure that later on there will be a career for me, I don't know what that will be but it will jump out and show me and it will fit in with the children. I don't know that I'd want a management job anymore even if I was able to do it, but there is something out (there) for me and I'm sure it will come out at the right time," (221/226).**

This loose construing seems to serve the function of reducing the need to plan or take action which may well reduce anxiety in the short-term. However there seem to be costs for the participants who employ this response as they are unable to predict or influence when the need will be met and this can have it's own anxiety. The Maintainers don't seem to consider that they are responsible for creating alternatives or for taking action.

#### **5. Describe strong negative feelings**

For many of the participants the discrepancy between their ideal and actual selves creates strong negative feelings, as does the awareness of being lacking in some way, not achieving their standards and not being able to predict when they will be validated. Almost all of the Maintainers described strong negative feelings.

Paul lives with the anxiety that people who become close to him may discover and confirm that his self is lacking.

**"I'm not sure if it's a fear of, an unrealistic fear of people thinking I'm stupid or silly. Probably it's insecure about being myself and nervous about being myself and thinking there is something wrong with being that," (74/78).**

Molly had anticipated that a brilliant career would be waiting for her just like the inevitable progression from primary school to secondary school and then to university. She is resentful because this has not happened and, as she did not have to plan the other stages, she had not anticipated having to plan her career.

**“But now being back here is making me stressed and resentful and just I feel like I’m back to square one in a way. Like what I was like before I went away to university and I would have hoped to have had progressed or moved on,” (275/279).**

Liz is also unable to predict what she will do next and this lack of alternatives seems to have triggered powerful emotions. There was evidence in the Maintainers’ transcripts that a lack of alternatives increased negative feelings. In contrast, as participants elaborated their construing by creating alternatives they described more positive feelings.

**“I still have negative feelings I still find I go through hard times, in fact I had a bad day on Sunday and I actually cried for five hours you know. I just cried for five hours because I felt, I’ve just retired and I don’t know why, I just felt where is my life going now?” (168/173).**

#### **6. Some beliefs are construed as ‘truth’.**

The unquestioned ‘truth’ status of many core role constructs seems to compound their influence on each other. Steve defines himself as liking to be ‘Top Dog’ in every situation and in this way his performance indicates his worth (tight core role construing). While Steve continues to construe his self as of worth only when these conditions are met, then he is reinforcing this as truth.

**“I have a very high need for power and influence, that’s what gives me my buzz,” (175/176).**

Paul’s doubts about his worth are actually construed as truth (tight core role construing) and he lives in fear of anyone confirming them and this has significant implications and consequences for his quality of life.

**“It’s doubts about myself em, I’m afraid that if I don’t hide these doubts then other people are going to see those doubts. And they will, and**

**because I think my doubts are reality, I'm scared of people seeing that and affirming it. They'll affirm my doubts," (142/146).**

Many of the Maintainers held similar beliefs about the meaning of what they called 'confident behaviours and articulate speech'. These were construed as indicators of intelligence. Additionally, if you were intelligent you were expected to learn everything easily and to complete tasks to a very high standard. Two of the Maintainers set the standard at 110%.

For a few of the Maintainers, their ideal standards were incredibly high and seemed to indicate that their ideal selves were definitely 'good' selves, who would be significant sources of worth once the standards were reached and this made persevering worthwhile. The expectation that an intelligent person could understand any kind of theory effortlessly left them believing they had failed to reach the standard. Many of the Maintainers described themselves as 'practical' people and they devalued the importance of theory as of little use.

Lynn describes herself as a practical person and when she went on a course about Power Point Presentations she devalued all the information about using the programme and focused on the practical skills required to connect the laptop to the overhead projection equipment. She was very disparaging of the lack of practical information and her belief, that theory is of little use, is evident.

**"And I felt that was a complete waste of time. Because I knew that the problem was with, eh, of doing a presentation with Power Point was not making you pretty pictures and your words, it was getting it from the computer onto the wall. That's the tough bit. I know this. So I asked the lecturers, "where is your overhead projector?" And they said, "we don't have one". I said, "but surely that's the tough bit getting it connected." No, no you just plug it in and it goes. And I grinned at them as if to say have you ever been to a lecture? And I actually came**

to the conclusion that no one in that room had ever made a presentation, on a wall, with Power Point. I am positive of it," (645/662).

#### **7. Believe that performance indicates their worth.**

Pam's performance as a mother will indicate her worth (tight core role construing) but this evaluation is in the future, as she has to wait until some undefined point in the future, when her children are grown up. She cannot control how they will turn out and so there is enormous uncertainty about her worth.

**"One area of my life where I do feel a failure is with my children. I see failure if my children don't, not necessarily perform, although that is important to me. But, even how they behave, how they start to live their lives. If it's not how I want it to be then I can see that as a failure as a mother, and that I've done something wrong and I take it very personally. And I feel that I've failed in that sense," (186/194).**

Paul recognises how his beliefs would need to be elaborated so that he no longer links his performance to his worth but, as this is what he 'naturally' does, it is construed as being his 'real self' and therefore truth. While Paul conceptually knows what would make a difference it does not influence his actions. In addition, awareness of the discrepancy between his 'ideal' and 'real' self increases his uncertainty about gaining validation and he becomes acutely aware of the need to reduce the anxiety. As a consequence he tends to act to reduce his uncertainty in the short-term.

**"Because yeah, then you, but then I naturally measure my worth against what I am doing. So yeah, if I could just do things for the joy of doing it, then I would be monitoring my performance less and em then it doesn't really matter how much you monitor how well you are doing something if you are enjoying it. You would probably be feel better about yourself, more worthy, and it wouldn't be a performance thing," (50/58).**

(Several of the Maintainers had conceptual information, that they described in their interviews, but which they did not act on and a few of the Maintainers recognised this during the interviews.) Nicola also believes that her performance indicates her worth and she seeks more than perfection! Her ideal self would provide a significant source of worth. In the interview Nicola described some of the difficulties associated with doing things to such a high standard and taking more time than other people to complete tasks/activities was the main problem. In order to explain why she could not either, be quicker or do things to a lower standard, Nicola describes a 'real' self who, by implication, was born a perfectionist.

**"I'm too much of a perfectionist and I take too long. I wish I could speed up. My mum is brilliant at doing things quickly, I wish I could make things like that. I want things done properly, I've always been like that and my Dad's like that. If you haven't done it to 110% it's not worth doing at all, you know, but I wish I could. There are times when that's not the right thing you have to just be quicker. I know that, but I just can't do anything about it because you know, I'm just not quick enough. It's just me. I'm just not quick," (595/606).**

How all these beliefs combine and reinforce each other is more clearly seen when one of the participants is profiled.

### **5.3 Paul's self-theories hinder his ability to change**

Paul was twenty-one years old when he completed the repertory grid and interview. He is married and presently studying at a Scottish university. Paul explained the meaning of the beliefs and feelings he had written on his grids and this allowed his core construing of self to be identified. In the analysis of his grid-interview I was able to identify the sustaining beliefs and responses he employed and how they were reinforcing his construing was explored. The first research question was to identify self-theories which facilitate or hinder the ability to change and from this profile it is apparent that Paul's self-theories hinder his ability to change.

Paul's beliefs about self are truths to be validated and his 'ideal' self would be worthy of validation. He is living 'as if' he is silly and stupid (tight core role construing). Paul describes **"compulsively self-monitoring"** his feelings. He uses his fluctuating feelings to assess his performance and worth. His most dominant fear is of feeling 'not worthy'. For Paul the assessment of his worth is based not on his actions or the assessment of others, but on his feelings, which seem to also be construed as 'truth' and as 'entities' in their own right.

**"I think I still, yeah even unconsciously, monitor what I'm feeling. How comfortable I am, it's a kind of critical thing as well seeing, which probably ties in with the 'not worthy'. And yet the 'not worthy' was the feeling that myself was not worthy enough to eh, to make an effort or to change things," (10/16).**

Paul provides a very clear example of how the Maintainers strongly connect their performance and their worth.

**"To change would be to not take myself so seriously, em and to do things, to live life well, anything but, just to do things for the joy of doing them rather than for finding some sort of fulfilment in doing it. Because yeah, then you, but then I naturally measure my worth against what I'm doing. So yeah, if I could just do things for the joy of doing it, then I would be monitoring my performance less and em. Then it doesn't really matter how much you monitor how well you are doing something if you are enjoying it. You would probably feel better about yourself, more worthy, and it wouldn't be a performance thing," (46/58).**

I asked him what makes things so serious when there is a desire to enjoy life? Paul responds with,

**"I'm not sure if it's a fear of, an unrealistic fear of people thinking I'm stupid or silly. Probably it's insecure about being myself and nervous about being myself and thinking there is something wrong with being**

**that. And not worthy thinking, thinking that, that won't be enough and so I've really put on some sort of, yeah. Cause serious, you feel like you've got a bit more control over how others perceive you. So em, it probably just comes from being nervous about who I really am because I'm not confident about that, I've learnt to despise that," (74/86).**

In the above extract Paul is describing both his fear of being found silly and stupid and what he calls his 'not worthy thinking'. The 'not worthy thinking' results in Paul believing his 'real' self is lacking and 'not worthy' and so he employs serious responses, which function to provide the illusion that he can control or influence how others perceive him. It is in Paul's closest relationships that he is most fearful that his real, silly and stupid self may be validated.

**"It probably only comes out in my closest relationships, say with my wife. And I think in those moments I really believe that I'm not worthy and that I do need to self-monitor and watch myself and kind of hide what I'm doing and so em, yeah. I can't believe that I could be something else which makes, which makes, I can't believe that I could be something else in those moments," (124/131).**

When Paul evaluates his actual self as 'not worthy' there is awareness that this invalidates his core role construing of an ideal worthy self and increases the possibility that his fear may be confirmed. The disorienting dilemma for Paul is how to have the close relationships that he desires, which could offer the validation he seeks but, which also carry a huge risk that perhaps his fears about self are justified.

**"It's doubts about myself, em. I'm afraid that if I don't hide these doubts then other people are going to see those doubts and they will. And because I think my doubts are reality I'm scared of people seeing that and affirming it. They'll affirm my doubts," (142/146).**

Not surprisingly these beliefs create huge anxiety about being rejected and so, at the pivotal point, he tends to act to reduce this anxiety by withdrawing further and so reinforces the cycle. When he is asked about why he self-monitors Paul says,

**"I think I've done it for so long and em, yeah even when I am confident, say when I'm around certain people who help me to feel more confident or even if I can feel that, that's more like me being myself. And, and em I see that I don't need to be em, insecure in my self. I always have this nagging doubt at the back of my mind that it's just an act and it's just me feeding off other people's confidence and affirmation. If I was by myself all the time then I would be feeling these negative things and so this is the true self because that's when I'm with myself," (169/179).**

There is evidence here of self-discrepancy theory where Paul discounts the evidence that he is confident and worthy by assessing it as 'an act' and therefore not real! Many of the Maintainers employ self-discrepancy theory to discredit the positive evidence of their worth. It is not that the Maintainers have less evidence of their worth than the Explorers, but they do not consider it to be valuable in comparison to their ideal standard. Their realist discourse offers the tantalising possibility of reaching their ideal standards.

The disorienting dilemma highlights the discrepancy between Paul's ideal and actual selves which increases his level of anxiety. As a result his goal becomes reducing anxiety which leads him to employ his established sustaining beliefs and responses. These are familiar and predictable and reduce his immediate anxiety, however, they also reinforce this cycle of thinking and responding. I asked Paul if he had any idea what would allow him to believe that the confident self was real? And Paul replied,

**"It is a circle that, if I feel I'm not a really confident person and I'm not really secure then it gives me ah, a reason to, em. A reason to keep my doubts and to keep these beliefs about myself," (186/190).**

Another of the sustaining beliefs is to employ loose construing and this emerges at the end of the interview where Paul talks in vague terms about wanting to change.

**“I’m also believing that I’m in a process of growing and I’m learning. I’m not really clear about it, but I’m believing and wanting to change in the next few years and so yeah. I probably am kind of hyper aware of the things that need to change and I want to change,”** (245/250).

In many of the Maintainers' transcripts there are references to a desire for change which are incredibly vague, it would be impossible to plan any actual elaboration of beliefs based on these kinds of statements. The second research question was to investigate if and when self-theories were elaborated and how this was accomplished, but Paul and the other Maintainers provide evidence of how not to elaborate beliefs. There is a lack of agency in the Maintainers' words and this is evident when these words and statements are compared to the vocabulary of the Explorers who are learning, growing, planning, evaluating, realising, aware of, expecting difficulties etc. The Maintainers' loose construing seems to serve the function of reducing the need to identify and evaluate their beliefs, and so keeps their immediate anxiety and threat levels lower.

#### **5.4 Alternatives are required for elaboration to occur**

The Maintainers' tight construing of their ideal selves leads to them having narrow ranges of convenience where there are few viable alternatives. If the Maintainers planned to elaborate their beliefs this would also increase anxiety levels as it would involve increased awareness of the gap between their ideal and actual selves. So the statement, **“I’m believing and wanting to change,”** leaves things sufficiently vague that Paul can believe he is going to change without the specifics that would make him more anxious. It is worth noting that the level of evaluation in the Maintainers' interviews is very low.

Evaluation only begins to increase as the possibility of there being alternative beliefs is considered and develops across the change dimension. By the time a participant is construing their beliefs as hypotheses, evaluation is a key part of their elaboration process. The Explorers are predicting that alternatives exist and this seems to make elaboration possible.

### **5.5 The quest for an ideal self hinders the ability to change**

The quest for an ideal self hinders the ability to change and consists of four stages, which answer the research questions from the standpoint of a Maintainer. Living 'as if' a belief was true is the first stage but, whereas the Explorers and Changers had moved onto question this belief, the Maintainers continued to construe many of their beliefs about self as 'truth' (tight core role construing). They also believed in an ideal self and while each Maintainer described their ideal self, differently there were some features in common. These include the belief that incredibly high or even more than perfect performances or standards are attainable, that their performance reflected their worth, that they were lacking in comparison to their ideal selves and that attaining their ideal standards would make them feel better about themselves.

The second stage occurs when they experience a disorienting dilemma that highlights the discrepancy between their ideal and current or actual selves. The term, actual self refers to their construing of self at the time of the interview, and not to some essential stable self. The disorienting dilemmas take many forms, but include fear that they will not reach their ideal standard and that the gap between their ideal and actual performance will be obvious, not only to them, but to others, which again indicates that some validation of self is external.

The third stage involves the pivotal point where the meaning of their feelings, especially their level of anxiety, can be construed as indicating that their beliefs need to be reviewed or as reflecting that they may not be able to meet the demands of the situation to their standards. Part of the anxiety raising process is when self-discrepancy theory is employed and evidence of

success is evaluated against their ideal and found to be inadequate. It is not that the Maintainers are unsuccessful in their lives, but that they do not value their success when they compare it to their ideal. Disorienting dilemmas increase their anxiety about their potential lack of worth and at the pivotal point where they could elaborate their beliefs, they focus on the need to reduce their anxiety and threat levels.

The fourth stage is a return to established beliefs and responses. As the Maintainers are already aware of their inability to attain their ideal standards, they dread further evidence of their failure, which would generate even more negative feelings about self. They tend to employ familiar responses that reduce the uncertainty and anxiety in the short-term, but which leave their beliefs unexplored and reinforced. Their range of convenience remains static and limited to the already established beliefs. In terms of the research questions the quest for an ideal self hinders the Maintainers' ability to change.

The Maintainers frequently employ a realist discourse of self, which is seen in their interviews when they describe living 'as if' a belief is truth. In stages two and three of the process, where there is the opportunity to elaborate their feelings, their strong orientation to validate their self results in them returning to their established beliefs and responses to reduce, both the strength of their negative feelings and to increase their sense of certainty. With the Maintainers' self-theories a disorienting dilemma increases anxiety about validating self so that elaboration does not occur. The quest for an ideal self answers an aspect of the second research question which was to investigate if and when self-theories are elaborated by providing an understanding of when and how they are not elaborated.

#### **Paul's quest for an ideal self hinders his ability to change.**

If Paul's profile is reviewed and framed within these four stages he is living 'as if' he is silly and stupid and so compulsively self-monitors for indications of this. "I'm not sure if it's a fear of, an unrealistic fear of people thinking I'm stupid or silly," (74/76).

His disorienting dilemma is how to have a close relationship when he fears that his doubts about self may be confirmed if he allowed someone to really know him. **“And because I think my doubts are reality I’m scared of people seeing that and affirming it. They’ll affirm my doubts,”** (144/146).

The meaning of his feelings at the pivotal point are of acute unworthiness as **“in those moments I really believe that I’m not worthy and that I do need to self-monitor and watch myself and kind of hide what I’m doing,”** (126/128).

These strong feelings of not being worthy are construed as further evidence that his self may be lacking and increase his anxiety further so that elaborating his beliefs seems risky. As a result, he returns to established beliefs and responses in an effort to reduce his immediate anxiety.

**“It is a circle that, if I feel I’m not a really confident person and I’m not really secure then it gives me ah, a reason to, em. A reason to keep my doubts and to keep these beliefs about myself,”** (186/190).

All of the Maintainers were on a quest to validate their ideal self and two more examples demonstrate how this process is grounded in the data and how this self-theory hinders the ability to change.

### **5.6 Peter’s quest for an ideal self hinders his ability to change.**

Peter is very concerned about his lack of vision as he construes having one as an indication that you know where you are going and that you have planned ahead (tight core role construing). This planning ahead allows you to take credit for any successes. Peter has a successful career, a happy marriage and three children who are in their late teens and early twenties and who are also doing well in life.

**Stage one: living ‘as if’ a belief is truth**

Peter's ideal self would have had a vision for his life and planned the choices and actions taken and this would have been successful within his construing system.

**"But I think em, vision is obviously a key thing. It's an indication of, that, you know, what you're doing with your life and that you know where you are going," (34/37).**

**"If you don't have a vision you can't necessarily move ahead," (170/171).**

### **Stage two: the disorienting dilemma**

Peter has been told about the need for a vision in various places and this has emphasised to him the importance of planning if you want to be successful and he is very aware that he did not have a strategic plan for his life, work or family.

**"Well you hear it in everything, you hear it, you hear it at church, is that we should have a vision for our lives. You hear it at work that you should have a, a vision for your work, what do you want to give to your work? What do you want to give to your family? And all that kind of stuff and it's almost the key and I don't have that. Or I have a sense that I don't have that," (80/87).**

### **Stage three: the meaning of feelings at the pivotal point**

While Peter has planned to put his family first he does not consider this equal to a vision and so in comparison to his 'ideal' self he discounts or devalues all his successes. As a result, instead of believing that he has a successful marriage, three well-balanced children and a good career, he feels lacking. It is not that there is not evidence of success, but he devalues it. The use of self-discrepancy theory emphasises that he is lacking in comparison to his ideal self and this generates negative feelings such as frustration and feeling unsettled. In the repertory grid he described believing that he was

increasingly 'clueless' and this resulted in him feeling anxious and unsettled, this was his lowest score on the grid.

**“Not knowing how to go about trying to get a vision. And the unsettled bit is the very same. (Referring to the grid). I’m feeling unsettled because I don’t eh, I don’t have a vision, em, and I don’t know how to go about getting a vision. It seems a bit simplistic that, but em, where do you start?” (54/59).**

Peter is also uncertain as to how you gain a vision and like the other Maintainers seems to construe what he needs as something which is external to him. It is as if he expects the vision to be given to him in some way and indicates that he seems to lack the constructs for 'himself creating a vision'. This inability to predict whether he will find or be given a vision increases his anxiety. The result is that, at the pivotal point where he could elaborate his belief, his high anxiety level about this perceived lack in his life, results in him returning to established beliefs and responses to reduce his feelings.

#### **Stage four: return to established beliefs and responses**

In Peter's case he employs loose construing about needing and wanting a vision but leaves how this will happen vague. This loose construing seems to serve the function of not requiring him to consider options which would increase his anxiety. Peter does not consider that he might be able to create his own vision, his range of convenience is very narrow which leaves him believing that he cannot do anything about the lack of a vision. Like most of the Maintainers there is a lack of agency.

**“I’ve put the time in but, but I’ve put the time in without knowing why I’m putting the time in,” (96/98).**

#### **5.7 Eva's quest for an ideal self hinders her ability to change.**

Eva is living 'as if' being the centre of attention renders her 'visible' and therefore worthwhile, but this requires her friends to keep their focus on her.

She is uncertain about having her needs met and her self recognised. It is not so much a fear of failure in terms of achievement but a fear of being invisible. Her dilemma centres on her dependence on others for recognition of her 'ideal self'. She has clearly defined standards for her friends to meet – but no one does! These standards were defined in her repertory grid.

If she did have a 'good' friend she would feel content, encouraged, valued and special which represent her 'ideal' self. What she actually feels is very different. She feels; used, ignored, frustrated, annoyed, pressured, scared, disappointed, unimportant, unappreciated and invisible. Eva's ideal self would be well treated, listened to, encouraged, appreciated, valued, special and visible. Eva wants her friends to be interested in her, not to let her down, to make her feel important, to know how to treat her, to be considerate, not to interrupt her, to take care of her, to give something back, to ask about her and to take time for her. The ongoing failures on their part to validate her 'ideal' self have left her feeling anxious and frustrated.

Eva did mention attempts to construe an alternative independent self who would not need external validation, but it seems that these constructs are insufficiently developed to be a viable alternative. Within Eva's construing her self-worth is in the hands of others, which again reflects an external source of validation and indicates that she is dependent on others to meet her needs. There is a lack of agency in the Maintainers' interviews which seems to offer the benefit of not making them responsible for meeting their own needs. However, there is a high emotional cost, as they do not construe themselves as being able to influence events and outcomes and they have to wait to find out if their needs will be met or the circumstances will change. These beliefs increase anxiety as the Maintainers cannot always predict outcomes.

### **Stage one: living 'as if' a belief is truth**

Eva is living 'as if' her standards for how her friends should behave are truth. Their behaviour is of great importance because that is how she is made visible or is validated and she does not have constructs for being visible without having friends. Giving up her high standards for friends would make

her invisible and this seems to be too great a price to pay. Yet she seems to be aware that her high standards for friends have been invalidated and so she tries to construe an alternative to being dependent on others, but with little success, as it increases her concern about gaining worth.

**“I don’t like to rely on other people they don’t always treat you as special or valuable and so I like to take care of myself so that I don’t need them the same. I prefer to do things for myself anyway,”** (119/122).

### **Stage two: the disorienting dilemma**

The disorienting dilemma for Eva centres on her belief that a 'good' friend would validate her by behaving in the appropriate way and so make her visible and her actual experience of this not happening and of feeling invisible. Again there is a lack of agency and a lack of creating alternatives. Eva is dependent on external sources to meet her needs and validate her worth.

**“And em, when I’m with Sarah it’s not, you don’t feel like you’re getting anything back from her, type of thing. You don’t feel like she’s paying you like, attention, you can be invisible,”** (194/198).

### **Stage three: the meaning of feelings at the pivotal point.**

The evaluation of selves that Eva employs results in her believing that she is not being treated properly and this belief is accompanied by strong negative feelings. She was ignored, used and invisible. These strong feelings raise her anxiety levels and make elaborating beliefs unlikely. The feelings keep her focus on the need to gain validation and avoid invalidation.

**“I hate it when people just take conversations back to themselves and aren’t interested in me, I want to listen to them but I’d like to be listened to as well. I hate it when I feel I’m being used or ignored. A couple of, well the three people on this actually, when I think about it, tend to, well I can feel invisible,”** (20/26).

**Stage four: return to established beliefs and responses.**

There is a discrepancy between Eva's belief about how friends behave and how her three friends treat her which creates negative feelings and so she withdraws and seems to try to avoid further invalidation. However, she cannot stay at a distance from friends as they are her only source of validation. In the next extract Eva is talking about another friend who has frequently let her down. They had tried a few times to renew their friendship but this had not been successful within Eva's narrow range of convenience for friendship.

**"We try to be friends and stuff again and we'd arrange to do stuff but then she'd just let me down. And that was annoying, it was like I wasn't important to her, and that was the childish part of her that was still self-involved and didn't consider other people. That I would be disappointed. She would just let me down," (136/138).**

It is of vital importance to Eva that she has good friends who know how to behave towards her and so validate her 'ideal self' and make her visible.

There were three Maintainers who did infrequently gain validation for their ideal selves. Lynn was a teacher who had a wealthy family and moved in higher social circles. Her ideal self would be rich enough not to work. Lynn was able to gain validation for her ideal self on some social occasions and this seemed to offset the lack of validation as a teacher. Steve was a consultant and his ideal self would always have been 'top dog' and in some situations this was the case, so Steve was infrequently validated. Lastly, Suzy was able, on a few occasions, to have her home as immaculate as her ideal standards and also gained infrequent validation. While there was some validation for these participants they still experienced significant anxiety about when they would next be validated, which left them very dependent on their next performance.

### **5.8 The Maintainers' belief in 'real selves' hinders their ability to change**

Within the Maintainers' transcripts there were many references to 'real' selves, which seemed to be part of their core role construing of self as unable to change. Most of the Maintainers referred to a realist discourse of self in general and to real selves in particular, to explain or justify why something was, or was not, possible for them. They seem to be implying that if you were born a certain way then you would be unable to change. Essentially, their construing of a 'real' self eliminates or restricts alternatives. For example, while Suzy was talking about why she likes things **'just so'** she refers to her 'real' self.

**"Well to me it kind of means that, that's me and that's how I am,"** (199/200).

By stating this is how I am, she eliminates choice. She has to live her life within the confines of her construing of self. In a similar way Nicola is talking about not being quick because she has to do things perfectly and she also refers to a 'real' self,

**"but I just can't do anything about it because you know, I'm just not quick enough. It's just me. I'm just not quick,"** (600/603).

And lastly, when Paul is talking about his doubts that he is silly and stupid and of little worth he refers to his 'real' self.

**"If I was by myself all the time then I would be feeling these negative things and so this is the true self because that's when I'm with myself,"** (177/179).

### **5.9 Frequent features in construing an ideal self**

Each of the Maintainers is on a quest for an 'ideal' self. They construe most of their core beliefs about self as 'truths' and they rarely question the validity of what they are seeking. It seems possible that by construing a 'real self' these participants find embracing new situations and events increasingly

difficult. If these 'truths' were created in childhood to accommodate a more limited number of situations they may well have been sufficient for a child's life. However, in an adult's life with the multitude of tasks to be completed and the ongoing demand for change these beliefs with their limited range of convenience may no longer be sufficient. This seems to be a possible explanation for why so many of the Maintainers describe negative changes on their repertory grids. If their construct systems, which were developed in childhood, have not been so fully elaborated as the Changers and the Explorers then they could be constricting their options and lives to what have already been established. The Maintainers have to live and respond within tightly construed self-theories, which hinder their ability to change.

There were several features of their construing systems that the Maintainers shared in common.

- Tight core role construing of an ideal self.
- Narrow range of convenience for their ideal self.
- Lack of influence or agency.
- Their 'needs' are often construed as requiring external sources to act to meet them.
- Lack of alternative selves and therefore a lack of alternative sources of worth.
- Self-worth is dependent on their own performance or on others recognising and meeting their standards.
- Anxiety is created by their inability to predict the outcome of events.
- Threat is created by tightly construing only an ideal self and no viable alternatives so that their worth depends on their performance.
- Lack of alternative selves results in few sources of significant worth and so there is a much higher risk in either elaborating their ideal self or developing an alternative self.
- Guilt when the ideal self's standards are not met and there is dislodgement from core role structures.
- Hostility when they attempt to validate already invalidated constructs.
- Constructs of transition are present and transition to other constructs might be possible as existing constructs are not proving sufficient.

However, anxiety, threat, guilt and hostility tend to be construed as prompts that further invalidation is imminent and so the Maintainers tend to withdraw and return to familiar beliefs and responses.

If the metaphor of the bicycles is employed again, then the Maintainers are peddling furiously on their exercise bikes with the goal of gaining validation when they reach their ideal self. Their ideal selves are just as unattainable as cycling to their favourite picnic spot on an exercise bike. What is experienced however, is enormous dissatisfaction with their actual self, frustration that they never seem to get anywhere and increased anxiety about how lacking they seem to be. The 'ideal self' diminishes their actual worth and successes and keeps their focus on what is lacking in their life or in their self. The quest for an ideal self hinders their ability to elaborate their self-theories and change.

## **Chapter six: The Changers' elaborated self-theories can facilitate change.**

### **6.0 The third master theme**

There were nineteen Changers who were separated into four sub categories of Changers who had all elaborated one or more of their 'truths' into a hypothesis and their 'ideal selves' had been elaborated, to varying degrees, so that many of the Changers are developing 'good enough' selves. It is in these interviews that the elaboration of beliefs and feelings is most clearly seen. These participants seem to be in the process of increasing their awareness of how their construing limits their choices and this has consequences for how they feel about their self. They also talked about being very aware of how they were lacking in comparison to their ideal self and how this leads to negative feelings and anxiety. These different beliefs reflect both their established use of a realist discourse of self and the beginning of employing an interpretative discourse of self.

In the inventories the Changers were characterising self as both growth and validation seeking which is understandable in the context of participants who are beginning to elaborate their construing. In the repertory grids they were mostly describing positive changes between the past and the present which indicates that their early beliefs are being elaborated and have sufficient range of convenience to cope with the demands of adult life. Across the four sub categories there are signs of elaboration occurring more frequently and this is reflected in the summary sheets where they are increasingly employing exploratory beliefs and responses.

### **6.1 The Changers employ a mixture of beliefs and responses**

The Changers are located across the middle of the change dimension depending on the extent they have elaborated their beliefs. There were four sub categories of Changers, which are shown on table twenty-seven.

- There were Changers who believed they had been forced to change for some reason.

- There were Changers who had made a few changes but were actually more frustrated as a result of doing so.
- There were Changers who had elaborated their construing for a better quality of life.
- And lastly there were Changers who were excited by the changes they had made. These participants were so pleased by the difference that elaborating their constructs had made that they were increasingly reviewing their beliefs when they experienced a disorienting dilemma.

When the sub categories are linked to the research questions then it becomes apparent that the elaboration of self-theories facilitates change and the restricted self-theories hinder the ability to change. The second research question focused on investigating if and when self-theories are elaborated and how this is accomplished and with the Changers the stages of elaborating self-theories are most clearly seen.

Despite the differences in how many beliefs had been elaborated, the Changers had all asked the question, 'what if this isn't true? Or, 'what if something else is possible? And this had altered their reflective process and effectively elaborated their construing of self by increasing their choices. The most striking benefit of elaborating the meaning of a belief was the reduction in anxiety that came from creating alternatives and the experience of more positive feelings, which came from not believing themselves to be so lacking in comparison to their ideal performance. Increasing the number of available alternatives seems to reduce negative feelings.

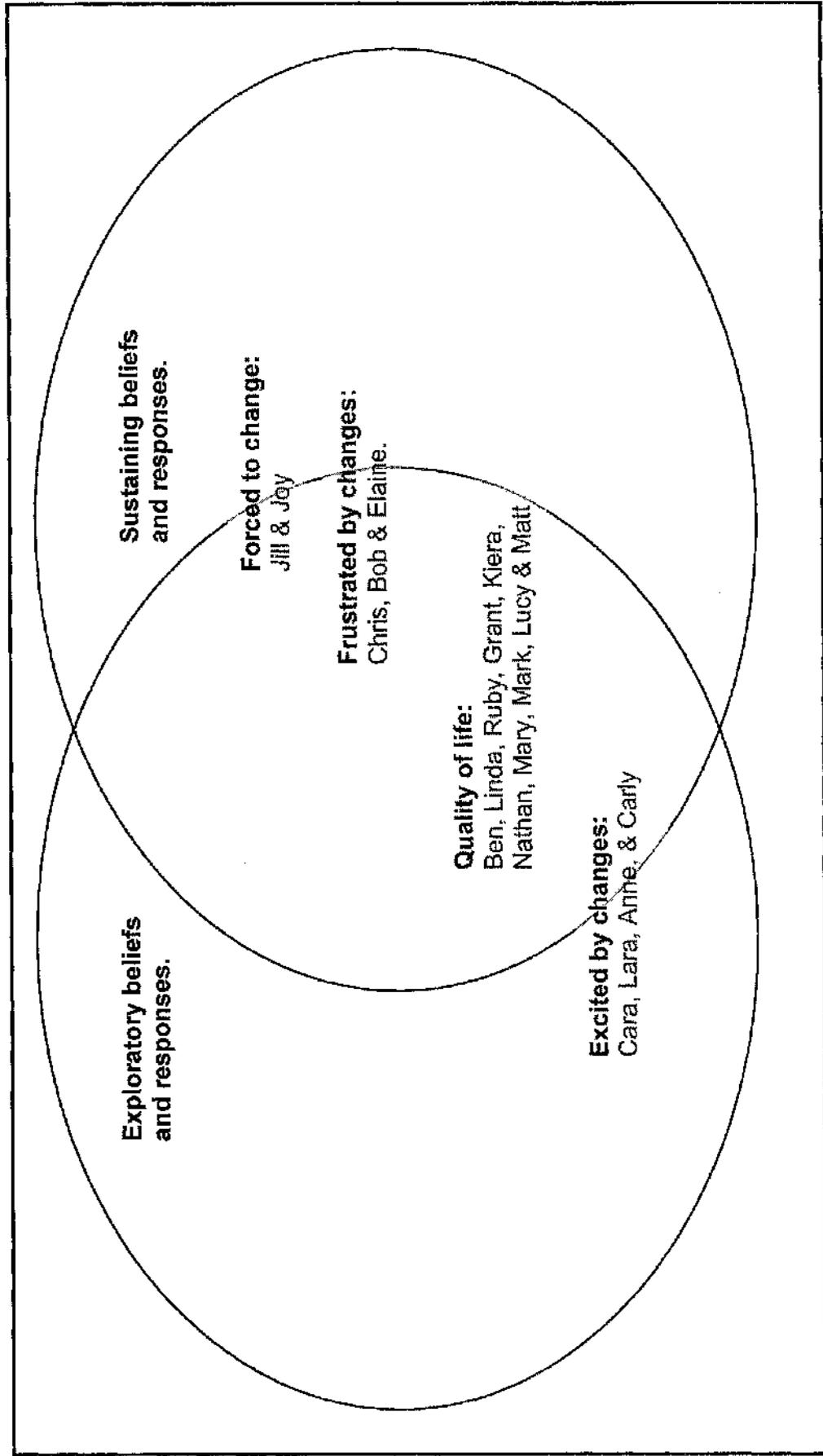
The third research question was to determine if these self-theories can be learned and there are indications with the Changers who have elaborated their construing for a better quality of life or because they were excited but the outcomes, of this process being strategically adopted. The positive benefits which elaborating beliefs and feelings brings seems to reinforce the likelihood of exploratory beliefs and responses being employed when the next disorienting dilemma is experienced. There seemed to be a connection between the amount of elaboration that had taken place and an increase in

positive feelings about self, and construing change as more of a challenge to embrace and less as a threat to avoid.

Returning to the bicycle metaphor used in the introduction, the Changers are now sitting on mountain bikes, with stabilisers for security and lots of protective clothing in case they fall off and are considering moving forward. Some will only go a little way as this new endeavour creates anxiety about their ability to ride the bike. Others will be so thrilled with their new found freedom when they compare it to the predictable monotony of peddling an exercise bike that, they will embrace it as their new mode of transport. There are now new possibilities to consider when sitting on a mountain bike, but there is also a level of anxiety about the ability to ride one in uncertain conditions, as they cannot predict the terrain ahead. In a similar way, elaborating beliefs increases the available options, but it also generates anxiety about the outcome of new beliefs and responses. It is how this dilemma is resolved that determines how much the mountain bike will be used.

There is also a shift from referring to a realist discourse of self to a more interpretative discourse of self where the potential for re-interpreting self-theories exists. Anne is a Changer who is excited by the difference that elaborating her self-theories has made and she succinctly expresses her awareness that re-interpreting is both possible and will make a difference, **“I have it in mind eh, that I can change the whole story,”** (175/177).

**Table 27: Locating the Changers on the 'change dimension'**



## **6.2 How self-theories are elaborated**

The Changers described the same process of elaboration as the Explorers, but were not, as yet, elaborating their beliefs to the same extent. It is with these participants that the process of elaborating 'truths' into hypothesis is mostly clearly seen. It is here that the link between the amount of elaboration that has occurred and the amount of validation their 'actual' self is gaining becomes apparent. The second research question was to investigate if and when self-theories are elaborated and how this is accomplished and this section provides examples of self-theories being elaborated to varying degrees in four profiles.

When a 'truth' is elaborated and the 'ideal' standard is changed to a 'good enough' one, then validation is possible. The gap between ideal and actual performance is reduced and the participant is able to achieve and experience positive feelings about their self. It would seem that 'ideal' standards, which are considered to be 'truth,' make gaining validation very difficult and result in negative feelings about self. This strong connection between performance and self-worth makes every task, event, situation or relationship a risky endeavour as there is the possibility that the lack of ability on the part of the actual self will be exposed.

## **6.3 Lara elaborated her self-theories**

Lara very clearly described how, in the past, her core beliefs about self were 'truths' that she never reviewed. Her ideal self would be intelligent and she had clear standards for what this involved. Within Lara's construct system confident behaviours and articulate speech were indicators of intelligence. Lara attributed intelligence to the people around her based on the above evaluation and, as she construed herself as shy and quiet, she evaluated herself as lacking in intelligence in comparison to others. These evaluations left her anxious about her abilities and worth.

As an adult Lara had trained to be a teacher and, despite gaining a degree, still employed as truth, the belief in her ideal intelligent self. This resulted in her not valuing her success as a teacher because it was never to the ideal

standard. During the process of elaborating this ideal self, Lara describes a specific disorienting dilemma which provides insight into how she elaborated her ideal self and gained validation for her successes. The context was a post-graduate degree course in education.

**Stage one: living 'as if' a belief is true.**

Lara had been living 'as if' her quiet speech and shy behaviours reflected a lack of intelligence (tight core role construing) as her ideal self would be confident and articulate. The clearest example of this comes when she had decided to begin a Masters degree in education and describes listening and observing the other students and then employing her established beliefs to evaluate herself and the others. This is an example of using a simple level of thinking in the unfamiliar context of the degree class (Sorrentino and Roney, 2000).

**"Let's take the M.Ed because it's the only context I can refer to. Right my initial reaction was oh dear, I'm a fish out of water here," (484/486).**

**"Having heard the people that went before me, who were, who had been in academia or you know, who had been within the student system, who seemed to be the spokesperson for the other groups, I thought oh no, I am out of my depths. Out of my depths really. It really, really scared me. Having to sort of articulate these ideas and not do them I thought as adequately as everybody else," (400/405).**

**Stage two: the disorienting dilemma**

Lara's ideal self would be confident and articulate, like the students she observed in her class, and therefore intelligent (tight core role construing). Lara's actual self was shy and quiet and therefore not so intelligent. The disorienting dilemma for Lara was how to account for her success in the assignments she completed. During her childhood her teachers had given her high marks for her written work, indeed she had won a scholarship to a private secondary school, but she had always devalued these marks as they did not come close to the desired behaviours of her ideal intelligent self.

However, as the positive evidence of her intelligence increased, it became harder for Lara to maintain the belief that her shyness indicated a lack of intelligence. The contradictory evidence of her success invalidated her tight core role construing and threatened her construing of self.

**“Now that scared me and then along come the essays and I find it’s a more level playing field,”** (412/413). This is repeated later when she says, **“but I guess at the end of the day there was a level playing field,”** (727/730).

### **Stage three: the meaning of feelings at the pivotal point**

Lara is aware that her past evaluation of self would have left her feeling inadequate, uncomfortable, embarrassed and silly and her self-worth would have gone down. At the pivotal point Lara would have construed her strong negative feelings as further evidence of the lack in her actual self and they would have prompted her to act to reduce her high anxiety level by employing established beliefs and responses.

**“Before it would have made me just feel uncomfortable, eh I just wouldn’t want to be there. I’d have felt so embarrassed, I would have felt silly,”** (656/658).

And this would have affected her self-worth,

**“My self-worth would have gone, my self-esteem would be pretty low and my self-worth would go down,”** (697/698).

### **Stage four: elaborate truths by asking what if?**

The dilemma was resolved for Lara by elaborating her beliefs about intelligence so that written work was also included and this had an effect on her construing of an ideal self. Like many of the Changers, Lara had been discounting the evidence of her successes by not evaluating her excellent written work as reflecting her intelligence. By elaborating the meaning of intelligence to include more than articulate speech and confident behaviours

she was able to construe herself as 'good enough' and so validate her actual self. The gap between her actual self and her developing 'good enough' self is much smaller and this makes gaining validation much easier to predict and gain.

In a similar way to other Changers, Lara had to create a story that accounted for the contradictory evidence in her life. Self-discrepancy theory had allowed her to compare her actual performance with her ideal one and to find herself lacking, however the increasing evidence that she was able to complete written assignments well made this evaluation increasingly difficult to sustain. In order to reduce the significance of this evidence Lara had employed what Sorrentino and Roney (2000) call simple thinking in unfamiliar or high risk situations. It is interesting that Lara is aware of the different evaluations she made in the degree class and in the staff-room. She gives a clear account of how she evaluated herself more favourably in the staff-room which was a familiar context and where the risk of being found lacking was lower.

**"it must depend on the context because I don't judge people in that context in the staff-room, in the way that I would have done in the class," (452/454).**

She goes onto explain that,

**"perhaps I was thinking that there were certain expectations of us with in the class. Which I don't, I don't look for among my colleagues," (451/454).**

**"but if I think of people in the staff-room I see myself on an equal playing field," (490/492).**

Once Lara began to elaborate her beliefs about her ideal self she also questioned the way that she evaluated her actual self with her ideal self and this elaboration has led to a significant change in her feelings. Previously

she experienced anxiety about her ability to reach her ideal standards and this led to her avoiding many activities, situations and relationships. As a consequence of elaborating some of her beliefs, she has lately begun a class in computing which she would not have considered twelve years before,

**“Well I probably wouldn’t have put myself in that situation,”** (679/680).

**“I definitely wouldn’t have put myself in it. I know I wouldn’t put myself in that situation. What, it would have meant absolute fear, terror, embarrassment. Probably wouldn’t have learned because my mind would be so, yeah,”** (684/685 & 689/692).

By elaborating her beliefs about her ideal intelligent self, so that they include written work, Lara is now able to evaluate herself as intelligent and is moving towards construing her self as ‘good enough’. With a ‘good enough’ self, the distance between her actual performance and the desired one is much smaller and so she gains validation more frequently. This has reduced her anxiety and she is able to cope with more uncertainty than before, as the ideal standards have been reduced to something more manageable.

Lara now believes that she has come to terms with ‘not knowing’ and can live with not being good at something without it threatening her sense of self. Lara ends by describing how her new belief about the meaning of effort has changed. She now believes that if she perseveres she will be able to solve a problem or difficulty. Lara assesses the worst case scenario and determines if she could cope with that outcome and this has allowed her to tackle more activities. The evaluation she now employs does not compare her actual and ideal selves but evaluates the worst outcome and whether she could deal with it. This new assessment allows her to take many more risks and to experiment with different solutions without the same level of threat.

At the pivotal point Lara now construes anxiety differently, instead of indicating possible invalidation she now construes anxiety as a part of doing something new or differently and predicts that she will cope even with a poor

outcome. There is a separation of performance and worth that creates room to experiment, make mistakes and learn while predicting that she will have worth. Lara's elaboration of the meaning of intelligence now includes a self who can 'not know' for a period of time while learning something new and who may never be brilliant at some tasks, but who would still have worth because they tried. Worth for effort, trying and persevering replace worth for performance, and this seems to reduce the pressure linked with reaching the high standards associated with the ideal self.

**"it's to see the situation and beyond, and what's the worst that could happen for this, therefore that encourages my ability to cope with things," (1073/1076).**

And lastly, as a result of enlarging her construing Lara says,

**"I actually don't mind change so much now. I don't find change threatening," (964/966).**

#### **6.4 Positive benefits of elaborating self-theories**

There were four sub categories of Changers; those who were excited by the changes, those who elaborated to improve their quality of life, those who were frustrated by limited changes and one participant who felt she had no option but to change. The Changers employ the same steps described in chapter four under the heading of 'Becoming an Explorer.' However they do not, as yet, elaborate their beliefs, either as often, or to the same degree, as those participants categorised as Explorers. The sub categories highlight the link between the amount of elaboration that is undertaken, how many alternatives are created and the amount of validation that is experienced by the participant.

Within the four sub categories of Changers there is evidence that elaborating a 'truth' into more of an idea or hypothesis, has positive benefits for the participant's construing system as a whole. Loosening a tight core role construct allows alternatives to be considered, increases choices and seems to reduce negative feelings. The four sub categories form minor stages along

the change dimension and indicate that there needs to be sufficient elaboration of both beliefs and feelings for the participant's level of anxiety to decrease. There are positive benefits as the actual self is validated, which increases positive feelings about self and so reinforces a positive, growth oriented, cycle of reflection.

At the beginning of the process of elaboration there is an increase in anxiety as established 'truths' are questioned. In terms of the Creativity Circle, a tight core role construct is loosened to allow alternatives to be created and evaluated. For all the participants this is an uncomfortable experience and how the meaning of anxiety is construed can influence the extent to which they are likely to question other 'truths' in the future. The sub categories highlight the amount of elaboration each participant has made and this is seen in their descriptions of their beliefs, selves, feelings and levels of anxiety. From describing change as something they felt forced to do; to feeling frustrated by their limited elaboration; to feeling they have improved their quality of life to those who are closest to having 'hypotheses' instead of 'truths' and who are increasingly excited by the new possibilities they are discovering.

One participant from each sub category will be reviewed to show how they have begun the process of, Becoming Explorers but are at different stages on the change dimension.

### **6.5 The first sub category, Jill who felt she was forced to change**

Jill is a primary school teacher who lived abroad for several years. During this period her only option for a job was a promoted post. She believes that intelligent people learn easily. In particular, she believes they can understand theory, which she finds difficult, effortlessly (tight core role construing). Jill's ideal self would be intelligent. As a result of the gap between her ideal and actual self she describes herself as a 'practical' person. She makes several references to finding theory difficult in comparison to the instant understanding her ideal intelligent self would have.

### **Stage one: living 'as if' her belief is truth.**

Jill lived 'as if' intelligent people learned effortlessly and this is the defining feature of her ideal self. In comparison to this ideal, Jill describes herself as having to work really hard to understand theory and does not value understanding when it requires perseverance and effort. Within her construct system, effort means that you are not intelligent.

**"It didn't come all that easily for me, you know," (336/337).**

**"Em I'm not, as I say I'm not eh, a high flyer, never have been and as I say I've always been aware of my slot in the hierarchy if you like," (550/554).**

**"I didn't have a very high opinion of, I've always known I've had to work you know, and I have, I work hard," (561/563).**

### **Stage two: the disorienting dilemma**

When Jill was abroad the only job she was offered was a promoted post as an infant mistress and later a management position, training teachers. Her success in these roles created a disorienting dilemma as she was, with effort, able to develop teaching materials and to give public talks and this challenged her established beliefs about herself as not very intelligent.

**"And em, I really didn't want it because, as I say I was just happy in the classroom. But you know, if I wanted another contract I had to do this and there were lots of situations that I, I had to, sort of really extend myself and em, talk, give talks, workshops. We had a training college em, we set up as a training college and I was asked, while I was an infant teacher we were asked to give, the expatriates were asked to give lectures and so on. And workshops and to write papers on phonics and the teaching of reading and so on and so I found that because of the demands made on me eh, I had to work hard to get through it all, and so on. And I found that I could do things that I didn't realise that I could," (575/589).**

### **Stage three: the meaning of feelings at the pivotal point**

Jill described feeling very nervous about her new responsibilities as her 'practical self' was having success in areas she had previously avoided. At the pivotal point, because she believed she had no other choice, she elaborated the meaning of her feelings, so that her nervousness was construed more as a prompt to elaborate her beliefs, than as a prompt that her actual self might be confirmed as lacking.

Jill had construed intelligent people as learning easily and effortlessly and, as she needed to persevere to understand, she evaluated herself as not intelligent. In her promoted post she was, with effort, able to accomplish tasks that she had never considered possible. They were out with her established construing and this invalidated her construing and created a dilemma.

**"And when I moved into the, as I say into the office and so on, again I was very nervous about it and it really wasn't of my choosing. And again I got a lot of em, from discovering that I could do things that I didn't think I had the confidence to do like stand up and talk. Not only with my peers, but the school management and so on, so yes I think I've achieved things that I didn't think I would be able to. Em, and you know and I didn't strive for it, but it came my way and I had to deal with it,"** (593/595 & 599/606).

### **Stage four: elaborating 'truths' by asking 'what if?'**

Jill has elaborated her belief by considering alternative meanings for intelligence to include situations where she has no other choice than to persevere. In these situations she can, with effort, meet the demands of the situation. This limited elaboration allowed her to work abroad but has not led to many other changes as she has categorised the experience under the heading of, what she can do when there are no other choices available. However, this elaboration of what she could do, albeit with effort, resulted in her acknowledging her success in these positions and both gaining validation and feeling better about herself.

And again,

**“Em, I would say I’ve gained confidence, a lot of things that again I have to stand and talk to em, three hundred parents em, with the reception parents, primary one, primary two and so on em. And again, so that I gained confidence that way, I had to lead assemblies and take assemblies and so on and, and talk in public which didn’t come easily to me and I found that I could do it, so em, yes I would think,”** (611/618).

On returning to this country she went back to classroom teaching and has mostly separated her experiences abroad from her career in this country.

### **Moving towards becoming an Explorer**

Jill elaborated her beliefs about self to include what she can do when there are no other choices. However, Jill is still evaluating her practical self against her ideal self and this is evident in her continuing references to learning, **“which didn’t come easily,”** which continues to be the bench mark for recognising her achievements. She still does not value effort or persevering, as her ideal self would learn effortlessly. By evaluating selves she keeps her focus on her performance and how close to her ideal standards she is and also sustains the link between her performance and worth. These beliefs affect how she feels about herself and sustain the belief that she needs to monitor anything new that she is asked to do in case she can’t do it to her ideal standard.

### **6.6 The second sub category, Chris is frustrated by the changes**

Chris is married with children and is in a management job. In his youth he didn’t really have **“any great ambition”** (7) and he wasn’t really aware of his abilities or what the opportunities were (7/8). From youth into adult life there was a change as he became aware of his abilities and took advantage of some of the opportunities. His ideal self would be a prominent person who makes full use of all the available opportunities.

#### **Stage one: living ‘as if’ his belief is truth.**

Chris is living ‘as if’ being prominent gives him worth.

**“It’s as if that’s where I get my value from. And to sit and be passive I find very difficult. And the way that I see it in that sense is that I’m proving my worth by what I am able to contribute and if I don’t contribute then how do I prove my worth?” (87/91).**

### **Stage two: the disorienting dilemma**

Chris’s disorienting dilemma comes from the beliefs that he has already elaborated. As a youth and young man he had been unaware of his own potential and the opportunities available to him. As he elaborated these beliefs, and his range of convenience was wider, he became aware of more opportunities. He uses a metaphor of making the ‘box’ bigger to explain the change from previously being **“quite content in the box,”** (108) and, **“oblivious if you like, to the ability to change,”** (110/111). Whereas he achieved 80% of the small box and felt fulfilled now he only manages 45% of the larger box and this increases his discontent as he feels he is achieving less.

### **Stage three: the meaning of feelings at the pivotal point**

While Chris has elaborated some beliefs he seems unable to consider elaborating anymore as a result of continuing to compare his ideal and actual selves. The emphasis on feelings influences the balance of his construing and his feelings direct his actions. With each evaluation of selves, Chris is reminded of how much he is not achieving and, at the pivotal point, he construes the frustration as indicating that he is actually lacking in comparison to his ideal self. By focusing on his feelings Chris is very aware of his increased anxiety level and acts to reduce this by returning to his established beliefs and responses.

**“The realisation is stronger in terms of, the realisation is stronger in terms of the eh, missed opportunities. It’s a sense of em, frustration born out of the fact that there are so many more opportunities there and I have more ability to be more able to fulfil them. But the frustration comes out of the fact that if you scaled that, then I’m achieving far less**

now that I'm aware. Whereas when I was narrower then it was easier to achieve more," (36/45).

#### **Stage four: elaborating 'truths' by asking 'what if?'**

While there have been some changes in his professional life these have only slightly changed his quality of life. Chris is aware of more opportunities but construes himself as achieving less and therefore not performing as well as his ideal self would. Although he has elaborated some beliefs about what he can do and what is possible, he continues to compare his ideal and actual selves, which keeps his focus on what he is not achieving.

**"As the awareness increases the frustration grows with the opportunities that are missed," (147/149).**

#### **Moving towards becoming an Explorer**

Although Chris has elaborated his core role construing of self, he is still evaluating selves and comparing his ideal and actual selves. He is still referring to standards of performance, which he is not achieving and still strongly connecting his worth to his performance. It seems that while Chris has elaborated his belief about his potential, he is still referring to and employing many sustaining beliefs and responses and these keep his focus on what he is not achieving, on the gap between his ideal and actual selves. Chris experiences many negative feelings about his self and is currently very frustrated.

**"So rather than getting fulfilled by what has been achieved there is a discontent at the fact of what's left undone," (153/155).**

#### **6.7 The third sub category, Linda changed for a better quality of life.**

Linda is happily married with children but for many years she was plagued by doubts that she was lacking due to the quality of her possessions. Her family had a dominant belief that the quality of your possessions defined your intrinsic worth (tight core role construing). Linda had grown up believing this

and her ideal self would have high quality possessions and therefore would have worth.

**Stage one: living 'as if' her belief is truth.**

Linda had been living 'as if' money defined your worth.

**"Right, well the money defines a person goes back to childhood to when we were younger, we weren't well-off, we were poor in fact em. What you had, what you wore was a major standing, you know in the community. A lot of people were poor. (But) even in my teenage years (some people) were really well-off. They seemed, em, let's see now, they had more friends, I think that's how I view it, they all seemed to have more friends. Em, so eh money did, it looked like money defined, they were also always happy, laughing," (30/39).**

**Stage two: the disorienting dilemma**

Invalidation of core role construing seems to create disorienting dilemmas and the lack of available alternative meanings further increases anxiety levels. Once Linda was married she discovered that her husband did not subscribe to her family's definition of what money meant and this invalidation of her tight core role construing created a disorienting dilemma. Her husband's beliefs were in sharp contrast to those of her family and for the first time she was aware that she could chose what to think about money and she elaborated her beliefs.

The crucial dilemma for Linda came when her sister wanted to go on another shopping trip with her. These trips involved her sister spending much more money than Linda could afford and therefore implicitly demonstrating that she was of more worth. This dilemma involved Linda in two crucial evaluations. In the first one she compares her limited spending with her sister's larger budget. In the second evaluation she compares the quality of her purchases with her family's ideal self who would have wonderful possessions, and in both of these evaluations she finds her actual self is lacking.

**“Also I think the realisation that money doesn’t make a person. That, the, there’s someone else underneath this outer coat, whether it’s a fur coat whether it’s a rag there’s still a human being underneath it. It doesn’t matter what, what their outer coat is, it’s the person underneath that counts,” (257/262).**

**Stage three: the meaning of feelings at the pivotal point.**

Linda’s old beliefs about the meaning of possessions had resulted in her feeling anxious, powerless, inferior and humbled. At the pivotal point when her husband offered an alternative meaning Linda was able to anticipate moving beyond her immediate anxiety and anticipate the relief that elaborating her beliefs would bring.

**“Just doing that one thing made the difference. It broke the cycle... Took all the baggage, all the weight away, that I don’t have to. I don’t need to go,” (297/299 & 304/305).**

**Stage four: elaborating ‘truth’s by asking what if?**

Linda’s husband provided an alternative construction of the meaning of possessions and Linda began to understand that she actually had choices about what she believed and what she did. As a result of having alternative meanings, when her sister suggested the next shopping trip Linda responded differently.

**“Yes, and him (her husband) saying well you don’t have to. So that had a lot to do with it, that was the start, that was early on that was in my thirty’s,” (111/113).**

Linda chose not to go on the shopping trip after listening to her husband’s alternative beliefs. Having available alternatives increased Linda’s choices and allowed her to influence the outcome.

**“He said, you don’t have to go shopping, there’s no one forcing you. Why don’t you just say no? And that was that,” (286/288).**

### **Moving towards becoming an Explorer**

Linda decided that going on shopping trips with her elder sister, where her sister was able to purchase expensive items and so confirm her worth according to the family's dominant belief, resulted in her feeling increasingly inadequate and worthless as she could not afford to buy these goods. When Linda realised that she did not have to either agree with her family's established belief or go on the shopping trips, she also stopped defining herself by her ability to buy goods. By elaborating these beliefs Linda was able to change her behaviour and her feelings and this one change made a significant difference to the quality of her life. The change in her emotions was dramatic. For example in her repertory grid she described her emotions as changing from;

Anxious to Peaceful  
Powerless to Confident  
Inferior to Worthy  
Humbled to Self pride

There is evidence of the creativity circle as Linda's tight construing of the meaning of possessions was loosened to allow alternatives to be considered. An experiment with a different meaning was undertaken and then used to elaborate her beliefs about possessions.

### **6.8 The fourth sub category, Cara who is excited by the changing**

The participants in this group have elaborated more of their core role constructs and this has occurred despite critical life events such as physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, abandonment and poverty. They have managed to elaborate the meaning of situations, relationships and their narratives of self and this has enabled them to take control of their lives and influence what happens. Importantly they continue to employ exploratory beliefs and responses and to review and elaborate their construing. They seem to have moved from living 'as if' something were true to considering 'what if' this isn't true or something else is possible?

Cara lived 'as if' her mother and husband's evaluation of her as worthless were true. It was only when she began to acknowledge the significant amount of contradictory evidence that she began to question her belief and consider the possibility, what if they are wrong?

**Stage one: living 'as if' her belief is truth.**

Cara had been living 'as if' her mother and husband's evaluation of her as worthless was true (tight core role construing).

**"I think, looking at if from the past self, I wasn't, it would seem or it would appear that I wasn't allowed my own thoughts, they were discounted. My own ideas of what I thought, because what did I know?" (11/14).**

Cara's ideal self would know what her opinions were and would be free to make her own informed choices.

**Stage two: the disorienting dilemma**

Cara organised her own fortieth birthday party and it was here that she discovered how her friends and relatives saw her and this provided a direct contrast to her established beliefs about self. The dilemma arose when she had two different descriptions of herself as '**useless**' and as, "**a wonderful wife, what a great family,**" (69/70). This alternative description of herself invalidated a core role construct.

**Stage three: the meaning of feelings at the pivotal point**

When Cara evaluated her ideal and actual selves, as described by her mother and husband, she found herself to be lacking and in her repertory grid she described feeling trapped, oppressed, dead, suppressed, distressed and depressed. When other constructions of her as a wonderful wife and mother provided an alternative self, there was a dilemma in terms of what to believe. At the pivotal point the alternative construing of herself offered the possibility of a worthwhile self. Cara experienced increased anxiety when she considered an alternative self but was able to elaborate the meaning of her

feelings so that the anxiety was attributed to considering new possibilities and not as reflecting a lack of worth.

#### **Stage four: elaborating 'truths' by asking 'what if?'**

With the contrasting descriptions of self swirling in her mind, Cara dared to consider, 'what if' her mother and husband were wrong about her and she was wonderful? Cara describes the party as the turning point.

**"I think it was and I made it, life does begin at forty. For me that was the turning point," (40/42).**

Cara and her husband separated and she describes this enormous change in the next extract.

**"I could only use the analogy that we got heat in our lives and someone turned the temperature up. So there was that and I chose to wear brighter, lighter clothes," (94/98).**

**"I can have choices, I can. Folk will see me as an independent female. I've taken the house on in my own name, before I was like a housekeeper, I only got things through my husband. I didn't get, I wasn't of any merit yeah," (150/155).**

#### **Moving towards becoming an Explorer**

Cara continued to elaborate her beliefs about self and there was evidence in her repertory grid that her present self is construed as 'good enough' as she scored herself as very close to Sarah the person she admired. When I pointed this out to Cara she was really surprised to discover how close to Sarah she had scored herself.

**"It makes me feel brilliant", (172).**

**"It makes me feel a sense of worth, I think," (176).**

Cara took time to look at how she had scored herself and Sarah and was really moved by the realisation of exactly how much she had changed. She believes that the process of completing the grid has clarified for her that she is of worth.

**“It gives me merit. Yeah, (pause) maybe gives me merit. Now that it’s numbers against people yeah, it does, it does credit me, it clarifies,”**  
(250 & 254/256).

**“It’s like confirmation and it’s like all been worthwhile. Sometimes it’s been, I think am I really worth it? Am I this or that? Why should I think I have a choice? But actually, it makes it all worthwhile, yes it does,”**  
(375/379).

Later when Cara completed the member corroboration process she commented,

**“Seeing the grid chart and how I marked myself was a real eye opener at the time. Being a part of this study helped me so much to focus on how much I had really changed.”**

### **6.9 Connecting the research questions with the Changers’ self-theories**

The four sub categories of Changers described how they had begun to elaborate their beliefs about self and to some degree move away from the quest for an ideal self. All the participants had been living ‘as if’ their beliefs about self were ‘truth’. They described what their ideal selves would be like and recalled experiences of disorienting dilemmas where a core role construct had been invalidated. It seemed that tight core role construing of an ideal self, with clearly defined high standards, led to a narrow range of convenience and when invalidation seemed imminent they felt more anxiety about the outcome as there were few alternatives. In the past the Changers had to find a solution within their existing construing systems, as elaboration was not considered possible.

### **The benefits of considering alternative meanings**

The second research question was to investigate how self-theories were being elaborated and considering the possibility that there may be alternative meanings seems to be an important part of elaboration beliefs and feelings. There is evidence that as the Changers elaborated their tight construing their wider range of convenience provided more choices, which reduced the level of risk, as there were more sources of worth. However, when elaboration is considered there will always be a level of uncertainty and it seems to be important to elaborate the meaning of feelings so that they are construed as part of doing something differently and not as indicating that they may not be able to perform well. The differences in the four sub categories of Changers seemed to reflect the extent to which elaboration had been considered possible or not, and the role of feelings in this decision is important. The elaboration of beliefs and feelings needs to occur simultaneously.

At some point each of the Changers had asked the question, what if this is not true or what if something else is possible? With this question came the possibility that the previously devalued evidence of success in their lives, could be re-evaluated and used to validate self. By elaborating their ideal self the criteria for gaining validation became easier to reach. The gap between ideal and actual selves was reduced so that the Changers were evaluating themselves on a more favourable scale. Instead of their ideal self's perfect performance against which they would always be failing, their elaborated beliefs about self, moved closer to the 'good enough' self. This less critical comparison offered the possibility of reaching a more attainable standard and validating their actual self.

### **Benefits of increased validation**

The third research question was to determine if it was possible to learn how to employ the self-theories which facilitated change and from the Changers' interviews it was apparent that there was a motivating aspect to elaborating beliefs. With increasing validation for a growing and developing self, came more positive feelings about self, which were evident in the sub categories of Changers, with more elaboration bringing more validation. Construing self as

'good enough' makes gaining validation easier and the increase in positive feelings about self makes further elaboration more likely. Across the four sub categories there were signs that elaborating ideal selves, with their unattainable high standards, into something more achievable meant that the participants were more frequently validated. Increased validation of self meant more positive feelings about self and was also linked to separating self-worth and performance. Within this study there was evidence that the participants who construed their self-worth as fairly separate from their performance were able to consider taking more risks, as their worth was not at stake. The ability to construe increased anxiety as a part of doing or learning something new, and not as an indication that the actual self may be lacking, makes elaborating beliefs more likely.

Within the four sub categories it was possible to identify how increased elaboration brought increased validation of self and to see the positive benefits of validation in the individual's construing system. Where the participant continued to evaluate selves and to employ established beliefs and responses, the impact of elaboration was reduced.

In comparison to Jill, who believed there had been no option but to change, the fourth sub category of Changers were excited by the changes in their lives. Each of these participants had changed from living 'as if' a belief was truth to questioning 'what if something else is possible? Despite the initial increase in anxiety that questioning an established belief brought, they had been able to consider alternative meanings and to elaborate their beliefs, which had a positive influence on their construing system. This elaboration of construing seemed to result in them beginning to predict that, when they experienced a disorienting dilemma, it could be indicating where their established construing needed to be elaborated to meet the demands of the new situation.

Elaborating a truth into a hypothesis increases available options and this seems to decrease anxiety. That is, instead of the right or wrong retirement plans, the possibility of there being many valid retirement plans increases

options and this reduces anxiety that there is a definitive plan to discover. Elaborating beliefs increases choices, reduces negative comparisons of self, values evidence of success and brings more validation of the actual self, which makes further elaboration more likely.

## **Chapter seven – Core beliefs about self influence the ability to change**

### **7.0 The implications of construing self as a hypothesis to change**

In the last three chapters the self-theories that facilitate and hinder change were identified from the participants' core beliefs and feelings about self. The constituent themes of exploratory and sustaining beliefs and responses were described and examples of each were given to ground them in the data. These chapters also began to investigate when self-theories were being elaborated, how this was accomplished and in this chapter the stages involved in elaborating self-theories will be more fully explored and a more theoretical understanding of the emerging theory developed. The purpose of this study is to explore the consequences of employing different self-theories and the first research question sought to identify the self-theories which facilitated or hindered change. The construing of core beliefs as 'truths' or 'hypotheses' was the first dimension considered and the participants were located on this dimension according to their construing of their beliefs in general and their construing of self in particular.

The second research question focuses on investigating, if and when, self-theories are elaborated and an important part of this process involves elaborating an 'ideal self' to a 'good enough' self. The Explorers described having hypotheses that they tested and elaborated as necessary, one of these hypotheses was that they had a 'good enough' self. By construing self in this way they elaborated their tight construing of their 'ideal self' who sought to perform to a specific standard in order to gain worth. Instead, they developed a more loosely construed 'good enough' self, whose wider range of convenience, meant that evidence of success in many areas of their life were valued as sources of worth.

A good enough self has multiple sources of worth and this seemed to result in the Explorers being freer to experiment with new solutions without their self-worth being at risk. In contrast, the Maintainers described having 'truths' which they sought to validate and one of these truths was their construing of an 'ideal self'. This tightly construed ideal self defined the standards for their

life, whether it was the standard of their retirement plan, the state of their home, the development of their children, or the possessions they owned.

This tight construing seemed to result in their ideal self, having a very narrow range of convenience where there were few, if any, alternative sources of worth. Instead there were clear standards against which to evaluate their actual performance at any point in time. This evaluation of ideal and actual selves created significant anxiety as they were predicting that they may not be able to meet the demands of the situation to their high standards and so their worth would be diminished. Any new activity or situation tended to be construed as another performance where their lack could be exposed to others or confirmed to them. When they encountered a disorienting dilemma, which invalidated their core role construing, they tended to return to established beliefs and responses to reduce the level of threat they were experiencing.

Spread across the middle of the dimension were the Changers, who had elaborated their core role construing to different degrees and who described different amounts of anxiety. There seemed to be a link between the amount of elaboration that had taken place and how anxiety was construed. It appears that with increased elaboration of their core role construing of self and the creation of alternative sources of worth, there was a decrease in anxiety when invalidation occurred, as they had, to varying extents, alternative sources of worth.

The degree of elaboration was apparent in the use of exploratory and sustaining beliefs and responses, with more exploratory beliefs and responses being employed as elaboration occurred. Essentially, looser construing of self and a wider range of convenience seemed to create more choices when invalidation was imminent. Increased choices kept the levels of negative feelings lower and there appeared to be a greater likelihood of them being construed as an indicator that current construing was insufficient for the situation and therefore a prompt to evaluate established beliefs and elaborate as necessary.

The Changers elaborated their beliefs and feelings to different degrees and employed a mixture of the exploratory and sustaining beliefs and responses. There was evidence that sufficient elaboration had to occur for the participant to fully engage in the process of 'Becoming an Explorer'. Where there was only a little elaboration the increased anxiety, which accompanied considering alternatives, still tended to be construed as indicating a potential lack in the actual self and this often resulted in the participant also employing established beliefs and responses to reduce their immediate anxiety. The influence of feelings on the participant's ability to elaborate is an important aspect of the findings and this will now be discussed further.

Tight core role construing of an ideal self seemed to result in a narrow range of convenience, where every event had to be understood and responded to within the existing construct system. Construing beliefs as 'truths' offers a clearly defined self and the high standards make it easy to assess every performance. When the high standards are met then the ideal self is validated and the participant feels worthy. However, by only being able to gain worth by performance and to a very specific standard, the Maintainer limits their sources of worth to those associated with the ideal self. As previously mentioned, the Maintainers described evidence of their success in life in many other areas but when asked why they discounted it the reply was always that it did not meet their ideal standard. This narrow construing of what success means and how it can be obtained results in them having only one valid way of gaining worth which, unfortunately, they rarely do.

It is not surprising that when faced with possible invalidation in a disorienting dilemma the level of threat they experience is high as their limited source of worth is at risk. It seems that tight construing of an ideal self with a single/limited source of worth makes considering changing a much higher risk and explains why the Maintainers tend to avoid situations that they construe as too threatening. Table twenty-eight highlights the differences between the Explorers' and the Maintainers' beliefs about self, in a condensed fashion, and indicates four main areas where feelings influence whether elaboration will occur. The differences between the Explorers' beliefs

on the left side of the table and the Maintainers' beliefs on the right reflect the interpretative and realist discourses of self which are being employed. How these feelings are generated and combine to reinforce core beliefs is of crucial importance in understanding why elaboration of beliefs can be construed as something to avoid as it is too threatening to fragile self-worth.

**Table 28: How construing of beliefs about self influences feelings.**

<b>Construing of beliefs about self influences feelings about self.</b>	
<p><b>Explorers' beliefs are hypotheses to be tested and elaborated as necessary.</b> Expect to review beliefs and try out solutions, so periods of uncertainty are anticipated and anxiety levels stay low.</p>	<p><b>Maintainers' beliefs about self are truths to be validated.</b> They expect solutions to be within their clearly defined truths, this increases their anxiety, as choices are limited.</p>
<b>Construing of self influences feelings</b>	
<p><b>'Good enough self'</b> means there is room to make mistakes and learn over time, as performance does not reflect worth. Easier to gain validation and so there are positive feelings and low anxiety about experimenting and not knowing.</p>	<p><b>'Ideal self'</b> defines the standard to be attained and so performance reflects their worth. There are no alternative sources of worth and so little room to make mistakes or learn over time. There is increased anxiety about every performance.</p>
<b>Type of evaluation influences feelings</b>	
<p><b>Focus is on finding solutions,</b> so they evaluate alternatives to assess the best response. This focus on growth and learning increases positive feelings about self.</p>	<p><b>Focus is on reaching their ideal standard,</b> so they evaluate ideal and actual selves and normally find a negative gap. This increases negative feelings and their level of anxiety.</p>
<b>Meaning and function of feelings</b>	
<p>Gap between 'good enough' and actual selves is small so there is ongoing validation which increases positive feelings and reduces anxiety, there is hope of success. This allows experiments to be tried and change is a challenge to embrace.</p>	<p>Not meeting their ideal standards means that validation is infrequent which increases their negative feelings about self. With no alternative sources of worth, change is construed as a threat to avoid.</p>

### **7.1 Multiple sources of worth facilitate elaboration and change**

When the Explorers were facing a disorienting dilemma where a core role construct might be invalidated their multiple sources of worth seemed to reduce the perceived risk. Their good enough self was aware of many areas where they were capable and by recognising the evidence of success they were able to gain worth from many areas of their lives. It appeared that taking a risk by elaborating one aspect of self was less threatening because their alternative sources of worth provided a stable base from which to explore one of their beliefs. For example, one of the Changers called Carly described how discovering she was successful in a different area of her life encouraged her to believe that she did have more abilities than she had previously thought.

**"I was then being successful in one area so I began to trust that I could do things in other areas. So there was less doubt about my own ability, and more trusting in the people who around me, as well as myself," (74/78).**

When the Explorers, and to varying degrees the Changers, found themselves in the position of being a beginner and not knowing how to do something, it was easier to be a learner and the uncertainty about the outcome did not dramatically increase their anxiety levels. Rather, increased anxiety was construed as a part of the learning process. There was space to be a beginner, to make mistakes and to learn over time.

Another of the Changers called Anne, who had previously only construed herself as a mother, describes how she elaborated the meaning of feeling threatened when she decided to go to university. In the past she had experienced life as very threatening.

**"Oh yes, everything in my life was threatening," (848).**

And recently she was able to attend university.

**"Before I would only have stuck with what I knew and wouldn't have moved out of that zone. Wouldn't have moved towards anything that was threatening. But in actual fact, threatening to who? Or whom? University isn't threatening to anyone, going out of your door isn't threatening. Having folk in your house isn't threatening," (834/840).**

It seemed that having many sources of worth gave the Explorers enough stability to take more risks in elaborating their beliefs by experimenting with alternatives. It was interesting to note that many of the Explorers also described 'self-talk', where they were able to soothe their feelings and remind themselves that their anxiety was not because they were lacking, but because they were considering doing something different and their feelings would pass. For example,

Linda said, **"I still feel anxious at times, but it's normal anxiety," (130/131).**

Carly is describing how the depression she used to experience is no longer construed as being able to overwhelm her.

**"It's more in control of my feelings that's a big part of it, em. I don't have to let the depression overwhelm me, I could have control over it. Em, and because I've changed that much I'm quite pleased with myself," (247/251).**

Carly had changed from feeling panic in the past, to now feeling calm most of the time, and even when her feelings become more intense she responds in a different way.

**"It's secure that I can, that things don't have to, that I don't have to be frightened of my feelings, or scared of my feelings. Em, I can be secure in knowing that they are from the past, maybe they will have a, an affect in the future or in the present but, eh they are not so overwhelming.**

**Ah, and because I've changed, quite a bit, I feel quite secure in what I've change to, I feel happier in it," (348/355).**

In these examples the participants were elaborating their feelings of anxiety and threat, into prompts to explore their beliefs, rather than as reflecting their lack of worth. There are also indications that their goal-orientation had changed from validation seeking to growth seeking. It is my hypothesis that multiple sources of worth result in self-worth being more stable. The combination of construing their beliefs about self as hypotheses to be tested and elaborated as necessary, includes the anticipation that elaboration will be necessary and, along with a stable sense of worth, seems to facilitate change.

## **7.2 A single source of worth hinders elaboration and change**

The Maintainers tended to have one ideal self with very clearly defined high standards and when they were met they would have a significant source of worth. Other areas of the Maintainers' lives where they were capable or experiencing 'success' were discounted as only the standards of the ideal self were valued. With only one source of potential worth, the Maintainers' experience an increase in their anxiety level when they consider elaborating a belief, as they are unable to predict the outcome and additionally their fragile self-worth is threatened.

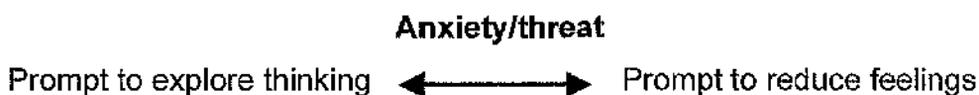
Encountering a situation where a new task is involved will also raise the Maintainers' anxiety level, as being a beginner and 'not knowing', are often construed as evidence of the actual self's lack of ability. The incredibly high expectations of the ideal self to learn quickly and effortlessly makes many new learning situations threatening, as they may not be able to perform to the ideal standard. When a Maintainer returns to their established sustaining beliefs and responses, there is a familiarity that they construe as being the 'real me,' and so familiarity, is mistaken for 'truth'. (Examples of this were given on page 176) There were many instances where the Maintainers described their feelings as 'entities' that could overpower them. An example of this has been given when Carly was talking about how she feared being

overwhelmed by depression in the past. For most of the Maintainers their feelings were construed as truths and their meaning never questioned, which resulted in them being prompts that indicated the need to return to certainty, by employing established sustaining beliefs and responses.

For the Maintainers the desire to validate their self, or to avoid further invalidation, is very strong and directs most of their actions. When the participants in studies two and three were asked to complete Goal-Orientation Inventories there were striking differences between the Maintainers and the Explorers. Most of the Maintainers agreed with double the number of validation statements as they did with growth statements. In contrast the Explorers agreed with four to seven growth statements for each validation statement. It would seem that elaborating the meaning of anxiety and threat is a crucial part of creating a space to elaborate beliefs by questioning established truths and considering alternatives.

### **7.3 Disorienting dilemmas as an opportunities to grow or a threat to self**

Most of the participants described experiencing negative emotions, in particular anxiety and threat, which served as prompts that an important belief was being challenged, or an established solution was not sufficient for the situation. The experience of these feelings seems to play a pivotal role in the change process. There were two ways of responding to the anxiety and threat.



The Explorers and, in varying degrees, the Changers, used their awareness of feeling threatened or anxious to address the challenge of an invalidated belief by considering alternatives, and eventually they reduced their feelings by experimenting with a different solution. However, the Maintainers experienced a greater level of anxiety and threat due to their need to validate a core belief to sustain their only source of worth, which then seemed to leave them less able to consider elaborating their beliefs.

It seems that the Explorers and Maintainers were asking very different questions when they experienced anxiety, which resulted in them pursuing different answers and courses of action. The Explorers and the Changers were apt to ask, what can I do about this? And the answer tended to be, review established construing and, if necessary, consider alternatives. The Maintainers were apt to ask, how do I reduce or get rid of this feeling? And the answer tended to be - withdrawal, avoidance and distance from the situation or individual.

When confronted with a challenge to established construing in a disorienting dilemma there seemed to be two very different reflective processes, which were based on either a growth or a validation orientation. The Explorers' growth-orientation seems to be based on beliefs about self as able to change and, with multiple sources of worth, they have a base from which to experiment with alternative beliefs, while sustaining a level of worth. They expect that there will be setbacks, difficulties and failures, but predict that with effort, they can develop new solutions and strategies.

In complete contrast, the Maintainers' reflection seems to be based on seeking validation for their established beliefs in general and their ideal self in particular. The strong connection between self-worth and performance means that their sense of worth is at risk in every new situation and relationship, which increases their level of anxiety. By largely construing self as unable to change they have to find solutions within their established construing, which limits available options and again increases anxiety. Their single source of worth, which is linked to attaining specific standards, results in their sense of worth constantly fluctuating. Essentially, they construe their beliefs about self as stable and their self-worth as fluctuating and this combination hinders change.

#### **7.4 How self-theories influence the ability to change**

The findings will now be considered within a personal construct framework as this further clarifies how beliefs about self can facilitate or hinder elaboration and change. It also develops the answers to research questions one and

two. Beliefs about self are core constructs, which influence adaptive functioning, behaviour, goal-orientation and motivation and shape individual worlds. They result in qualitatively different experiences of self and the world. The purpose of constructs is to enable the individual to make meaning out of their experiences and core constructs are like the bricks that are used to form the foundation of a building. They are probably created at an early age and may well influence construing in a largely unquestioned way. They are the basic assumptions or truths on, which construing is based.

Within PCT, anxiety is defined as anticipating a situation for which my constructs are inadequate. For the Maintainers, with their clearly defined ideal selves, and their evaluation of their actual selves as lacking, there is anxiety because they do not construe alternatives. Their rigid or tight construing leaves them with no room to consider alternative sources of worth. While their tight constructs offer the illusion of certainty and predictability, they seem to pay a high price in terms of increased anxiety and threat levels in many situations. Their tight construct systems are often insufficient to cope with new events as, every response or solution has to be found within the existing range of convenience.

For example, Eva, mentioned on page 172 was living 'as if' her standards for how her friends should behave were truth. She had no alternative constructs for friends. Eva's only source of worth came from finding 'good' friends who knew how to behave, so that she was visible and validated. Eva mostly described how this truth was invalidated. She has no alternative constructs and continues to seek validation for an already invalidated belief, which results in her experiencing strong negative feelings about herself. Within PCT, hostility is defined as trying to extract evidence from circumstances or events, which have yielded at best, only partial validation. In her grid, Eva described four 'friends', but only David the person she admired, validated her ideal self. As she related stories about the other three friends she realised that they did not actually meet her standards for friendship and within her construing were not really friends.

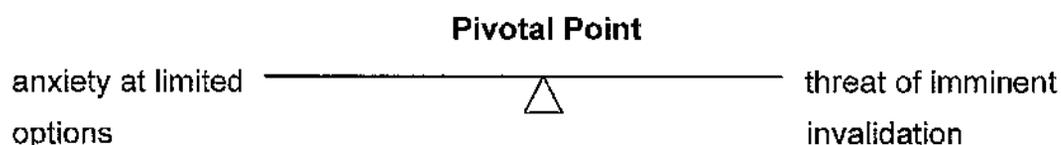
Fragmentation is another aspect of PCT which is relevant to the findings, as it suggests that an individual cannot change to something for which they have either limited, or no constructs. In the above example Eva appeared to have no alternative constructs for gaining validation, apart from finding 'good' friends. In order for Eva to consider elaborating her ideal self she needs to have constructs for alternative sources of worth. It is the lack of available alternatives which make the disorienting dilemmas so threatening. In PCT, threat is defined as invalidation of core role construing and this is seen when the Maintainers encounter a disorienting dilemma and realise that their predictions, based on core role constructs, are not going to be validated. Indeed disorienting dilemmas include awareness of imminent invalidation of core role constructs. The differences between the two core role constructs about self are clearly seen when participants at either end of the dimension become aware of the imminent invalidation of their core construing.

#### **Flexible construing of self results in stable self-worth and facilitates change**

The Explorers, with their flexible beliefs about self, are anticipating that elaboration will be necessary throughout life and provision is made to do this by construing their beliefs about self as hypotheses to be tested and elaborated as necessary. As a result, they have a wider range of convenience for what a good self involves. They seem to gain worth from many areas of their lives and can take more risks in experimenting in one area of their life without threatening their self-worth completely. Their awareness of possible invalidation does increase their initial anxiety, but this is construed as a prompt to review their beliefs and to consider alternatives, and so change is more of a challenge to embrace. At the pivotal point the Explorers' core constructs are not as threatened by invalidation, as they are anticipating elaboration and their anxiety levels are used as prompts to evaluate the effectiveness of current construing.

#### **Fixed construing of self results in unstable self-worth and hinders change**

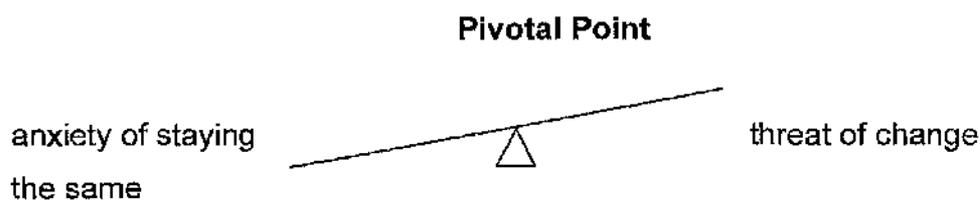
The meaning of a disorienting dilemma is different for the Maintainers and so are their responses. When they become aware of imminent invalidation of a core role construct, they have few if any available alternatives, especially alternative sources of worth. The possibility of invalidating core constructs is a threat to their ideal self and there is increased anxiety as they reflect within their existing limited range of convenience. For the Maintainers, the pivotal point is about threat and anxiety as defined within PCT. There are essentially two levels of negative feelings, first there is anxiety about how they will cope as they have limited options. Secondly, there is the awareness of imminent invalidation of a core role construct which threatens their unstable self-worth. Consequently elaboration and, implicitly, change is a threat to avoid. Returning to the seesaw metaphor to describe the pivotal point highlights their unsettling dilemma.



With relatively fixed construing of self there are few, if any, viable alternative constructs for self and only one source of significant worth. When faced with the prospect of further invalidation the Maintainers return to their established construing, as seen in the constituent themes of sustaining beliefs and responses. These serve the function of reducing anxiety and threat in the short-term. However, there are long-term consequences for the Maintainers as they return to their quest to validate their ideal self. Nothing else is construed as good enough and they experience increased frustration as they attempt to validate an already invalidated belief. The Maintainers discount evidence of success in other areas of their lives as it does not conform to their ideal standards and experience growing dissatisfaction with their actual selves.

There is a clear difference in the quality of life of the Explorers and the Maintainers, which appears to be directly influenced by their beliefs about self. The third research question was to determine if the self-theories which

facilitate change could be learned and there does seem to be a self-motivating component to employing exploratory beliefs and responses. PCT suggests that elaboration occurs when the anxiety aroused by staying in the same place is greater than the threat of changing and there is evidence of this in the Explorers' transcripts and to varying degrees in those of the Changers. The Explorers' beliefs about self are not so threatened by change as their flexible construing systems allow for growth and elaboration to happen. For the Explorers, the anxiety aroused by staying in the same place is greater, or more significant, than the threat of change.



In the past, elaborating beliefs had positive outcomes for the Explorers and this seems to encourage them to persevere through the phase of increased anxiety that accompanies a disorienting dilemma. It was when the participants were describing disorienting dilemmas that differences in their core role construing were most obvious.

### **The meaning of setbacks and failure**

Disorienting dilemmas occur when participants' predictions were not validated, that is, when they found themselves in a situation where what they expected to happen did not and so a core role construct was invalidated. There were also many examples of participants being asked to do something out with their existing construing of self, which also threatened to invalidate their construing. The meaning of setbacks and failure for the different groups of participants highlights what is considered possible, or not, within the different construing systems.

Dweck's (2000) investigation into theories of self, highlighted the differences in construing between participants who employed an Entity, or an Incremental, theory of intelligence. It was when the participants encountered

setbacks or failure that the differences in their construing were most apparent. Participants employing an entity theory, construed failure in one area as reflecting their worth in general, which resulted in them being very careful about what they chose to do, so that they could predict a positive outcome and validate their self. Their construing of intelligence, as meaning that learning should be easy and effortless, meant that when they experienced a setback, they would tend to withdraw, as they did not have alternative constructs available.

In comparison, the participants who employed an incremental theory of intelligence, tended to construe failure as meaning that their belief, strategy, or solution was not sufficient for the task and an alternative would need to be developed. It would be their response, and not their self, that had been inadequate and effort would be given to creating and evaluating alternatives. Problems, failure and setbacks were more likely to be construed as challenges to embrace, as opposed to something to avoid, in case they could not meet the demands of the task or situation.

Within this study there is evidence of the Maintainers' beliefs about self also including an entity theory of intelligence. When they experience invalidation of core role construing in a disorienting dilemma, they respond in similar ways to the students in Dweck's (2000) studies, by construing invalidation as a reflection of their lack of worth. There is a tendency to disengage from situations, tasks and relationships in an attempt to protect their vulnerable self from further invalidation. The Explorers, with their incremental theory of intelligence, separate their self-worth from their performance and construe setbacks as meaning that they need to find a more appropriate solution. In this study there is clear evidence of the Explorers separating their past and present abilities and this gives them room to consider that in this new situation they may be able to do something that had previously been difficult.

While Dweck's (2000) study focused on how participants responded to failure in an academic learning situation, in this study there was evidence of the participants employing similar kinds of responses to setbacks and failure in

more general life situations. Entity and Incremental theories of intelligence were part of the participants' beliefs about self and seemed to influence more than their responses to formal learning. In this study disorienting dilemmas often included experiencing failure or a setback in life and it was these situations that the differences in core role construing were most evident.

### **The two processes as cycles of reflection**

The purpose of this chapter is to define the impact of beliefs about self on participants' construing systems. By reviewing the master themes as core role constructs, it has been possible to clarify how the Explorers' and Maintainers' different core role constructs hinder or facilitate their ability to elaborate their beliefs when they encounter a disorienting dilemma. The Explorers' flexible construing of self and stable self-worth seems to reduce anxiety and threat at the pivotal point and so facilitate elaboration. In contrast, the Maintainers' fixed construing of self and unstable self-worth, increase anxiety and make potential invalidation seem threatening and so hinder elaboration. The choice at the pivotal point is between elaborating a construct to broaden understanding or to validate construing and have constricted certainty.

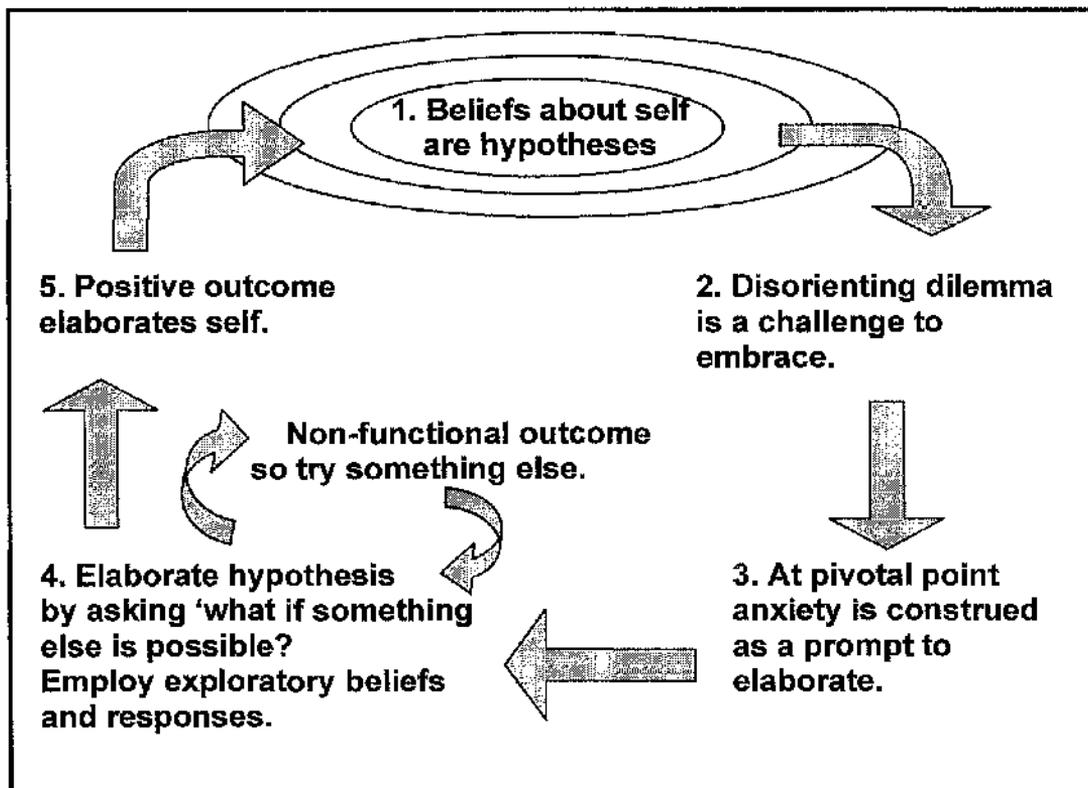
In this study, the two master themes represent different beliefs about self and these core role constructs are part of broader construing systems. The processes of Becoming an Explorer and the Quest for an Ideal Self, have been employed to differentiate these construing systems and they will now be reviewed as cycles of reflection.

### **7.5 Becoming an Explorer is a reflective cycle which facilitates change**

Essentially the process of Becoming an Explorer is based on construing alternatives. When this process is considered as a reflective cycle there is further evidence of how different the construing systems are as a result of core role construing. It is the Explorers' ability to create and consider other meanings and solutions that seems to reduce the level of threat they experience when a disorienting dilemma occurs.

Within PCT the creativity circle is used to explain the process of elaborating construing. When the constructs of transition, threat, anxiety, guilt and hostility are experienced, they can be used as prompts which indicate that current construing may not be sufficient and require elaboration. In this study, the Explorers, and to varying degrees the Changers, were using these feelings as prompts to explore/evaluate their existing constructs. Elaborating a construct involves loosening the meaning sufficiently for alternatives to be considered and evaluated. An experiment may be undertaken and if deemed useful it enlarges the existing construct, which is then tightened, until the next elaboration is considered necessary. When the constructs of transition are experienced there are two choices at the pivotal point, which are to elaborate construing and so broaden understanding, or to validate construing, which gives constricted certainty.

**Table 29: The exploratory cycle of reflection shows the creativity circle in action.**



Alice is an Explorer and her construing illustrates how the exploratory cycle of reflection facilitates elaboration and change. At the time of the interview

Alice was nineteen years old and finishing her first year at university. She had left home to attend university, was sharing a flat and had a part-time job. As a schoolgirl, Alice had achieved very high marks in most subjects and this 'high achiever' was a good self, who provided a significant source of worth. Alice's experience of invalidation will be reviewed within the exploratory cycle of reflection.

**Stage one** - Living 'as if' a belief is a hypothesis implicitly assumes that self can change. Within this reflective cycle the results of trying or believing something new, are incorporated into the individual's construing system and the circles around the 'beliefs about self' indicate growth and assimilation.

Alice had been living with a good self who was a 'high achiever' and who had been a significant source of worth. She did have other sources of worth in her roles as a daughter, sister, friend and Christian. (This is the diverse portfolio of the market trader who invests in several good companies to spread their financial risks across several companies.) Alice recognised her success in other areas and roles in her life and this seems to indicate flexible construing of self where many factors influence her core role construing.

**Stage two** - In this cycle of reflection, disorienting dilemmas are construed as indicating that existing constructs are not sufficient for the new situation. Some of the constructs of transition are present, so elaboration may be considered, although this depends on how the feelings are construed. For the Explorers, feelings are prompts to explore their beliefs and so invalidation is construed as a challenge to embrace.

Going to university created a disorienting dilemma when Alice experienced more demands on her time and the core role construing of the 'high achiever' was invalidated. In addition to being a student Alice now had to look after a flat and work part-time. These new roles increased her anxiety about how well she would do in her course and there was a threat to her construing of self as a 'high achiever', as she no longer had sufficient time to work to her

previous high standard. Alice began to consider being a 'good enough' student.

**Stage three** - At the pivotal point the increased anxiety that accompanies awareness of possible invalidation of a core role construct is construed as a prompt to review construing and not as a threat to self-worth. The Explorers choose the construct that they predict will give most self-worth. Alice has always acknowledged evidence of success in other areas of her life and these alternative sources of worth seem to provide a stable sense of worth that allowed the risk of elaboration to be undertaken. Alice was able to loosen her construing of a 'high achieving' pupil so that it included being 'good enough' in many roles.

high standard in one role  good enough in many roles

**Stage four** - The Explorers review and elaborate the relevant hypothesis by asking 'what if' there are alternatives? They experiment with a different response and, if it is functional, it enlarges their construing of self and, even if it is not a desired outcome, it still provides information and another experiment is undertaken.

Alice is now a 'good enough' flatmate, worker, student, friend, daughter, sister, etc and these diverse sources of worth sustain and promote positive feelings about her self. Essentially, Alice reconstrued the meaning of having a good, 'high achieving self', in the light of the new situation, (leaving home) and choose to elaborate the self that she predicted would give her the most self-worth. With the increased demands on her time she chose to elaborate her 'balanced self' and predicted that this would be a significant source of worth.

**Stage Five** - The positive outcome of reducing her high academic standards validates Alice's 'balanced self' and gives her a wider range of convenience for her construing of a 'good' self. In addition, her repertoire of available responses is increased. Alice had a sense of agency, where she was

anticipating that she could meet her own needs, and work out what to do in new situations. Alice can tolerate the increased uncertainty that accompanies loosening a construct, as she has sufficient alternative sources of worth from her successes in other roles, to sustain a stable sense of worth. At the pivotal point Alice elaborates her construing to broaden her understanding, that is, she chooses to elaborate her 'balanced self' as she predicts this will give her more worth than the 'high achiever' in this new situation. Alice's anxiety at staying the same and trying to sustain her previous standards is greater than the threat of elaborating her construing of self. The Explorers' effort is used to create and evaluate alternatives and to experiment with them. Becoming an Explorer, is something you **do**. In comparison, the Quest for Ideal Self is about trying to **be** a particular kind of self.

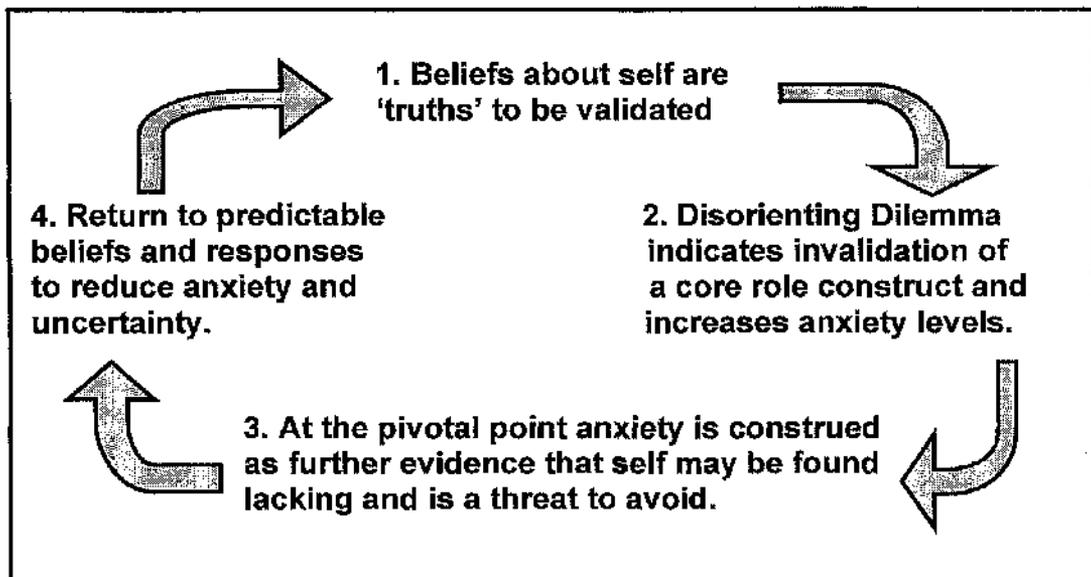
#### **7.6 The Quest for an Ideal Self is a reflective cycle which hinder change**

The Maintainers exert effort in trying to validate their ideal self, nothing else is considered worthy. This reflective cycle does not include the growth circles around the beliefs about self, as the goal is to validate their established 'truths' about their ideal self and so they choose constricted certainty over broadened understanding.

The creativity circle involves exploring a tight construct by loosening it and investigating options, trying one out and tightening the construct up again by including the elaboration so that the construct is changed. Loosening a construct increases uncertainty for a period of time and the Maintainers struggle to tolerate even short-term uncertainty as it threatens their construing of self. There is brief period of considering what might be possible that occurs between becoming aware of the disorienting dilemma and reaching the pivotal point. However, this loosening creates so much anxiety about the outcome that the Maintainers quickly tighten their construing again to reduce uncertainty and return to their established beliefs and responses. The Maintainers' tight construing of an 'ideal self', where they make unvarying predictions, seems to give a sense of security and certainty.

Suzy is the Maintainer whose ideal self would always have an immaculate home which reflected her high standards and worth. This is potentially such a good source of worth that Suzy does not recognise other areas where she does well (this is the myopic focus of the single company investor whose financial security is dependent on the performance of a single company).

**Table 30: The sustaining cycle of reflection shows a limited creative circle.**



**Stage One** - Living 'as if' beliefs about self are truths to be validated. Reflection only occurs within the established range of convenience which severely restricts their options and consequently there is little, if any, elaboration of the actual self. The goal is to validate the ideal self and so enhance self-worth.

Suzy is living 'as if' having an immaculate home will give her worth. Her ideal self is a 'standard setting' self and is her main source of potential worth. Suzy's unvarying predications that meeting her high standards will give her worth seems to result in her experiencing guilt when she does not meet these standards. Consequently she often feels unworthy and this is something she tries to avoid.

**Stage Two** - For the Maintainers, a disorienting dilemma represents possible invalidation of a core role construct and this is something they want to avoid, as their evaluations of their ideal and actual selves already make them feel as if they are lacking.

As Suzy's home is frequently less than perfect she experiences invalidation regularly. With her myopic focus on the worth of her 'standard setting' ideal self she rarely considers that there might be an alternative way of living or of gaining worth. The only viable alternative self in her repertory grid was an undeveloped 'laid back' self who would have an untidy home. To elaborate her 'laid back' self she would need to ask, when has the house been less than immaculate and this seemed to be all right? However, the uncertainty that accompanies even briefly considering this alternative seems to threaten her construing of self and her only source of worth.

**Stage Three** - The Maintainers lack sufficiently developed alternative constructs to enable them to elaborate their construing of self. They do not recognise the evidence of success in any other area of their life and so they cannot predict gaining worth from other sources. However, they are certain of gaining worth when they reach their ideal standards. This certainty offers security in the face of invalidation and makes employing sustaining beliefs and responses very appealing. The meaning of their feelings at the pivotal point are construed as further evidence that their actual self may be lacking.

When Suzy's home is less than immaculate she experiences all of the constructs of transition. There is anxiety about the state of her home as each time she returns she cannot predict how tidy it will be due to her family. There is a threat to her construing of self, as 'me as untidy', does not give her any worth. She feels guilty if she is not meeting her self-imposed standards. There was also evidence of hostility on each occasion when her standards were invalidated that is, when the house was untidy. In order to reduce her feelings and to increase her ability to predict having worth, she employs tremendous effort to tidy the house and so validate her worth. For Suzy, the constructs of transition are experienced as further evidence of her lack of

worth, and she so she acts to reduce the negative feelings and to restore certainty.

**Stage Four** - Return to established beliefs and feelings in an attempt to reduce anxiety and uncertainty. In doing so their beliefs about self remain unaltered and perhaps reinforced.

Suzy's problem is her inability to elaborate her construing system to create alternative possible selves, which are defined enough to offer worth. She does not acknowledge evidence of success in other areas of her life as a wife, mother, career woman, friend etc and so she has no alternative sources of worth to provide stability while she elaborates a specific construct. If Suzy valued the evidence of her competence and skill in other roles it would probably reduce the influence of her negative feelings when she experienced invalidation.

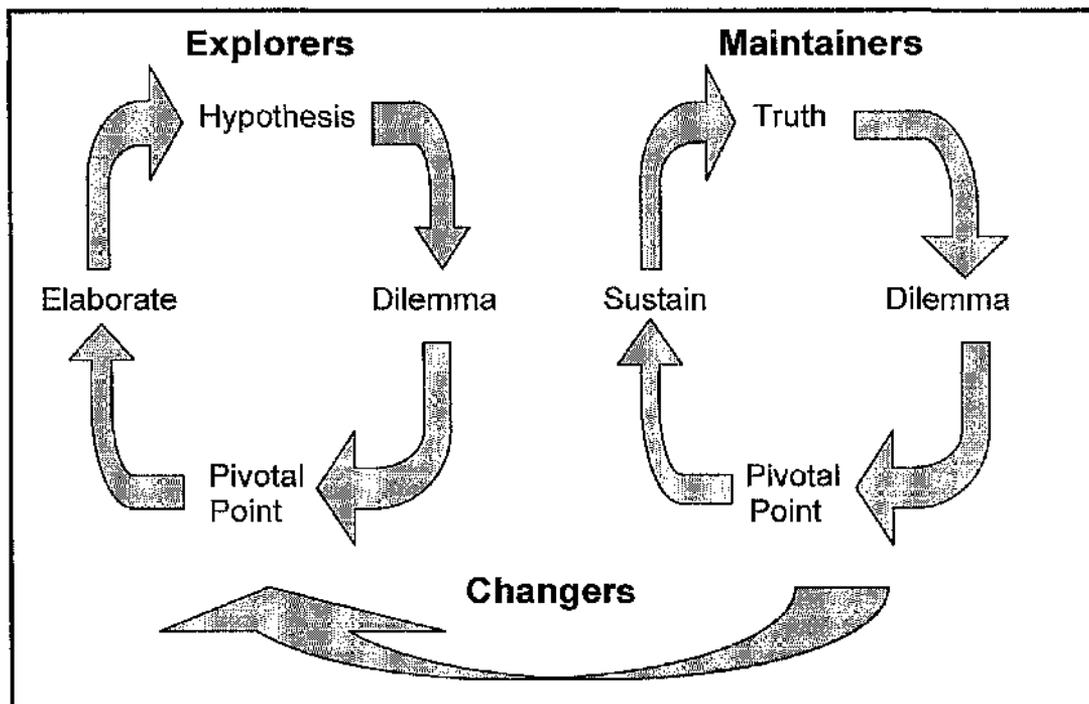
### **7.7 The Changers' transformative reflective cycle**

Most of the Explorers described elaborating their core role constructs from truths about self, to hypotheses about self and explained how elaborating their construing had a positive influence on their feelings and sense of worth. While the Explorers were still elaborating their beliefs in the present, there was a tendency in the interviews to describe more significant changes in construing which had occurred in the past. This was inevitable as the repertory grids were designed to encourage participants to think about how they had changed between the past and the present. In comparison, many of the Changers seemed to be more currently involved in considering elaborating their core role construing. It is in the Changers' cycle of reflection that elaboration is most visible.

In table thirty-one the Changers are construing their feelings at the pivotal point differently and are able to move towards becoming Explorers by elaborating their core role constructs. Instead of the constructs of transition being construed as a prompt to reduce their negative feelings and to increase certainty, they are construed as a prompt to explore their thinking. There is

sufficient anxiety at anticipating staying the same that the threat of change seems to be reduced.

**Table 31: The transformative cycle of reflection.**



Anne provides an example of this cycle of reflection in action. Anne had married at a very young age and unfortunately her husband was abusive. This seemed to result in her construing herself as 'only a mother'. Eventually the couple separated and Anne began to question the truth of many of her core role constructs. In these extracts she is describing elaborating her limited 'mothering self' into a 'student'.

**Stage One** - The Changers had all been living 'as if' a belief was truth but in the face of invalidation of a core role construct had then elaborated their construing to ask, what if this isn't true? One or more truths had been elaborated into hypotheses.

Anne had been living 'as if' being a 'mother' was all she was capable of being. She had spent most of her time in her home and construed life outside as threatening and out with her abilities.

**Stage Two** - All the Changers described at least one disorienting dilemma where they had considered that the invalidation of a belief might be indicating that another meaning might be possible. It is the awareness of potential alternatives that facilitates elaboration of truths into hypotheses.

When Anne and her husband separated she found her core role as, 'a stay at home mother', was no longer sufficient in her new liberated situation. In the past Anne had tended to only attempt tasks where she could predict a successful outcome, but without her husband's presence, she began to consider that there might be alternatives. Anne's anxiety about staying the same and living a very limited life was greater than the threat of elaborating her construing of self and this enabled her to loosen her construing of self.

**Stage Three** - Having questioned the truth of their established belief and considered the possibility that there might be alternative meanings, the Changers were able to construe their feelings at the pivotal point in a different way. Having entertained the idea that something else might be true or possible, their anxiety was not construed as a prompt to withdraw, but as a prompt to explore. It is at this stage that the Changers elaborate their 'truth' into a hypothesis and move into the exploratory cycle of reflection.

At the pivotal point, Anne construed her feelings as a prompt to explore her construing and she moved over to the exploratory cycle of reflection. Anne began to recognise and use the evidence of success in other areas of her life to create alternative sources of worth. She had previously been a helper at the 'Brownies,' a Sunday school teacher and a valued friend at the local playgroup. These other roles offered sources of worth that provided a stable base from which to consider elaborating her construing to include the possibility of 'me as a student'.

**Stage Four** - By questioning the status of their beliefs, the Changers were able to consider alternatives. This seemed to result in them beginning to employ some of the exploratory beliefs and responses and to experiment with alternatives. Anne increasingly used exploratory beliefs and responses

to question her established construing. For example, she separated her past abilities from those in the present, she began to consider that she might be 'good enough' to try new activities and realised that, with effort, she could do more than she had previously anticipated. An important change was in the meaning of gaining a poor mark, of doing something badly or being criticised, which previously would have been construed as reflecting a self who had little worth.

**"It's like, the better you do something the more worthwhile you are, (690/691). And I'd say it has possibly changed, before I would take, I would take any criticism, any failure, any knock-back as me. As criticising me, who I am," (679/681).**

Whereas now she thinks that even getting a low mark at university would not define her worth.

**"If I don't pass it, it's not, I must admit everything used to be life or death, but not it's not the same. As long as I'm still happy. It's this, doing it for myself and not being answerable now to anyone, because it's only for me. You know it's for me," (746/747 & 759/761).**

In this way Anne was able to elaborate her construing of self. The increase in positive feelings that accompanied elaborating her constructs encouraged her to continue using the constructs of transition as prompts to explore her beliefs. This is a good example of how the positive outcomes of elaborating self-theories can motivate the participant to consider elaborating when the next disorienting dilemma is experienced. The third research question was to determine if the self-theories which facilitate change can be learned. There is evidence of the positive outcomes of elaborating beliefs and feelings creating a better quality of life and so reinforcing the usefulness of elaborating and making it more likely to be used in the future. Indeed she said,

**"I have it in my mind eh, that I can possibly change that whole story," (181/182).**

**Stage Five** - The extent to which a Changer questioned their established truths varied between the participants in this group, but there were similar benefits when core role constructs were elaborated. These had a motivating affect on the participants.

- The loosening of core role construing by questioning established truths allowed alternatives to be created and evaluated. This was of benefit as the wider range of convenience increased choices and seemed to reduce anxiety.
- With the elaboration of truths into hypotheses came more consistent and predictable validation of the actual self. This developed as the participants stopped evaluating the evidence of their success against an idealised standard and began to recognise and value the evidence of success in other areas of their lives.
- Once the ideal self was elaborated into a good enough self the crippling negative evaluation of the actual self ended. Recognising many sources of worth provided a stable base from which to consider elaborating beliefs and resulted in more frequent validation as the evidence of their successes were recognised and valued. This resulted in the participants experiencing positive feelings about self.
- With the positive feelings about self there seemed to be hope for further positive outcomes in the future. Indeed as elaboration increased so did validation for the good enough self and this seemed to have a motivating function.
- Construing beliefs about self as hypotheses builds in the anticipation that elaboration will be necessary throughout life. This malleable self has many sources of worth and is able to take more risks and experiment without the threat of being found lacking.
- Moving towards becoming an Explorer is an active process, it is something you **do** and exploratory beliefs and responses allow the participants to influence outcomes. In comparison, the quest for an ideal self is about trying to **be** someone. Whether the quest was to be 'top dog', to be a person of worth by having an immaculate home, to be a

person of worth by having the right possessions or the right retirement plan the goal was the same – 'to be' their ideal self.

### **7.8 A summary of how core role construing influences the goal of reflection**

The aim of this study was to explore self-theories to determine if they facilitate or hinder change, to investigate if and when self-theories were elaborated and whether the stages of elaboration could be learned. The three reflective cycles demonstrate how beliefs about self influence whether elaboration and change are likely to occur. The Explorers' beliefs about self as hypotheses seem to facilitate elaboration of core role constructs. There was evidence of elaboration in many areas of their construing, as beliefs about self, the meaning of feelings, the evaluation of success, the meaning of setbacks etc were questioned and the possibility of there being alternative meanings was considered. Elaboration of core role construing seemed to create a space where it was safe to be a beginner, to make mistakes and experiment without self-worth being at risk. In addition, elaborating self-theories increased positive feelings about self, which seemed to motivate the participants to try elaborating in the future. There seems to be a self-teaching aspect to elaboration where the participant becomes aware of the benefits of elaboration.

In comparison, the Maintainers' beliefs about self as truths seem to hinder their ability to elaborate and change. The Maintainers' tight construing of an ideal self results in a narrow range of convenience where there are few options and their reflective cycle occurs within the confines of their established construing. They only value the success of their ideal self and this makes taking a risk, by elaborating a belief, more threatening as there are no alternative sources of worth. There is little room to learn over time or make mistakes as the standards of the ideal self require virtually instant understanding of material and a high standard of performance. Not surprisingly, these participants experience significant anxiety about each performance as it is so closely associated to their self-worth.

The Maintainers' focus on becoming their ideal self casts a shadow over all of their construing which results in them having few, if any, alternative roles. Until the Maintainers consider the possibility of alternative selves they will not elaborate their construing of self. For the Maintainers, there are limited acceptable alternatives to consider, as nothing is construed as being better, or of more worth, than their ideal self. To elaborate their construing towards a good enough self is not a valued alternative. In addition, the good enough self is not clearly defined but is fragmented and, as such, moving towards this loosely construed self is 'threatening' as it does not provide a clearly construed alternative self.

The Maintainers' ideal selves often incorporate very high standards, which sometimes seemed to be construed as more virtuous than other alternatives. For example, there were descriptions of only submitting work which was 110% perfect, of wanting to be 'top dog' in every situation, a desire for not just a tidy home but an immaculate one and of wanting a perfect life. It was the assessment of these standards as ideal that appears to make considering alternatives unlikely as they are of less worth. To elaborate an often 'virtuous ideal self', for an ill-defined 'good enough self', does not seem to be an appealing alternative. Essentially, having an ideal self is construed as a good choice and goodness is important in PCT as each person's goal is to have a 'good self'. However, what this means for each of the categories of participants is different and will be fully discussed in chapter eight.

### **7.9 Corroborating the findings**

Instead of seeking to validate this study's findings, which has the implicit assumption of truth, I decided to seek corroboration that the findings were a viable, or plausible account, of how the participants construed their beliefs and feelings about self in relation to change. Two participants from each group were given a copy of their transcript and a profile of their current beliefs and feelings about self in relation to change. Two different kinds of profiles were created with the Maintainers being given less information about the findings.

In the Maintainers' profiles I simply reflected back to the participants the beliefs and feelings they had described in their grids along with the contextual information they gave in the interview. There was no positive change to report and so these profiles were brief. There was a concern that the Maintainers might find reading about their construing difficult, as they seemed largely unaware in the interviews, of the consequences of construing many of their beliefs about self as 'truths'. For this reason care was taken in the construction of these profiles.

### **Member corroboration**

Despite this care, one of the Maintainers called Suzy, became upset when she read the transcript. This lady had never objectively observed herself in a conversation and was shocked by the rigid statements she made. When I met her and asked about her response, she was initially reluctant to express her concerns, but over a coffee she began to talk and was offered the opportunity to withdraw. I explained that while I appreciated Suzy's willingness to participate in the research it was of minor importance in comparison to Suzy's well-being. It transpired that Suzy had eventually talked to a good friend and allowed her to read the transcript and the profile and the friend had reassured Suzy there was nothing wrong in having strong beliefs and expressing them. The friend had also read the profile and thought it was reflective of Suzy's beliefs, feelings and way of responding to disorienting dilemmas.

The other Maintainer simply confirmed the truth of his belief that he really did need a vision to be successful in life. Peter said,

**"I had not realised that having a vision for my life was so important to me, but having spoken to you I still think that it is important for me to have a vision of where I am going in life."**

The Changers were given a copy of their transcripts and a profile that described their beliefs and feelings about self and how they accounted for

changes in their lives. Essentially, this included brief descriptions of the reflective cycle they employed in simple terms. Cara said,

**“Seeing the grid chart and how I marked myself was a real eye opener at the time. Being part of this study helped me so much to focus on how much I had changed and Catherine’s description is spot on.”**

Kiera was the other Changer and she said,

**“Reflecting this is a true picture of our interview and shows the changes I have gone through to get to this point. Looking back I have moved on and changed even since this particular interview, and it has helped me personally to coming to terms with the past and moving on.”**

The two Explorers were given the same kind of profiles as the Changers and both Reece and Iain had thoughts about their participation.

Reece had several comments to make,

**“The ‘grid’ as a summary of my feelings, helps me see there has been a real journey, therefore the journey ahead with it’s challenges seems more possible. Kate’s notes have truly reflected what I said and felt. It makes me feel so thankful that I am not stuck where I was and the risk of ‘unknown’ is much better than the reality of the ‘known’.”**

And finally, Iain’s comments,

**“Firstly I would like to say that I found being a subject in this study very interesting and quite refreshing. Based on what I said, you have a full and thorough understanding of the events that have taken place in my life and how they helped me to**

**develop into the person/character I am today. It is clear that you have been able to relate well to how I thought and felt through these experiences, and I have no doubt that you understand what coping mechanisms/strengths/beliefs I would draw on in future when faced with hardship etc.”**

It was interesting to note that in the responses the participants sent back, the Maintainers wrote a few sentences, the Changers a paragraph or two and the Explorers filled all the available space. The ability to reflect and describe self is an important difference between the categories of participants described in this study and will be explored further in chapter eight. In addition to asking six of the participants to corroborate the findings, an external source of corroboration was also sought.

### **Outside corroboration**

Outside corroboration was sought from Edith Cormack, my counselling supervisor, who had been providing a reflective space where the ongoing analysis of the data was discussed. Edith is herself a psychologist and has worked with Dr. Fay Fransella to gain advanced qualifications in personal construct psychology. She read the transcripts and worked through the process of coding alongside me to provide corroboration of my interpretation.

**“I confirm that I have had frequent and intensive reflective discussions with the above student regarding the analysis of her research data. Having an in-depth knowledge of her transcripts, I confirm that the findings reported are a reasonable and plausible account of the meanings reflected in the data and she has, at all times, kept true to the raw data of her transcripts in order to support her conclusions,”** (Edith Cormack, 2004).

With both participant and external sources corroborating my interpretation as a plausible account of how the different self-theories facilitate and hinder change, the last chapter moves onto discuss the implications of the findings.

## **Chapter eight - Elaborating early meaning systems facilitates change**

### **8.0 Early construing of a 'good' self needs to be elaborated**

In the previous chapter the influence of core role construing on the ability to change was highlighted for each of the three categories of participants. Construing beliefs about self as truths to be validated was found to hinder elaboration and change, whereas construing beliefs about self as hypotheses to be tested, facilitated elaboration and change. There is another facet of core role construing that needs to be discussed, which highlights the implications of these findings for current theories of self. Within each individual's meaning systems, there is a notion of what a 'good self' involves, and it is from these beliefs that self is evaluated. This evaluation is important, not only for how the individual feels about their self, but for the number of viable options they construe.

In the last chapter when member corroboration was sought, Suzy, one of the Maintainers, was very shocked and upset after reading her transcript. Suzy had happily described her strong beliefs and feelings in the interview and characterised herself on the goal-orientation inventory as validation-seeking. She had agreed with more than double the number of validation-seeking statements than growth-oriented statements. During the grid-based interview she had appeared very confident of who she was and what she thought. Suzy had been very clear that the problem of validating herself, by having her home immaculate, could be solved by her family appreciating her beliefs and participating in keeping things significantly tidier. However, her response to reading about these beliefs, feelings and solutions was to construe herself as a 'bad person,' who was so ashamed of how she 'sounded' in the interview, that she hid the transcript from her family. It was only days later, that a close friend was allowed to read it and reassured her that what she believed was allowed and acceptable.

Suzy's response to reading her transcript was framed within her existing range of convenience for her self, as a 'good or bad' person, and this construct formed the basis of her self-evaluation. Reading her transcript



The most common experience for this group is either failure to reach their ideal standard or invalidation of their core role construing of a 'good self'. Both of these experiences increase their anxiety levels. The Maintainers' goal of validating their good/ideal self is complicated by the need to avoid instances where they may fail. For example, if a Maintainer was sent on a computing course, they would want to validate their good/ideal self by performing well and doing this effortlessly. If they could not predict that their 'actual self' would be able to perform to their ideal standards, this would actually pose a threat to their evaluation of self as 'good' and to their fragile self-worth.

The Changers are in between these two categories, and are engaged in elaborating their construing of what a 'good' self comprises and they increasingly have more choices. It is important to consider the origins of the concept of 'goodness,' as it influences the development of self-theories (Dweck, 2003). This study's findings indicate that the concept of goodness also influences how self is evaluated in later life.

### **8.1 Possible origins of the concept of goodness**

Dweck (2003) explored the question of where notions of 'goodness/badness' originate. She concluded that before children develop a mature conception of ability, in terms of their theory of intelligence, they are working on solving another question, which focuses on determining if they are 'good or bad.' She suggests that young children's early meaning systems are organised around notions of goodness and badness. When parents and other adults are communicating with toddlers and young children a lot of the talk involves giving instructions about how to behave in different situations. For example, to wait until they are offered a sweetie from a friend, to sit quietly on the bus or to wait patiently in a queue. In addition to instructions, young children also receive feedback about their behaviour, which is often expressed in terms of goodness and badness.

Heyman, Dweck and Cain (1992) suggest that five and six year olds may have a view of goodness/badness as a stable or malleable quality of a

person, and when goodness/badness is construed as 'stable,' it provides a dimension for evaluating self. The child construes their behaviour and their abilities as performances that can be used to measure their goodness. Any praise from adults for their behaviour or for completing a task well, is construed as evidence of their self, 'being good'. In a similar way any criticism or failure is construed as evidence of their self, 'being bad'. For example, when an adult praises a child for colouring-in a picture and staying inside the lines, in terms of the child being good, it seems to reinforce this emerging conceptualisation of worth on the goodness/badness scale. Essentially, goodness could be construed by a five year old as something that can be observed from your behaviour and performance. There are consequences for a child when they so strongly connect, praise for 'good behaviour' and praise for 'good work' with their evaluation of self, as they create a situation where they always have to perform/behave well to have worth.

From my experiences, as a parent and as a primary, and nursery school teacher, this notion of young children trying to understand goodness and badness rings true. Young children are very aware that the child who does not focus on their 'jobs' (schoolwork) and complete them before playing with the toys is 'bad'. For some children this evaluation of 'badness' becomes a fixed characteristic of other people. This seems to mean that the 'bad' boy, who rushes through his number work in order to play with the toy garage, is evaluated as more likely to steal your 'play-piece,' than the 'good' boy who took the time to finish his work neatly before playing with the Lego.

The questions surrounding goodness/badness for young children are complex and involve trying to determine, how many 'bad' behaviours a 'good boy' can employ, before being characterised as 'bad'. For example, can you have some incorrect answers in your language work and still be 'good'? Can you forget your gym clothes and still be good? In a similar way, children seem to evaluate their goodness or worth, from their ability, and this is despite teachers' attempts to label reading groups in ways, which do not denote current ability. Whether children are separated into groups which are

called by animals names, colours in the rainbow or favourite television characters, every five year old knows that the zebras are better at reading than the elephants and implicitly they know it is 'good' to be a zebra!

According to Dweck (2003), children's early meaning systems are based on the goodness/badness dimension. During the primary school years they are elaborated to incorporate, first conceptual information about the meaning of effort, ability and worth etc., and then, to varying degrees, the information is assimilated into more developed meaning systems (Bempechat, London and Dweck 1991, Cain and Dweck, 1995). How a child resolves the issue of goodness/badness influences their developing meaning system and has consequences in terms of how they construe self and the world.

Dweck's (2003) findings about early meaning systems suggest that children are forming different meaning systems as they grow up, which result in them experiencing self and the world in qualitatively different ways. If these early beliefs are not sufficiently elaborated during the primary school years to include a theory of ability and effort, then these children will go into their teenage years with beliefs that strongly connect their 'worth' with their behaviour and performance. This will result in them assessing situations, activities and relationships, as performances which they need to 'get right,' to have worth. They will be as 'good' as their last performance. Depending on the amount of elaboration that occurs, children can begin their teenage years with very different beliefs and feelings about what a 'good self' involves.

## **8.2 Self-theories as mature/immature meaning systems**

There are several important developmental questions raised by Heyman and Dweck, (1998) and two are especially relevant to the issues being discussed in this chapter. The first concerns what happens to this early theory of self. Does it remain in the background, in the form of contingent or non-contingent self-worth, with the entity theorists continuing to doubt the self when things go wrong? In this study there were clear signs of the Maintainers believing that their worth was closely linked to their performance, which seemed to result in them living with ongoing anxiety about validating their worth.

Some of the Changers also described believing they were responsible for any problem or difficulty that arose. Both Cara and Lucy reported that they always felt responsible for difficulties and talked about being to blame for their children forgetting their lunchboxes or gym kits, despite no one else suggesting they were in anyway responsible. The Maintainers described experiencing contingent self-worth and referred to the goodness/badness construct in their quest for the ideal self. The Maintainers also believed that there were standards to attain and that making mistakes or failing in one area reflected on their total worth. Indeed, it seemed likely that the Maintainers had extended the goodness/badness dimension to include their ideal self, which meant that the standard for having worth became even harder to attain.

The second question relevant to this study concerns the possible relationship between early goodness/badness meaning systems and the later entity/incremental based meaning system. The question is, to what extent is the early goodness/badness meaning system biasing the teenagers' and later the adults' perception of their ability? There is evidence of the Maintainers still being significantly influenced by performance, and of determining worth on the 'goodness/badness' scale. In reading and analysing the Maintainers' transcripts there were frequent references to huge amounts of effort being spent trying to achieve their elusive 'ideal' performance. It could be that the Maintainers do not replace their early meaning system with a more developed, mature understanding of self. Instead, they could be incorporating an entity theory of self into their meaning system, which results in them continuing to evaluate self on the limited goodness/badness dimension.

### **8.3 The Maintainers' self-theories are immature meaning systems which hinder change**

Children's early meaning systems are immature and consist of constricted conceptions of self, which offer the illusion that other people can be easily distinguished from each other, along the goodness/badness dimension. When these develop through childhood they become more discerning and

are capable of embracing complexity and ambiguity. However, it seems possible that the Maintainers are still employing aspects of this early, and immature, conception of self. There is little evidence of complex levels of thinking in high risk situations, of critical evaluation, or elaboration of their beliefs about self. There are, however, many examples of the Maintainers' certainty about their knowledge, their predictions and their understanding of self and others. This is reminiscent of children's early meaning systems where they often discriminate on a 'black and white', 'either/or' dimension and where attempts to communicate complexity are unsuccessful.

The desire to reduce complexity is evident in the Maintainers' transcripts where they are often waiting for something external to change so that their beliefs can be validated. There is a constricted certainty that vague 'others' are responsible for changing. For example, Holly is waiting for the university to develop a practical course so that she can excel and be validated as worthy. Ross is waiting to have a car, house, wife and child so that he is seen to be worthy. Molly is waiting for her brilliant career to appear so that she is worthy and Eva is waiting for her friends to treat her properly and so make her visible and implicitly worthy. The Maintainers do not tend to construe themselves as able to influence events, or as responsible for outcomes, and there is a childlike simplicity to aspects of their construing which does not serve them well.

Suzy's response to reading her transcript reflected an immature meaning system. When Suzy became aware of the disconfirming information about herself she was shocked, and these powerful negative feelings, dominated her responses and her evaluation of self. In chapter one, Goleman's (1996) theory of emotional hi-jacking was mentioned and there is evidence that the Maintainers' strong negative feelings frequently 'trigger' this process.

When Suzy became aware, possibly for the first time, of how she 'sounded' she was so shocked and ashamed that she hid the transcript and evaluated herself simply as a 'bad' person. This response seems to be driven by powerful negative feelings that hinder her ability to evaluate in a more

complex style. It was not until after the feelings subsided, several days later that she was able to consider how to respond to the new information. Suzy's limited range of convenience for a 'good self' does not provide her with many options. She is either attaining her ideal standards and evaluating herself as 'good' or failing to meet them and evaluating herself as 'bad'. When she read the transcript she construed herself as 'bad', and the strength of her negative assessment of self seemed to result in emotional hi-jacking, which led to her hiding the transcript. It was only days later, when she had calmed down, that she was able to consider what to do and her focus was on re-establishing her worth. This was accomplished by seeking validation of her 'goodness' from her closest friend. The continued quest for an ideal self reflects an immature meaning system, which hinders change.

Feelings continue to exert considerable influence on the Maintainers' reflective cycle and this seems to indicate a lack of maturity in their meaning systems. Dictionary definitions of maturity and immaturity both refer to something which is either fully developed or not yet developed (Chambers Dictionary 1992) and these terms will be used to describe the degree to which early meaning systems have evolved. The findings from this study can now be reviewed as representing mature and immature meaning systems and this will allow the implications of the findings to be considered.

#### **8.4 The Explorers' self-theories are mature meaning systems which facilitate change**

Beliefs about self are core role constructs, which reflect the participants' beliefs about what a 'good' self involves. For the Explorers, it is good to be flexible, good to persevere, good to take risks and good to be inquisitive etc. They seek to broaden their understanding of 'goodness', which effectively widens their range of convenience for several core role constructs and the dimensions on which they evaluate self. All the Explorers chose to elaborate their construing of self and they are alert to the possibility that there may be alternative choices and responses. Alison provides a clear example of the difference that a mature, developed meaning system has on resolving a disorienting dilemma.

Alison had just finished school, where she had worked to a very high standard in all her subjects. However, when she left home to attend university she faced the dilemma of continuing to construe her good self as a 'high achiever,' or to elaborate her construing to include a 'balanced self'. Alison chose to elaborate her 'balanced self' because she predicted that this would enable her to cope better with the new demands in her life. Alison values broadening her understanding more than constricted certainty. For Alison, it is good to move beyond the 'high achiever,' and to balance many aspects of her life like keeping a flat, studying for her course, working part-time, being a good friend, maintaining family relationships and having a social life.

By elaborating her construing of the 'high achiever,' Alison broadens her construing of a 'good' self, which further expands her sources of worth. With multiple sources of worth Alison will be able to risk elaborating other parts of her construing. Alison values evidence of success in many areas of her life and has a sense of agency, in that, when she experiences invalidation she believes that she can elaborate her construing to meet the demands of the new situation. As an Explorer, Alison has developed a more mature or developed meaning system, which facilitates her ability to change.

The findings from this study demonstrate how different beliefs and feelings about self influenced the ability to change. In table 32, on the next page, the most important features of the findings have been organised into eleven dimensions. These dimensions represent the sort of construing that an Explorer and a Maintainer might employ. Not every Maintainer or Explorer would be in the same position on each dimension, but they would tend to be located towards the same end of each dimension. The potential for elaborating early meaning systems is always an option although for the Maintainers, a very unsettling one.

**Table 32 - Beliefs about self as mature/immature meaning systems**

Beliefs about self		
←	→	
as mature meaning systems, as used by the Explorers	as immature meaning systems, as used by the Maintainers	
Hypotheses to be tested and elaborated as necessary, reflects an interpretative discourse of self.	↔	Truths to be validated reflect the use of a realist discourse of self.
Wide range of convenience for the meaning of goodness.	↔	Very narrow range of convenience for the meaning of goodness.
Evaluate self on the wider growth dimension.		Evaluate self on the limited goodness/badness dimension.
Good enough self includes many areas of life.	↔	Only the Ideal self embodies goodness.
Recognise success in many areas of their lives.	↔	Only the ideal self's success is valued.
Multiple sources of worth.	↔	Very limited source of worth.
Sense of agency as good enough self is expected to change and can influence outcomes.	↔	Limited sense of agency due to tight construing of what self can do.
Elaborating an aspect of self is a low risk activity as there are alternative sources of worth to provide stability.	↔	Considering elaborating the ideal self, which is their only source of worth, is a high risk as self-worth depends on the performance of this self.
When invalidation is experienced the constructs of transition tend to be construed as indicating that current construing is not sufficient for the new situation and that elaboration is required.	↔	When invalidation is experienced the constructs of transition tend to be construed as further evidence of the 'actual' self's lack of worth.
Constructs of transition are prompts to explore construing by employing exploratory beliefs and responses.	↔	Constructs of transition are prompts to reduce level of feelings by returning to sustaining beliefs and responses.
Goal is to broaden understanding of their 'good enough' self so they choose to elaborate so they chose to elaborate.	↔	Goal is to validate their ideal self and so they choose constricted certainty.

**8.5 What facilitates the elaboration of early meaning systems?**

There is one research question which still has to be answered, which is to determine whether exploratory reflection can be encouraged and learned.

There is a significant amount of literature surrounding the topic of reflection, which includes defining what reflection entails and describing ways of trying to encourage its use. Reflection has been identified in the literature as a critical component of learning (Angelo, 1991; Atkins and Murphy, 1993). The term 'critical' reflection is often used to define attempts to increase an individual's awareness of their meaning system. Critical reflection includes the ability to be self-aware, to analyse experiences, to assess the underlying beliefs, to evaluate their meaning and to plan further action based on the analysis. The expectation is that reflection should result in the transformation of meaning and action (Greenberg and Pascual-Leone, 1997). There seem to be three stages of the reflective process which are agreed upon in the literature (Atkins and Murphy, 1993 and Cranton, 1994).

1. The reflective process begins with a stimulus, which creates an emotional response such as surprise, discomfort or puzzlement.
2. The reflective process involves becoming aware of, and exploring current knowledge, perceptions and assumptions.
3. The reflective process results in revising and elaborating assumptions/beliefs etc.

### **Critical incidents as opportunities to explore and elaborate construing**

In order to encourage critical reflection, learners are often asked to identify a critical incident and then to explore their beliefs and responses in relation to it. The concept of a critical incident was first described by Flanagan (1954) in relation to his work with war veterans. Critical incident technique involved the veterans evaluating their behaviours in a specific situation as more/or less helpful. Williams (2001) suggests that reviewing critical incidents is a form of problem-based learning, which seeks to identify the underlying beliefs that tend not to be questioned, to determine if they are the best solutions. The goal is to explore taken-for-granted solutions and knowledge. In this process, awareness is increased by the act of explaining and describing what the situation involved, and the individual's own decision-making process. Individual beliefs are made explicit by creating an account of the event.

Williams (2001) considers that reflective skills can be learned. However, he acknowledges that the process is challenging and unsettling for the student as it brings into focus beliefs and responses, which may be out with their awareness. Critical incidents are essentially disorienting dilemmas; moments which interrupt the individual's usual thoughts and responses, and require consideration. The dilemma, which initiates a critical incident, may well have an emotional component with the awareness of a change in feelings alerting the individual to the significance of the event. The incident is critical because of the feelings.

The findings from this study indicate that, while everyone has these moments, not everyone chooses to explore them. At the pivotal point the individual can choose to critically reflect, or to reduce the unsettling feelings. The meaning of feelings at the pivotal point seems to be crucial in determining the goal of reflection. This is an important finding, which offers the possibility of enhancing current understanding about how to encourage critical/reflective thinking. There have been various creative attempts to encourage critical reflection, and three of these will be reviewed, to provide a context for highlighting the contribution that this study's findings make.

#### **'Cognitive postmortem' with student nurses**

Greenwood (1993) coined the term 'cognitive postmortem' in connection with using critical incidents with student nurses. The intention was that the student nurse would identify an incident, which had been significant for them in some way; perhaps they had not been sure of what to do, or had felt they were lacking in the necessary skills to carry a task out. The 'postmortem' involved revisiting the situation to identify what the nurse had thought at the time and the reasons for the actions they had taken. The next stage involved the nurse in considering what alternative decisions and actions might have been possible and to evaluate their suitability. The purpose of reflecting was to increase the student's awareness of their decision-making process. It was hoped that students would then be more aware that they had choices and would take time to consider alternatives before acting. The second study to be reviewed took place in Australia.

### **Internship as a safe place to experiment and make mistakes**

Sharplin (2003) reports on an Australian experiment, which involved student teachers being given the opportunity to experience an internship, as opposed to a teaching practice. This unique experience was also an attempt to encourage exploratory reflection by removing any kind of assessment from the internship. It was hoped that the students would be freer to experiment with teaching methods, and to critically reflect on outcomes, when there were no negative consequences for their course marks. The interns (anonymously) reported significant benefits.

"It's great to teach without having a mentor looking over my shoulder. Feel more relaxed about making mistakes."

"Being more independent when teaching and not having someone look over your shoulder all the time."

These students were able to develop their own strategies for teaching when the penalty, in terms of making mistakes in front of the tutor, was removed. The interns felt more able to take risks and identify changes they would like to make when external evaluation was removed. With traditional teaching practice, the students often perceived that there was no room to experiment or make mistakes, as it would be reflected in their assessment. The students enjoyed being interns, as it allowed them to experience a more authentic classroom experience, where they gained confidence from their ability to deal with emerging problems by themselves.

### **Teachers identifying their strengths and weaknesses**

The last study to be reviewed involves teachers who were participating in CPD, and using Independent Learning Portfolios as a tool for organising and documenting their reflective process (Mockler and Normanhurst, 2001). There were ten teachers, and one of the researchers mentored them through the process. The purpose of creating a portfolio was to allow the teachers to reflect on their life stories. The focus of their reflection was to determine how their personal and professional lives had influenced each other. There were a

variety of ways for presenting the material including writing a story, drawing diagrams or making tables.

Mockler and Normanhurst (2001) suggest that teachers who cannot express and describe what it is that they do, cannot make full use of that knowledge. A strategy that has never been articulated and refined leaves professional knowledge vague and less accessible to the teacher. In the study, the process of being a teacher was made explicit, with lesson plans being shared, and actual lessons videoed. This is reminiscent of Schon's (1983) description of jazz players who each has an understanding of music and a repertoire of musical 'figures' that they can base their next turn on. It is the musicians' awareness of their repertoire that allows them to strategically deploy a suitable 'figure.' In a similar way, the Explorers and Changers were able to identify what had made a difference in a specific situation and this awareness extended their repertoire of responses for the next situation.

The teachers found the writing up of their insights in journals, the most difficult part of the process, but also where they learned the most about their construing. The journal writing required them to make explicit their theories of self and to identify both their strengths and their weaknesses. Once the journals were complete they were reviewed and discussed by other professionals, with the teacher present, as another form of critical reflection. This was a risky endeavour, with an uncertain outcome, which required trust and openness between the participants. The aim was to elaborate the teacher's construing of self and to bring into conscious awareness their tacit knowledge of what they do and how they do it. The teachers were helped in this process by spending individual time with the mentor.

The mentoring role included asking 'hard questions' and making suggestions, which hopefully challenged the teacher. This relationship was described as requiring a 'leap of faith' for both of the participants, so that they chose to construe comments as helpful and not as criticism of their self. Many of the teachers in this school have gone through this process and there has been a shift from construing learning as being about admitting that, "there are

deficiencies in what I am already doing,” to understanding that learning is about reflecting on practice and continuous improvement.

### **8.6 The implications of the findings for developing current theories**

The three reviewed studies identified strategies for encouraging critical reflection. One strategy involved articulating construing verbally to a mentor, or to a group of colleagues. Another strategy involved describing construing in a written journal or portfolio. What they have in common is that they require personal construing to be articulated. They focus awareness on what is taken-for-granted, in both individual and institutional construing, and require the development of more considered beliefs and responses. The strategies are similar to the exploratory beliefs and responses identified in this study. By linking the strategies with the exploratory beliefs and responses the relevance of the findings is apparent. The exploratory belief or response is written in bold.

- Critical reflection assumes that, **evaluating alternatives is helpful.**
- Critical reflection requires the individual to learn how to, **identify their beliefs, feelings and responses to enhance their understanding and their choices.**
- Critical reflection involves the ability to, **identify what made a difference.**
- Critical reflection assumes that, **effort is effective.**
- Critical reflection anticipates that, **there will be an ongoing elaboration of beliefs and responses through life.**
- Critical reflection **separates responses and abilities in the past, from what is considered possible in the present situation.**
- Critical reflection seeks to **construe a ‘good enough self’ who is evaluated on the wider growth/learning dimension.**

In the three reviewed situations, it seemed to be assumed that the interns, student nurses and teachers would be able to, not only identify their construing, but be willing to share it with others. Mockler and Normanhurst (2001) mentioned the need for trust, a safe space and a ‘leap of faith’

between the mentor and the teacher. However, there was little mention of the difficulties that people have in acknowledging a perceived lack in their ability to themselves, let alone in a public forum. Indeed, the whole issue of how self-theories influence the ability to change is largely ignored. This study's findings represent an opportunity to develop reflective learning by incorporating a theoretical body of knowledge, which highlights the impact that mature/immature meaning systems have on the ability to reflect and change.

The Explorers', Changers' and Maintainers' self-theories have highlighted many significant differences in their construing systems. The Explorers and, to varying extents, the Changers, were able to identify their beliefs and feelings about self and began to elaborate their meaning systems. In doing so they developed more mature meaning systems, and new ways of responding to disorienting dilemmas, which enriched their lives. The transformative and exploratory cycles of reflection provided explanations of how this seemed to have happened. The new insights, which have been gained from these accounts of elaborating early meaning systems, form a valuable resource, that has the potential to help people understand why they often construe learning and change as risky or threatening.

### **The benefits of construing a 'good enough' self**

The essential challenge in elaborating construing of self, seems to involve accepting and valuing a 'growing/developing self'. The range of convenience for self is extended when an individual is able to construe self as 'good enough,' and to acknowledge that they will always have strengths and weaknesses. This allows the crippling evaluation of self, on the goodness/badness dimension, to be elaborated into a more complex and developed understanding of self.

The concept of a 'good enough' self was created to represent the elaborated self that the Explorers and Changers were describing. The Explorers emotional stability seemed to emerge from not having to hide or protect less developed areas of self. Their core construing of self was significantly more

complex and mature than the Maintainers and seemed to provide them with more choices and more room to manoeuvre. The Explorers' anticipated elaborating and learning throughout their lives, and there was no expectation that one day they would arrive at a point where they 'knew,' and could stop learning and developing. This created a space to grow, to make mistakes, experiment and even 'play' with alternatives, as the act of trying something new, even if it was unsuccessful, was valued by their growing 'good enough' self. Whereas, for the Maintainers, there is an illusive sense that, somehow as the years pass and they become adults, the need to learn would come to an end.

When an individual is able to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, they are freed from the need to protect and hide less developed areas of self. There is also less likelihood of becoming stuck in constricted, habitual ways of construing that don't enhance the quality of life. It seems that many students and professionals who find themselves in a position of being beginners, do not give themselves a space to acquire skills and knowledge over time. It is of note that the student teachers, who had the opportunity to gain classroom experience without being assessed, felt they had a unique chance to experiment and make mistakes.

Being a beginner is not always a valued role, and this may be connected to immature, under-developed meaning systems that are still evaluating self on the goodness/badness dimension, where performance indicates worth. The teachers who were completing the learning portfolios on page 247, also mentioned elaborating their construing of learning, so that it was no longer about admitting, "there are deficiencies", to understanding that learning was about ongoing growth. It is the immature belief that a 'good self', should be able to acquire almost instant mastery of skills and knowledge, which seems to cause enormous difficulties.

The implicit, almost hidden meaning is that you should not require time to learn! This assumption explains why the Maintainers, and others who have immature, less developed meaning systems, can find learning situations so

threatening. There is no sense of the Maintainers having fun when they are in a position of being a learner and they certainly do not want to 'play'. Their goal is to validate their self as good, or perhaps ideal, through their performance and this results in learning being a serious business where much is at stake.

### **Strong negative feelings lead to reactivity and distancing**

Exploring core role construing is a creative process, which requires identifying and articulating current beliefs about self. However, vocalising previously hidden or unarticulated aspects of self can be a risky and unsettling activity, as it challenges established beliefs about self. The increase in anxiety seems to result in individuals, with an immature meaning system, withdrawing to avoid the perceived threat to self. The greater the intensity of the feelings seems to determine how far they need to distance themselves to 'feel safe' again (Lerner, 2001). They become reactive and in doing so they also become defensive.

The defensiveness focuses their attention on avoiding situations where they might experience increased anxiety or uncertainty. In adopting defensive strategies there is increased monitoring of anxiety levels, which has several consequences such as; reduced risk taking, increased desire for certainty, increased reliance on established/sustaining beliefs and responses, and a static range of convenience that does not allow new or possibly contradictory information into the system. In addition, with such strong feelings the likelihood of experiencing emotional hi-jacking increases and life becomes increasingly threatening.

This study began with the Scotia consortium providing computer skills training and the tutors becoming aware of one or two teachers in each school who were defensive, aggressive or hostile in their responses. It seems likely that these teachers had less developed meaning systems and their responses were attempts to protect their vulnerable selves from being exposed as 'not knowing'. It is a sobering thought to realise that some teachers, with less developed meaning systems, construe being a beginner

or a learner, as something to avoid. It is this response to learning situations in particular, but to disorienting dilemmas in general, which needs to be elaborated.

### **8.7 Elaborating disorienting dilemmas into opportunities to learn**

This study has shown the powerful influence, that beliefs and feelings about self, have on the ability to elaborate early meaning systems into mature self-theories, which can facilitate change. In many professions, for example, nursing, teaching, counselling and social work, students and qualified practitioners are encouraged to be reflective. Boud, Keogh and Walker (1995) suggest that critical reflection can be perfected through active, repeated, guided practice. The methods of encouraging reflection are based on articulating current beliefs and responses, but these methods do not seem to take into account how beliefs about self influence the process of learning and change.

The findings from this study suggest that, where the individual has an immature meaning system, it is likely that the goal of any reflection will be to validate their established beliefs and responses. A Maintainer who finds themselves in a situation where exploratory reflection is required, may perceive a need to protect self, which results in them not engaging in the activity or possibly becoming defensive. The Changers and Explorers described elaborating the meaning of their feelings at the pivotal point and explained how this was a significant factor in enabling them to develop their meaning systems. The findings from this study suggest that, there may be a body of knowledge about self-theories that could be taught at various levels in the education system, which would form the necessary background for encouraging exploratory reflection.

As a former teacher, and now as a psychologist, I have made attempts at providing new frameworks, for increasing awareness and understanding of how self-theories influence the ability to learn and change. One in-depth example of working with six year olds, for a school term, provides an example of how this framework of reflecting on self-theories can be used to

explore, and elaborate beliefs and feelings by making explicit the taken-for-granted underlying assumptions. With the six year olds, the belief to be explored and elaborated was the meaning of being a learner.

### **8.8 Learning as 'not knowing:' An example drawn from my experiences of working with children**

In my previous career as a teacher, the notion of 'puzzling,' was introduced to a class of six year olds. Three of the children, two boys and one girl, whose work tended to be very well done, displayed significant anxiety whenever they had to learn, or try to do something new. The reaction was most visible in the little girl, who will be called Claire to protect her identity. Claire cried four or five times a day at the start of the term. Obviously at the age of six she had an immature meaning system, but Claire's feelings about learning or doing anything new, were extreme.

In retrospect, Claire and the boys were construing their performance as reflecting their worth on the goodness/badness dimension. Even when the new activity was something 'non-academic' like making a collage butterfly, where there was no 'right or wrong' way of making one, Claire and to a lesser extent the two boys would be tense and anxious. For these young children there seemed to be the expectation that, a 'good girl/boy' would be able to do every new task, not only to a high standard, but to accomplish this on their first attempt! Essentially, there was no space to learn. In order to challenge these beliefs the teacher introduced the notion of 'puzzling'.

The concept of 'puzzling' involved the teacher showing the children a jigsaw that she had been working on for several months. The jigsaw had twenty-five pieces and a frame, and the puzzle was to replace all the pieces in the frame, but following the rules about where the pieces could go. The teacher explained that, so far neither she nor her family, had succeeded in completing the jigsaw but that they were enjoying puzzling over how to complete it. Learning something new was linked to 'not knowing' and 'puzzling'. Age related developmental milestones such as learning to sit up, learning to walk, and the various stages required to ride a bike without

stabilisers, were employed to emphasise that many new activities began with the person 'not knowing'. It was hoped that by elaborating the meaning of learning something new it would reduce the children's anxiety about 'not knowing', and their expectations of their performance would be less.

There were four stages to work through when a child found they couldn't do something. For example, during number work Claire used the four stages of puzzling to provide a framework that offered different ways of trying to solve a numerical problem. The four stages for number work were;

1. Get some equipment to count with, a number line or blocks.
2. Ask a friend at the table to go through the steps of the problem with you.
3. Ask someone you think might know the answer to talk you through the steps.
4. Ask the teacher.

Care was taken not to present the teacher as always knowing, and so mention was made of the teacher having the answer book and being able to work the answer out. Reassurance was given that by play-time every child would have completed their number work correctly, so that there was a time limit on the period of uncertainty. Instead of praising performance, Claire was praised for persevering and within a month the process of 'puzzling' began to have an effect.

While the other children were still telling the teacher when Claire was crying, this had reduced to a few tears on her cheek. When Claire was asked how she was managing she began to bravely say, "I'm puzzling Mrs. Brown, I'm puzzling," and then to describe how many of the steps she still had to try. By the end of the term there were tear free days and Claire was significantly less anxious about trying something new. It seems likely that the initial tearful responses were indications of emotional hi-jacking in a child. It was as if Claire's worth was so connected to her performance, that every new activity

was a threat to her construing of herself as a 'good girl,' which was of high value to her.

**Understanding 'self' as involving a range of roles: An example from my experiences of working with adults.**

In a similar way when I am working with clients as a psychologist, I have enabled clients in both a counselling and a mentoring role, to elaborate their construing of self. The two processes essentially involve teaching the same body of knowledge, but usually beginning at different points on the change dimension. Clients who are looking for a mentoring relationship are generally more aware of their self-theories than clients who are seeking a counsellor. They also tend to have a more elaborated description of self, accompanied by more positive feelings.

What is noticeable in working with clients at various stages of development, is the range of feelings they describe. The counselling clients are often quite depressed, frustrated and lacking in hope, as their repeated attempts to validate self within their limited range of responses has led to frequent invalidation of their core role construing. In their descriptions of self and key situations in their lives, there are stories of emotional hi-jacking, which seems to be triggered by the limited range of alternatives from which they try to solve problems. In contrast the mentoring clients, with their more mature meaning systems, have more positive feelings about self. Sessions with the mentoring clients are more upbeat and fun, as meanings are identified, explored and alternatives created and evaluated.

The process of elaborating self-theories begins by identifying the client's current beliefs and feelings about self and their range of convenience for each. This is reflected back to the client too, so that they can help to clarify their self-theories for me. From this interaction an evaluation of the client's position on the change dimension can be approximately determined. With counselling clients there is often a specific event or problem, which is of concern to them. I tend to ask them about how they have tried to resolve the

problem in the past and, importantly, if they have any ideas about what would need to happen for the situation to change.

When the clients have immature meaning systems there can be repeated use of the same unsuccessful solution, which increases their negative feelings. It is this repetition, which seems to contribute to the client's sense of hopelessness. Once there is sufficient shared understanding of the self-theories being employed and what the client would like to change, that is their goal, the psychologist is able to explain something about how self-theories influence construing and the ability to change.

This stage would tend to include information about the stories we create to describe our lives, the consequences of construing self as fixed or fluid, an account of the quest for an ideal self and also of becoming an Explorer. The teaching content varies with the client's needs but would include much of the topics covered in the findings and in the literature review, for example something about neural pathways and how we can create new pathways and extinguish old ones which do not serve us well. For those clients who are experiencing strong negative feelings, something about emotional hi-jacking would be included.

The purpose of the teaching section is to create a different way of looking at self, which makes a space to observe self, while keeping the level of anxiety low. This allows current beliefs, feelings and responses to be identified and evaluated for their effectiveness and additionally, alternatives can be created and considered. This is an iterative process, where information and examples are shared with the client, while the client is also beginning to apply the strategies to their own construing. Care has to be taken to evaluate how much uncertainty the client can cope with, this is similar to ensuring that the primary one children knew they would have their work completed correctly by playtime. There needs to be sufficient discontent to encourage reflection, but not so much that the increase in anxiety triggers a desire to reduce the uncertainty.

Once the client has identified the kind of self they want to create, both the past self and the new self are given names, for example, the 'easy-going self' and the 'standard-setting self'. This is a fun part of the process and often marks the beginning of the client sensing that they can be different. Together the client and the psychologist select a metaphor, which is meaningful to the client and which reminds the client that they are going to respond differently. Examples that have been useful to clients include, imagining their brain is a computer and they are only running one programme, perhaps a word processing programme, which is useful for writing letters but really hopeless for organising their household accounts. A link is made between construing the word processing programme as defining their computer's ability, and their current construing of self as defining them.

Other examples of useful metaphors include only using the wool wash programme on a washing machine, which is great for woollen items of clothing, but really hopeless when clothes are stained. Mention is made of all the programmes the washing machine can run, and how construing the wool wash programme as defining the machine, is really limiting. Occasionally a client comes to sessions wearing the same shoes or style of clothes, on one occasion the lady always wore training shoes, which she referred to as 'dressing for comfort.' This description came into many conversations about her as a 'casual' person and seemed to be linked to her fixed construing of self. The 'casual self' was identified by the client as restricting her choices, and a new alternative self was described by the client as the 'chameleon,' which she construed as someone who was adaptable. (This client gave permission for her metaphor to be used as an example with clients and in this thesis).

One helpful metaphor for increasing awareness of construing is to link each of the selves identified by the client, to different tapes which they 'play' in their brains. Once suitable names have been decided for each self then a metaphor for the elaboration process is selected. My dual tape recorder is a useful way of describing to the client how they need to learn to identify the tape that is playing, to 'pause' the tape and evaluate its usefulness. They can

then to choose whether to keep listening to the old tape or to begin to play a new tape. For example, when this client experienced increased anxiety she reviewed her last thoughts and determined whether her 'casual tape' or her 'chameleon tape' was 'playing'. With this information she could evaluate which tape would be the most helpful in the current situation and this had created a way of allowing her to observe her thoughts and evaluating options. This is where the meaning of feelings are elaborated, so that instead of increased frustration or anxiety being used as prompts that indicate danger or possible invalidation, they are construed as prompts to identify the tape that is playing and to evaluate its usefulness.

The client's work very hard to create alternative selves and to use their feelings as prompts to stop, identify and evaluate what they are thinking. Care is taken to emphasise that it has taken years to develop and reinforce current beliefs about self, and that it will take time to establish new neural pathways and self-theories. This is especially important with clients who were evaluating self on the goodness/badness dimension and, as they need to allow them-selves time to learn and change.

Table 32, has eleven dimensions, which represent different beliefs about self, and many of these will be discussed with a client during the sessions. This framework allows many core beliefs to be identified and discussed and the clients are often asked to identify where they are on a dimension. A few weeks later, at a review session, they can decide if they have elaborated their construing and this offers encouragement that they are changing. Once clients have been working with the new ideas and applying them to specific beliefs and feelings for a few weeks, they tend to make progress quickly. The combination of providing information about self-theories, which creates a safe space to observe self, and the practical work, which targets an area the client wants to elaborate, is very effective. Indeed, the number of sessions required has been reduced by around half since incorporating the theoretical findings from this thesis. This novel combination of blending theory and reflection will be described as, reflecting on self-theories.

### **8.9 The task ahead - to ensure early meaning systems are elaborated**

The above examples of where I employed the strategy of reflecting on self-theories to inform my teaching practice with children, and my clinical practice with adults, shows the relevance and transferability of this approach for developing mature meaning systems. Although in this study the participants were mostly white, middle-class and fairly well educated, in private practice the range of clients to benefit from reflecting on their self-theories have come from all walks of life.

When groups of people share the same experience it is both easy and convenient to assume that they also construe it in the same way. Whether the group is a class of five year olds on their first day at school, students attending a lecture, or some other group of professionals attending continual professional development, each person has their own meaning system. Individual meaning systems are filters, through which the meaning of experiences, are determined. In other shared experiences, like being at a party, playing sport in a team, being part of a department at work or being a witness of a crime, the experience is shared but the meaning is open to multiple understandings. Individual meaning systems, allow some people to respond positively to opportunities to learn something new, while others feel uncertain, defensive and even hostile.

There can be a tendency for theoretical models and clinical approaches to correlate chronological or physical development with the maturity of meaning systems. However, this study has demonstrated that these are not necessarily coterminous. Reflecting on self-theories has been helpful with both adults and children, as it is concerned with the maturity and development of the individual's meaning system, and not their chronological age. This is a novel and innovative approach, which can provide valuable theoretical and practice-related insights into shifts in perceptions of self and behavioural change, independently of the constraints associated with chronological age or stages invoked by traditional developmental models espoused by psychology.

The children in primary one, who were construing 'being a learner' as meaning they should be able to understand new material and acquire skills instantly, share some of the same underdeveloped construing as the Maintainers in this study. This raises several questions about the impact that a parent or teacher with an immature or less developed meaning system has on a child's developing self-theories. Would the children in my class have elaborated their construing at the time they did, or to the same extent, with a teacher who had an immature meaning system? These questions have consequences for children, as Claire could have been left in her tearful anxious state for longer, if she had not had the opportunity to reflect on her self-theories.

The success of the approach with six-year old children and a range of adult clients suggests that the findings are transferable. It could be that various transition stages in life, whether they are age related like moving from nursery to primary school, or related to personal life, with a transition to living away from home or becoming a parent, may offer the same opportunity to elaborate construing as a disorienting dilemma. If they are construed as prompts to reflect on self-theories, then they become opportunities to learn and grow. In contrast, if they are construed as potentially threatening obstacles, they may reinforce reliance on established beliefs.

Continuing Professional Development is another setting for reflecting on self-theories and for future research to refine this approach so that it is tailored to the specific profession, thereby enhancing learning. There are several professions such as teaching, counselling and social work, where a professional 'self' needs to be developed. Within counsellor training, the potential counsellor is usually required to participate in counselling sessions themselves so that they are more aware of their own construing. Professions like counselling and teaching could benefit from incorporating reflecting on self-theories with their students as it makes the elaboration of meaning systems more tangible. It would also be interesting to determine the difference that reflecting on self-theories made in these professions as

sometimes there can be a lack of direction/instruction in reflective learning that results in the experience being quite vague.

The espoused theory in some course descriptors reflects the rhetoric of self-development, but often the theory in practice is underdeveloped and lacks a clearly articulated method of implementation. Specifically, reflecting on self-theories provides both an understanding of the mechanisms involved and one possible template for affecting an integrated model for personal and professional development. The notion of 'lifelong learning' may well depend on ensuring that reflecting on self-theories is introduced and developed in the education system and in continuing professional development. The task ahead is to create a range of methods for teaching how to reflect on self-theories so that many more people construe a 'good enough' self and are able to embrace more of life's experiences as opportunities.

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## Appendix 1.-

### This is a copy of the goal-orientation inventory

**Directions:** read each item carefully. Using the scale provided circle the number that best describes how you think and act in GENERAL, try to answer quickly without pondering too much!

1. Instead of just enjoying activities and social interactions, most situations to me feel like a major test of my basic worth, competence or likeability.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

2. I look upon potential problems in life as opportunities for growth rather than as threats to my self-esteem.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

3. I have a knack for viewing difficult or stressful situations as opportunities to learn and grow.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

4. Relative to other people, I tend to approach stressful situations as if my basic self-worth, competence, or likeability was "at stake".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

5. Personal growth is more important to me than protecting myself from my fears.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

6. Whether it be in sports, social interactions, or job/school activities, I feel like I'm still trying to prove that I'm a worthwhile, competent, or likeable person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

7. My interactions with people often feel like a test of whether or not I'm a likeable person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

8. When I'm faced with a difficult or stressful life situation, I'm likely to view it as an opportunity to learn and grow.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

9. I feel like I'm constantly trying to prove that I'm as competent as the people around me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

10. When I approach new or difficult situations, I'm less concerned with the possibility of failure than with how I can grow from the experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

11. I look upon possible setbacks and rejection as part of life since I know that such experiences will help me grow as a person in the long run.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

12. My approach to situations is one of always needing to prove my basic worth, competence, or likeability.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

13. I'm the type who is willing to risk the possibility of failure or rejection in order to reach my fullest potential as a person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

14. My attitude towards possible failure or rejection is that such experiences will turn out to be opportunities for growth and self-improvement.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

15. One of the main things I know I'm striving for is to prove that I'm really "good enough".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

16. How well I perform in social and achievement situations are a direct measure of my basic self-worth, competence, or likeability as a person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

17. In situations that could end in failure or rejection, it's natural for me to focus on how I can grow or what I can learn from the experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

18. I feel as though my basic worth, competence, and likeability are "on-the-line" in many situation I find myself in.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

19. The attitude I take towards possible setbacks and disappointments is that they'll end up being good learning experiences.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

20. As I see it, the rewards of personal growth and learning something new outweigh the disappointment of failure and rejection.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

21. It seems like I'm constantly trying to prove that I'm "okay" as a person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

22. So much of what I do feels to me like a major test of my basic worth, competence, and likeability as a person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

23. My natural tendency is to view problem situations as providing opportunities for growth and self-improvement.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

24. I feel like my worth, competence, and likeability are things I'm constantly struggling to prove to myself and to others.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

25. I approach difficult life situations welcoming the opportunity to learn from my mistakes.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

26. Relative to other people, there are a lot of things I do just to prove my basic adequacy as a person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

27. My approach to challenging life situations is that I'd rather make a mistake and learn from the experience than sit back and never try.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

28. I approach stressful situations knowing that the important thing is for me to learn and grow from these experiences.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

29. Whereas other people see themselves as competent in the things they do, that's something I'm still trying to prove to myself.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

30. I feel like I'm always testing out whether or not I really "measure-up".

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

31. I look upon potential disappointments in life as opportunities to improve and grow as a person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

32. In many things I do, I'm trying to find out whether or not I'm a competent, worthy, or likeable person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

33. I approach difficult life situations knowing that I can accept failure or rejection as long as I learn and grow from the experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

34. I tend to view difficult or stressful situations as all-or-none tests of my basic worth as a person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

35. Realising my fullest potential in life is more important to me than protecting myself from the possibility of failure.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally agree and disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree

36. My main motive for doing many of the things I do is to prove my basic self-worth, competence, or likeability.

1  
Strongly disagree

2  
Moderately disagree

3  
Slightly disagree

4  
Equally agree and disagree

5  
Slightly agree

6  
Moderately agree

7  
Strongly agree

## **Appendix 2 - A copy of the consent form.**

### **Research Participants Consent Form**

I agree to Catherine Brown recording this interview for use in her research. I realise that this interview will be transcribed, analysed and extracts may be used in her thesis. While Catherine will attempt to disguise my identity there is still the possibility that someone reading her thesis might recognise me and I accept this risk.

Catherine has my permission to use the information I give to answer her research questions and this will involve her interpretation of how I construe my experiences of change. I understand that this information will be recorded in an anonymous fashion.

**Signed**

**Date**

**Appendix 3 - The information that was given to potential participants.**

This study is investigating how people respond to change in their lives. How their personal thinking styles help them to learn and adapt to new situations and events. By completing this questionnaire you will be providing information that can be assessed for common thinking styles.

One fifth of the participants will be asked to complete a repertory grid which is a kind of table where they consider their beliefs and feelings about change then there will be a short discussion about the grids. This second stage will take one hour. From these two stages it is hoped that common beliefs and feelings about change will emerge.

While your personal details are needed to contact you in the event of your selection for the second stage, they will be removed and a number substituted to protect individual identities. Should you wish further information you can contact me with the details provided on the attached card. Thank you for your participation in this research.

**Appendix 4** - The topics which were covered in the pilot interviews.

As this was an inductive research design the purpose of the pilot interviews were to discover how the participants were construing their experiences of change. Instead of specific questions there were topics which were explored with the study 1a participants to try to determine what was relevant within their constructs systems. These were only loosely employed and areas that seemed to be important to the individual participants were pursued.

- What sort of activities would you consider learning to do or becoming involved with and why?
- If you found this more difficult than you had imagined what would you be thinking/feeling? Would you continue or leave?
- Explore beliefs about intelligence, personality and whether these can change?
- How sure do you need to be that you can do something new before you will take that risk?

After the study 1a interviews had been analysed an emerging theme was beliefs and feelings about self in relation to change and so in study 1b the topics to be covered also included a few topics about this issue.

- If you had to attend a professional development course and did not think you knew much about the topic or did not have the skills what would you be thinking or feeling before you started?
- If you do not gain the necessary skills or knowledge easily what you be thinking and feeling and how would you decide to act?
- If your marks for the assessment were very poor what would you be thinking/feeling?
- When you are in that situation to what degree to your feelings influence your decisions?

**Appendix 5** - The final summary sheet for Alice who took part in study three and was nineteen years old. Alice used exploratory beliefs and responses and was an Explorer. In her interview she was describing the dramatic changes she had to make when she left home to go to university and had to cope increasing demands on her time. While she had been a schoolgirl Alice had attained very marks for all of her exams and when she went to university and found herself with a flat to run, a part-time job, friendships to make and her degree her established beliefs about herself were thrown into confusion. Alice had to elaborate virtually all of her construct system which she seems to have accomplished very successfully. The focus of elaboration was on deciding to do all the activities to a 'good enough' standard instead of working towards excellence in one area. As she says, "**I need to balance our all the things I have to deal with. So eh, top marks are not the, everything,**" (23/25).

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 40, 65, 70/73, 85/87, 171/173
Anticipate elaboration and change 119/121, 133/136, 193/196, 198/201
Believe effort is effective 10/11, 106/109
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 23/25, 41/42, 65/67, 61/63, 65/67, 69/70, 97/103, 111/113, 128/133, 152/155, 161/163, 173/182
Believe that the past and present are separate 19/22, 30, 81/85
Can identify what made a difference 7/10, 30/32, 22/23, 25/26, 88/90, 103/106, 155/157, 196/198
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 54/59, 67/69, 118/119, 126/128, 144/145
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 60/61
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Appendix 6** - The final summary sheet for Steve who is a Maintainer, he took part in study three and was fifty years old. Steve predominately employed sustaining beliefs and responses to describe his quest to be 'top dog' in every situation. It is interesting to note the lack of negative feelings and this seemed to be the result of his job as a business consultant where he works with several clients or companies each week and gains sufficient validation in these situations.

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change 31/35
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 29/31
Believe that the past and present are separate 6/8
Can identify what made a difference 11/18, 232/234
Can identify their beliefs and feelings
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 41/42, 50/51, 127/130, 157/168, 174/178, 188/189
Believe that performance indicates their worth 43/50, 55/59, 74/81, 101/104, 130/135, 150/157, 178/188, 195/197, 206/213
Believe that there are standards to attain 8/11, 53/55, 66/63, 83/91, 146/149
Experience strong negative emotions 91/94, 224/226
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Appendix 7** - The final summary sheet for Elaine who is a Changer and was in study two she was sixty-one years old. While Elaine was employing more exploratory beliefs and responses she seemed to still be in the process of elaborating her construing. In her interview Elaine was talking about finishing her PhD and her husband's expectation that she would return to looking after him full-time which was not something she wanted to do. The presence of so many negative feelings is an indication of her unhappiness at this prospect. The references to being lacking in comparison to her ideal self are also related to not believing that she can embrace the professional self that she desires without unpleasant consequences.

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing



**Becoming an Explorer:  
How mature meaning systems facilitate  
the ability to change.**

**Volume 2**

**Data**

**Catherine Brown  
A Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D**

**Faculty of Education  
The University of Glasgow**

**September, 2004**

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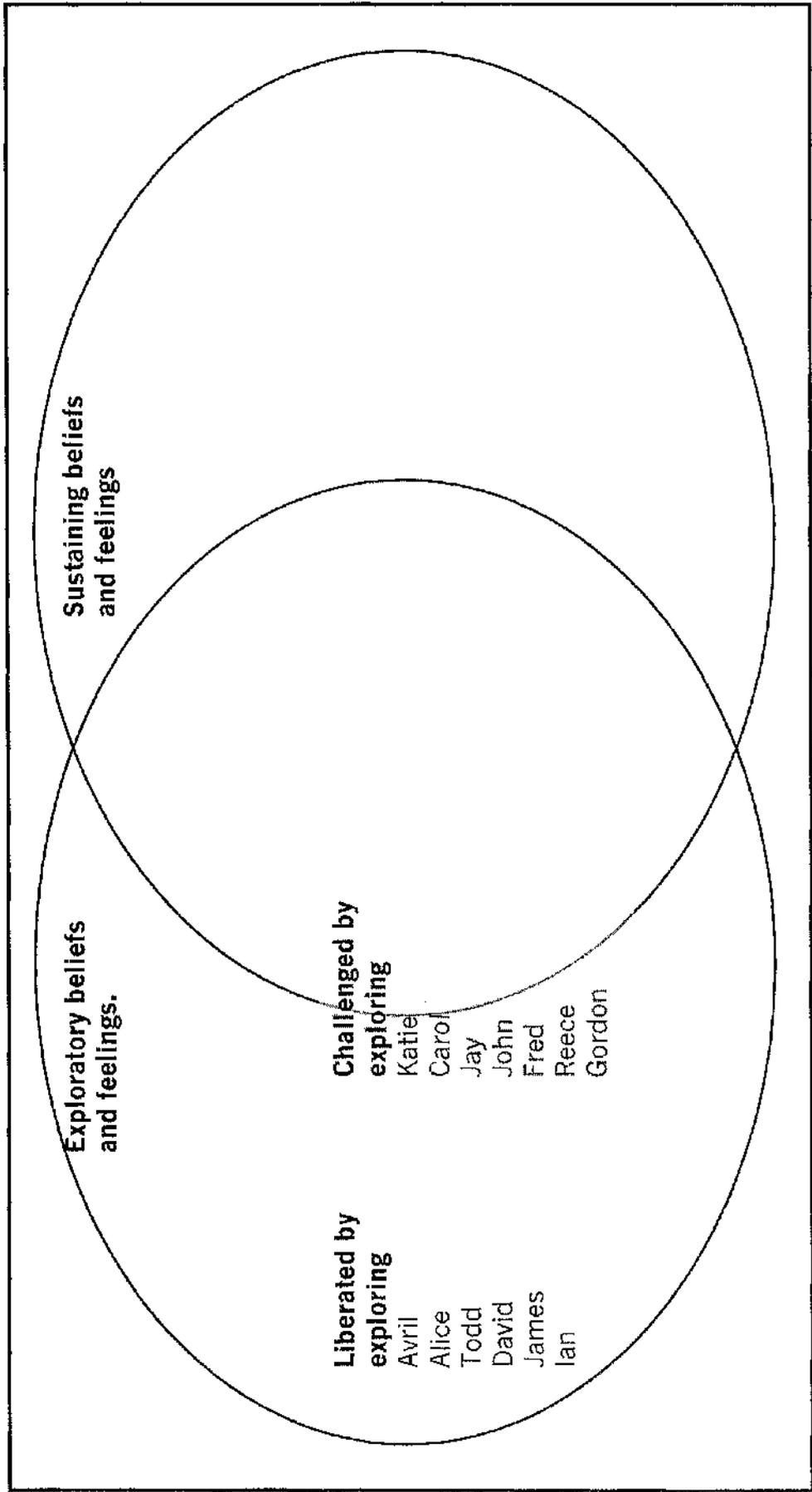
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## **The Explorers' Data**

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**Table 24 Locating the Explorers on the 'change dimension'.**



**Sub category 1: Those participants who were described as 'liberated by exploring'.**

**1.1: Avril**

**Study 3**

**Liberated by exploring**

**Belief's Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Bigoted	7	7	3	1	7	4	Accepting
Simplistic thinker	7	7	4	4	7	1	Direct thinker
Strong opinions	3	6	7	1	6	5	Flexible opinions
Self-effacing	1	6	1	3	6	3	Positive about self

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Uncomfortable	1	6	2	2	6	6	Relaxed
Worn out	5	5	4	1	5	2	Stimulated
Frustrated	1	6	4	4	6	2	Comfortable
Lack of worth	1	6	1	4	6	2	Higher esteem

Name: Avril

Age: 54

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V	1						
6 V		2					
7 V	1						
9 V	1						
12 V	1						
15 V	1						
16 V	1						
18 V	1						
21 V	1						
22 V	1						
24 V	1						
26 V	1						
29 V	1						
30 V	1						
32 V	1						
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G							7
3 G						6	
5 G							7
8 G						6	
10 G							7
11 G							7
13 G						6	
14 G							7
17 G						6	
19 G						6	
20 G						6	
23 G						6	
25 G						6	
27 G						6	
28 G						6	
31 G						6	
33 G					5		
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 113  
 Validation seeking score: 19  
 Ratio 1:6

Name: Avril

Study: 3

Group: Explorer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 12/14, 58/62, 79, 80/86, 107/108, 111, 131/133, 152/154, 182/183, 201/203, 235/236
Anticipate elaboration and change 38/41
Believe effort is effective 27/30, 103/104
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 22/27, 47/51, 89/93, 100/103, 140/146
Believe that the past and present are separate 104/106, 213/219
Can identify what made a difference 10/12, 68/73, 11/112, 122/125, 180/182, 183/184, 190/194
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 7/10, 46/47, 80/86, 163/169, 201, 240/241
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 203/208
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 19/22, 56/58
Seek validation 226/230
Employ loose construing

**1.2 Alice**

**Study 3 Liberated by exploring**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Introvert	2	4	6	3	3	6	Extrovert
Easily Stressed	3	5	4	2	1	6	Very Relaxed
Irrational	5	5	3	5	3	4	Logical
Self-Conscious	2	4	6	4	3	6	Uninhibited

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Frustrated	2	5	6	2	4	3	Optimistic
Pressured	2	5	6	2	2	4	Relaxed
Irritated	2	4	3	2	3	3	Challenged
Responsible	4	4	6	3	6	6	Open to share

Name: Alice

Age: 19

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V		2					
4 V		2					
6 V		2					
7 V		2					
9 V	1						
12 V	1						
15 V	1						
16 V	1						
18 V	1						
21 V	1						
22 V	1						
24 V	1						
26 V	1						
29 V	1						
30 V	1						
32 V	1						
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G							7
3 G							7
5 G							7
8 G							7
10 G						6	
11 G							7
13 G							7
14 G							7
17 G							7
19 G							7
20 G							7
23 G							7
25 G							7
27 G						6	
28 G							7
31 G							7
33 G							7
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 124

Validation seeking score: 22

Ratio 1:6

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 40, 65, 70/73, 85/87, 171/173
Anticipate elaboration and change 119/121, 133/136, 193/196, 198/201
Believe effort is effective 10/11, 106/109
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 23/25, 41/42, 65/67, 61/63, 65/67, 69/70, 97/103, 111/113, 128/133, 152/155, 161/163, 173/182
Believe that the past and present are separate 19/22, 30, 81/85
Can identify what made a difference 7/10, 30/32, 22/23, 25/26, 88/90, 103/106, 155/157, 196/198
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 54/59, 67/69, 118/119, 126/128, 144/145
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 60/61
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Introvert	2	7	7	3	4	5	Extrovert
Over-powered	3	7	7	4	4	5	Empowered
Lacking confidence	2	7	6	5	5	6	Self-Assured
Depressed	7	7	6	5	4	5	Optimistic

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Uneasy	3	7	6	5	3	5	Happy
Sad	3	7	5	4	3	4	Pleased
Dead	2	5	7	4	5	5	Stimulated
Morbid	5	7	7	4	3	4	Exhilarated

Name: Todd

Age: 64

Question Number		Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly agree
1	V	1						
4	V	1						
6	V	1						
7	V	1						
9	V	1						
12	V	1						
15	V	1						
16	V	1						
18	V	1						
21	V	1						
22	V	1						
24	V	1						
26	V	1						
29	V	1						
30	V	1						
32	V	1						
34	V	1						
36	V	1						
2	G							7
3	G						6	
5	G	1						
8	G							7
10	G	1						
11	G							7
13	G							7
14	G							7
17	G							7
19	G							7
20	G							7
23	G							7
25	G							7
27	G							7
28	G							7
31	G							7
33	G							7
35	G							7

Growth seeking score: 113

Validation seeking score: 18

Ratio 1:6

**Name: Todd**

**Study: 3**

**Group: Explorers**

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 11/12, 21/22, 35/37, 42/43, 49/50, 92/93, 109/112, 174/177
Anticipate elaboration and change 152/154
Believe effort is effective 106/109, 114/117, 138/140, 144/147
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 50/51, 56/63, 93/98
Believe that the past and present are separate 9/10, 77/79, 161/164, 177/179
Can identify what made a difference 7/8, 10/11, 17/21, 27, 32/35, 63/66, 80/85, 98/100, 129/137, 141/144, 149/152, 169/174, 179/185
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 66/68, 78/80, 104/106, 112/114, 122
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 74/77, 122/125
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**1.4 David**

**Study: 3 Liberated by exploring**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Artistic	8	9	9	5	6	3	Logical
Drifting	7	8	9	2	7	8	Determined
Failing	7	8	8	4	6	7	Succeeding
Arrogant	7	7	9	4	2	5	Humble
Scattered	6	8	9	5	6	7	Focused
Lack of direction	6	8	8	5	7	8	Direction

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Detached	4	7	7	4	7	10	Engaged
Apathetic	6	8	8	3	6	7	Driven
Intrigued	6	8	8	4	6	7	Content
Irritated	8	7	8	7	7	8	Peaceful
Unsure	6	8	8	5	7	8	Know what to do
Bored	4	7	6	5	6	6	Challenged

Name: David

Age: 22

Question Number		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	V	1						
4	V	1						
6	V	1						
7	V		2					
9	V	1						
12	V	1						
15	V	1						
16	V	1						
18	V	1						
21	V	1						
22	V	1						
24	V	1						
26	V	1						
29	V	1						
30	V	1						
32	V	1						
34	V	1						
36	V	1						
2	G						6	
3	G							7
5	G							7
8	G						6	
10	G							7
11	G							7
13	G						6	
14	G						6	
17	G						6	
19	G							7
20	G							7
23	G							7
25	G						6	
27	G							7
28	G							7
31	G						6	
33	G							7
35	G							7

Growth seeking score: 119

Validation seeking score: 19

Ratio 1:6

Name: David

Study: 2

Group: Explorers

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 136/138, 303/306, 511/512, 523/525, 556/559
Anticipate elaboration and change 155/157, 220/229, 455/456
Believe effort is effective 372/375
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 21/23, 28/31, 49/51, 94/95, 112/115, 121/30, 134/136, 139/149, 157/163, 170/188, 198/205, 241/244, 253/261, 284/287, 316/337, 432/444, 495/507, 547/552
Believe that the past and present are separate 280/284
Can identify what made a difference 104/108, 272/274, 287/289, 293/294, 354/359, 374/377, 390/392, 397/404, 417/418, 422/426, 489/494, 512/516
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 3/9, 16/21, 31/35, 39/41, 45/48, 69/70, 75/80, 84/85, 92/93, 99/104, 154, 195/198, 209/211, 216/219, 235/237, 250/252, 261/262, 269/271, 299/300, 312/316, 331/333, 340/341, 346/350, 385, 411/412, 449/451, 482/488, 525/526, 534/541, 559/565
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Pessimistic	4	7	7	5	2	5	Optimistic
Materialistic	4	6	2	7	2	4	Possessions not high value
Withdrawn	3	7	7	4	4	4	Happily interacts
Lack of confidence and self-understanding	3	7	6	5	6	5	Self-assured

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Frustrated	4	7	5	5	3	5	Inspired
Disconnected	3	6	5	5	4	5	Enlightening
Careful	3	6	6	4	4	3	Easier
Challenged	2	6	5	6	5	4	Strong

Name: Iain

Age: 33

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V	1						
6 V	1						
7 V	1						
9 V	1						
12 V	1						
15 V	1						
16 V	1						
18 V	1						
21 V	1						
22 V	1						
24 V	1						
26 V	1						
29 V	1						
30 V	1						
32 V	1						
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G							7
3 G							7
5 G							7
8 G							7
10 G							7
11 G							7
13 G							7
14 G							7
17 G							7
19 G							7
20 G							7
23 G							7
25 G							7
27 G							7
28 G							7
31 G							7
33 G							7
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 126

Validation seeking score: 18

Ratio 1:7

Name: Iain

Study: 3

Group: Explorer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 35/38, 112/115, 160/162, 196/200, 305/306, 316/321, 337/338
Anticipate elaboration and change 17/19, 42/45, 126/133, 240/244
Believe effort is effective 286/288, 355/359
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 94/97, 213/216, 321/323, 346/349
Believe that the past and present are separate 5/9, 191/196, 251/268
Can identify what made a difference 9/17, 28/35, 54/58, 62/65, 84/94, 106/112, 115/117, 142/147, 154/160, 171/177, 200/208, 228/234, 238/240, 307/310, 330/332
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 19/22, 38/42, 59/62, 77/83, 123/126, 138/142, 208/213, 222/228, 234/235, 280/284, 301/305, 310/314, 332/337, 349/355
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth 135/138, 168/171
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 162/168, 288/292
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation 134/135
Employ loose construing

**Sub category 2: Those participants who were described as 'challenged by exploring'.**

**2.1 Katie**

**Study: 3**

**Challenged by exploring**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Stuck in a rut	4	7	7	3	4	7	Desires knowledge and growth
Avoids conflict	1	5	7	3	4	5	Faces up to conflict
Self-Indulgent	5	5	4	6	5	2	Self-control
Others-first in Relationships	6	4	7	7	4	2	Reciprocity (give and take)

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Bored	5	6	7	4	5	7	Stimulated
Sick	3	6	5	4	5	4	Strong and bold
Guilty	3	4	5	3	4	6	Righteous
Intolerant	7	3	2	7	1	6	Tolerant

Name: Katie

Age: 48

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V	1						
6 V		2					
7 V	1						
9 V		2					
12 V	1						
15 V			3				
16 V		2					
18 V	1						
21 V	1						
22 V	1						
24 V	1						
26 V	1						
29 V	1						
30 V	1						
32 V	1						
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G						6	
3 G						6	
5 G				4			
8 G					5		
10 G						6	
11 G						6	
13 G			3				
14 G						6	
17 G					5		
19 G						6	
20 G				4			
23 G						6	
25 G				4			
27 G						6	
28 G					5		
31 G					5		
33 G					5		
35 G					5		

Growth seeking score: 93

Validation seeking score: 23

Ratio 1:4

Name: Katie

Study: 3

Group: Explorers

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 54/56, 87/88, 140/143, 158/162, 197/200, 213/216
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective 118/123, 186/187, 200/203
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 18/19, 37/38, 65/71, 93/98, 111/115, 151/158, 170/173
Believe that the past and present are separate 16/18, 27/28, 46/50, 179/183, 187/190
Can identify what made a difference 7/16, 19/20, 28/34, 50/54, 71/75, 89/93, 98/104, 139/140, 191/195, 203/213
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 34/37, 64/65, 88/89, 115/118, 123/125, 149/151, 168/170, 183/186, 190/191, 222/231
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 83/87
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Stagnant	5	6	4	1	4	6	Evolved
Resigned	4	6	1	1	4	5	Optimistic
Self-defeating	1	4	6	1	5	4	Self-actualising
Stubborn	2	5	6	1	1	3	Self-confident

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Depressed	1	7	4	1	7	7	Exciting
Sad	1	7	3	1	6	7	Contented
Anger	1	7	5	1	7	7	Joy
Frustrating	1	7	7	1	6	7	Secure

Name: Carol

Age: 43

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V	1						
6 V	1						
7 V	1						
9 V		2					
12 V	1						
15 V		2					
16 V		2					
18 V	1						
21 V		2					
22 V	1						
24 V		2					
26 V	1						
29 V	1						
30 V		2					
32 V	1						
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G							7
3 G							7
5 G						6	
8 G							7
10 G							7
11 G						6	
13 G						6	
14 G							7
17 G							7
19 G		2					
20 G						6	
23 G							7
25 G						6	
27 G							7
28 G						6	
31 G						6	
33 G							7
35 G						6	

Growth seeking score: 113

Validation seeking score: 24

Ratio 1:5

Name: Carol

Study: 3

Group: Explorer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 60/63, 67/69, 183/184, 193/199, 212/214
Anticipate elaboration and change 31/35, 51/55, 75/76, 83/85, 127/128, 213/234
Believe effort is effective 26/28, 180/183
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 72/73, 143/153, 184/185, 202/211
Believe that the past and present are separate 49/51, 114/117, 227/231
Can identify what made a difference 11/17, 24/26, 28/31, 35/37, 45/49, 63/67, 91/94, 110/114, 138/139, 234/237
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 42/44, 55/58, 76/83, 103/109, 117/119, 136/137, 139/141, 157, 160/162, 199/202, 212, 214/219, 237/239
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 8/11
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 177/180
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Rigid opinions	1	6	7	1	5	7	Extremely flexible
Having own way	1	7	5	1	5	7	Willing to listen
Compulsive competitiveness	1	7	4	1	6	6	Focused achievement
Apathetic	1	6	4	3	5	7	Grim determination (persevere)

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Threatened	1	6	7	2	5	7	Relaxed
Fear	1	7	6	1	5	7	Contentment
Angry	1	6	6	2	4	6	Satisfied
Pathetic	1	7	7	1	5	7	Strong

Name: Jay

Age: 46

Question Number		Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	V	1						
4	V	1						
6	V			3				
7	V	1						
9	V	1						
12	V	1						
15	V	1						
16	V		2					
18	V		2					
21	V	1						
22	V	1						
24	V	1						
26	V	1						
29	V	1						
30	V	1						
32	V	1						
34	V	1						
36	V	1						
2	G						6	
3	G						6	
5	G						6	
8	G						6	
10	G						6	
11	G						6	
13	G						6	
14	G		2					
17	G	1						
19	G						6	
20	G							7
23	G							7
25	G							7
27	G							7
28	G							7
31	G						6	
33	G						6	
35	G							7

Growth seeking score: 105

Validation seeking score: 22

Ratio 1:5

Name: Jay

Study: 3

Group: Explorers

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 52/56, 165/168, 216/223, 230/233, 267/272, 297/301
Anticipate elaboration and change 7/11, 100/104, 265/267, 272/274
Believe effort is effective 11/16, 23/28, 44/45, 84/87, 124/128, 161/165, 192/196, 227/230
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 28/31, 40/44, 46/49, 81/84
Believe that the past and present are separate 132/134, 244/273, 87/9149, 255/265
Can identify what made a difference 16/23, 92/95, 134/140, 157/160, 203/206, 223/227, 272/274
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 5/7, 38/40, 49/52, 116/124, 196/202, 207/215, 249/255, 294/297
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth 189/192
Believe that there are standards to attain 70/73, 87/91
Experience strong negative emotions 74/81, 95/100, 146/151, 176/185
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 151/157, 185/189
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Change is threatening	6	10	10	4	3	10	Change is exciting
Change is external	5	10	10	2	2	10	Change is internal
Observers	7	10	10	6	6	8	Reflective
Mistakes make you a failure	7	10	10	4	7	8	You learn from mistakes
Unaware	6	10	10	4	2	7	Very aware of thoughts
Life is always hard	5	10	10	1	7	10	Life is sometimes hard

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Frightened	9	9	9	3	7	6	Excited
Deeply frustrated	3	8	8	3	7	5	Achieving
Drained	3	8	9	2	7	7	Stimulated
Condemned	9	10	10	2	8	7	Release
Annoyed	3	8	8	2	6	6	Triumphant
Monotonous	3	10	8	6	8	9	Varied

Name: John

Age: 21

Question Number		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	V	1						
4	V	1						
6	V	1						
7	V	1						
9	V	1						
12	V	1						
15	V	1						
16	V	1						
18	V	1						
21	V	1						
22	V	1						
24	V	1						
26	V	1						
29	V	1						
30	V	1						
32	V	1						
34	V	1						
36	V	1						
2	G						6	
3	G						6	
5	G						6	
8	G						6	
10	G						6	
11	G							7
13	G						6	
14	G						6	
17	G						6	
19	G						6	
20	G						6	
23	G						6	
25	G						6	
27	G						6	
28	G						6	
31	G						6	
33	G						6	
35	G						6	

Growth seeking score: 102

Validation seeking score: 18

Ratio 1:6

Name: John

Study: 2

Group: Explorers

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 14, 19/21, 199/127, 163/168, 245/247, 267/270, 278/280
Anticipate elaboration and change 172/178, 299/301, 305/308,
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 6/7, 28/33, 95/99, 100/104, 148/153, 178/182, 199/206, 280/291
Believe that the past and present are separate 79/81
Can identify what made a difference 50/55, 99/100, 108/111, 194/199, 237/245, 254/261
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 42/50, 56/59, 67/79, 131/133, 146/148, 153/157, 168/172, 214/226, 270/273, 308/309
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 104/107
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Narrow-minded	2	9	2	1	9	8	Open to Alternatives
Negative outlook	2	9	5	4	5	7	Positive outlook
Directionless	1	8	9	2	2	8	Purposeful
Apathetic	3	9	9	9	9	9	Judgemental
Followers/ need guidance	9	10	10	2	3	3	Leaders
Takes offence	2	9	5	2	6	7	Thick skin

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Frustrated	1	8	7	3	2	7	Encouraged
Annoyed	5	9	8	3	5	9	Pleased
Depressed	1	9	8	5	1	8	Joyous
Stagnating	1	9	6	5	2	8	Stimulated
Exasperated	2	9	9	2	2	7	Satisfying

Name: Fred

Age: 30

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V	1						
6 V		2					
7 V		2					
9 V	1						
12 V	1						
15 V	1						
16 V	1						
18 V	1						
21 V	1						
22 V	1						
24 V	1						
26 V	1						
29 V		2					
30 V	1						
32 V	1						
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G							7
3 G							7
5 G						6	
8 G							7
10 G						6	
11 G							7
13 G						6	
14 G							7
17 G						6	
19 G							7
20 G							7
23 G							7
25 G						6	
27 G						6	
28 G						6	
31 G						6	
33 G							7
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 118

Validation seeking score: 21

Ratio 1:5

**Name: Fred**

**Study: 3**

**Group: Explorer**

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 99/102, 232/235, 438/439, 464/467
Anticipate elaboration and change 155/156, 171/175, 182/187, 473/477
Believe effort is effective 253/260, 327/331, 335
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 10/29, 53/60, 94/99, 187/189, 260/264, 271/272, 349/361, 385/392, 450/455
Believe that the past and present are separate 6/10, 182/187, 310/315
Can identify what made a difference 91/94, 157/167, 201/206, 210/214, 216/220, 245/253, 264/267, 291/293
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 66/71, 126/132, 145/146, 194/201, 215, 363/367, 380/385, 446, 455/460
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 411/415, 422/429
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 132/135, 410/411
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 48/52, 60/64
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Stuck	2	7	8	1	2	7	Making progress
Uncertain	2	9	7	3	3	6	Secure
Unpredictable	1	7	9	2	5	8	Content with ongoing change
Unchanged	2	7	7	3	3	7	Changing
External focus	7	7	8	4	2	6	Internal focus
Inevitable events	2	8	9	3	3	9	Possibilities

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Frustrated	1	7	7	2	3	6	Happy
Anxious	2	9	7	1	4	8	Relaxed
Insecure	1	9	9	3	3	9	Calm
Unhappy	2	7	8	3	4	7	Fulfilled
Superficial or Shallow	4	7	9	3	2	8	In depth
Hopeless	1	8	8	2	3	9	Optimistic

Name: Reece

Age: 33

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V		2					
6 V							7
7 V	1						
9 V	1						
12 V	1						
15 V	1						
16 V	1						
18 V	1						
21 V	1						
22 V	1						
24 V	1						
26 V	1						
29 V	1						
30 V	1						
32 V	1						
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G						6	
3 G					5		
5 G							7
8 G						6	
10 G						6	
11 G						6	
13 G							7
14 G						6	
17 G					5		
19 G						6	
20 G						6	
23 G						6	
25 G						6	
27 G							7
28 G					5		
31 G					5		
33 G					5		
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 107

Validation seeking score: 19

Ratio 1:5

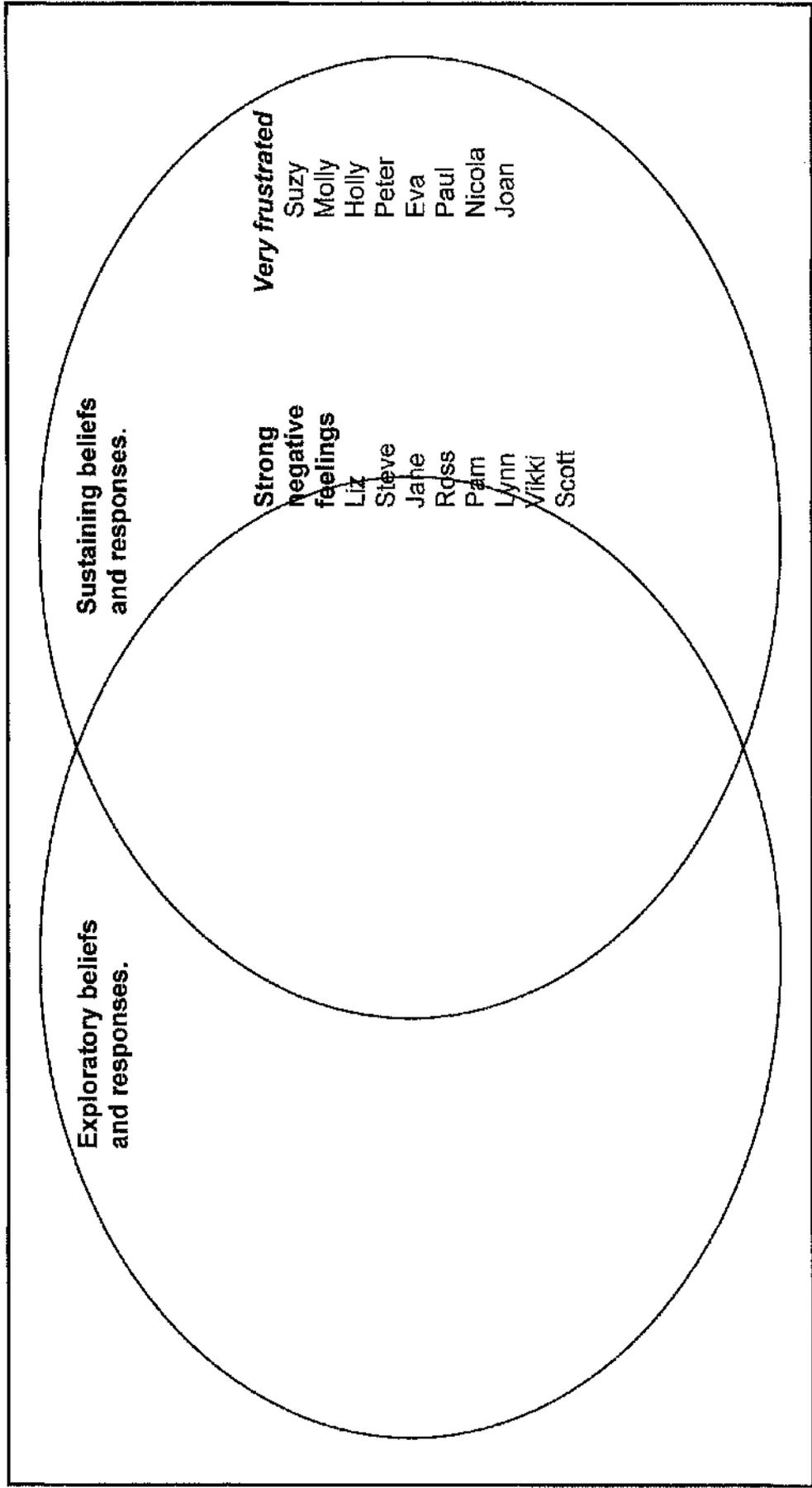
<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 381/383, 405/407
Anticipate elaboration and change 235/236
Believe effort is effective 165, 237, 315/318
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 160/161, 181/183, 251/254, 328/331, 335/338, 378/380, 403/405, 407/409
Believe that the past and present are separate 360
Can identify what made a difference 19/21, 30/34, 143/147, 223/227
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 21/24, 61/64, 75/ 92, 106/112, 117/124, 137/143, 189, 194/195, 291/, 343/344, 355
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 44/47, 68/71, 266
Believe that performance indicates their worth 276/283
Believe that there are standards to attain 165/167
Experience strong negative emotions 51/52, 218/223
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 263/264
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 113/117

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 75, 270, 275, 288/290, 303/306, 329/330, 334/344, 354/356, 375/376
Anticipate elaboration and change 311/319, 344/347
Believe effort is effective 249/252, 256/259, 265/266, 296/298
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 3/5, 31, 38/39, 43, 48/51, 55/56, 66/67, 82/84, 98/101, 111/115, 128/132, 160/163, 175/181, 194/197, 209/212, 218/219, 241/243, 248/249, 286/288, 290/292, 373/374
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 10/12, 21/22, 26/27, 71, 82, 109/111, 137/140, 153/156, 173/175, 186/188, 208/209, 217/218, 229/230, 235, 280, 325, 362/368
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 193/194, 240/241
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

## **The Maintainers' Data**

**Venn Diagram**

**Table 25 The Maintainers located on the 'change dimension'**



**Sub category 1: Those participants who were describing 'strong negative feelings'.**

**1.1 Liz**

**Study:3**

**Strong negative feelings**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
'Too nice'	2	5	3	1	7	6	Assertive
Dour	4	2	6	1	6	7	Contented
Serious	3	1	5	1	7	7	See funny side
Introverted	4	3	5	2	7	7	Sociable

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Frustrated	1	6	4	1	7	6	Inspired
Irritated	4	2	5	1	7	7	Hopeful
Life-less	3	4	5	1	7	6	Light-hearted
Depressed	3	3	5	1	6	5	Exhilarated

Name: Liz

Age: 71

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V				4			
4 V							7
6 V							7
7 V						6	
9 V							7
12 V							7
15 V							7
16 V							7
18 V							7
21 V							7
22 V							7
24 V							7
26 V							7
29 V							7
30 V							7
32 V							7
34 V							7
36 V							7
2 G					5		
3 G		2					
5 G				4			
8 G				4			
10 G		2					
11 G				4			
13 G		2					
14 G				4			
17 G	1						
19 G				4			
20 G				4			
23 G				4			
25 G						6	
27 G						6	
28 G				4			
31 G						6	
33 G					5		
35 G				4			

Growth seeking score: 71  
 Validation seeking score: 122  
 Ratio 2:1

Name: Liz

Study: 3

Group: Maintainer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 22/26, 83/84, 245/247
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference 20/21, 61/65, 94/106
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 40/41, 49/57, 66/69, 287/294
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 8/10, 14/16, 113/114, 179/184, 219/221, 254/256, 260/264, 275/276
Believe that performance indicates their worth 134/137, 211/214, 225/229
Believe that there are standards to attain 59/61, 124/126, 131/134, 207/211, 285/287
Experience strong negative emotions 10/12, 153/155, 168/170
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 16/18, 111/113, 120/123, 170/173, 175/178, 185/187, 197/200, 233/235, 240/244
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 84/87, 184/185, 302/308

**1.2 Steve**

**Study: 3 Strong negative feelings**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Plays safe, cautious	5	6	2	2	2	4	Experimental
Acceptor, follower	7	6	5	2	4	3	Good leader
Rigid beliefs	2	6	3	1	3	5	Open beliefs
Unimaginative	6	7	2	1	2	5	Creative

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Frustrated	5	6	6	6	5	7	Energised
Bored	5	6	7	3	4	6	Stimulated
Uncomfortable	2	6	2	2	1	6	Inquisitive
Lazy	5	5	6	2	3	6	Motivated

Name: Steve

Age: 50

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V						6	
4 V					5		
6 V							7
7 V						6	
9 V						6	
12 V						6	
15 V						6	
16 V			3				
18 V						6	
21 V							7
22 V						6	
24 V						6	
26 V			3				
29 V		2					
30 V						6	
32 V					5		
34 V							7
36 V						6	
2 G		2					
3 G	1						
5 G			3				
8 G		2					
10 G	1						
11 G					5		
13 G			3				
14 G		2					
17 G	1						
19 G		2					
20 G		2					
23 G		2					
25 G		2					
27 G						6	
28 G		2					
31 G	1						
33 G		2					
35 G			3				

Growth seeking score: 42

Validation seeking score: 99

Ratio 2:1

Name: Steve

Study: 3

Group: Maintainer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change 31/35
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 29/31
Believe that the past and present are separate 6/8
Can identify what made a difference 11/18, 232/234
Can identify their beliefs and feelings
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 41/42, 50/51, 127/130, 157/168, 174/178, 188/189
Believe that performance indicates their worth 43/50, 55/59, 74/81, 101/104, 130/135, 150/157, 178/188, 195/197, 206/213
Believe that there are standards to attain 8/11, 53/55, 66/63, 83/91, 146/149
Experience strong negative emotions 91/94, 224/226
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**1.3 Jane**

**Study: 3 Strong negative feelings**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Narrow Minded	6	7	7	3	5	4	Wide horizon
Trapped in cycles of thought	1	4	6	3	2	3	Balanced approach to life
Hesitant	7	3	6	3	7	5	Going for it
Lack of awareness of complexity of life	6	7	7	3	6	5	Understanding

**Feelings Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Aggressive	1	4	4	5	4	5	Relaxed
Suffocated	1	5	4	6	2	5	Comfortable and safe
Frustrated	6	3	6	5	5	6	Stimulated
Resigned	7	4	7	5	5	7	Interested

Name: Jane

Age: 22

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V							7
4 V					5		
6 V						6	
7 V						6	
9 V						6	
12 V						6	
15 V				4			
16 V					5		
18 V					5		
21 V					5		
22 V					5		
24 V						6	
26 V					5		
29 V						6	
30 V						6	
32 V					5		
34 V					5		
36 V					5		
2 G					5		
3 G						6	
5 G							7
8 G						6	
10 G				4			
11 G					5		
13 G					5		
14 G					5		
17 G					5		
19 G					5		
20 G					5		
23 G				4			
25 G				4			
27 G					5		
28 G						6	
31 G						6	
33 G						6	
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 98

Validation seeking score: 96

Ratio Equal

**Name: Jane**

**Study: 3**

**Group: Maintainer**

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 30/33
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 100/106
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference 7/14, 22/24, 55, 60/64, 183/187
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 110/114, 171
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 56/59, 72/73, 76/78, 89/92, 121/129, 177/178, 195/197, 201/202,
Believe that performance indicates their worth 36/37, 129/133
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 19/24, 34/35, 55/56, 59/60, 73/76, 104/107
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 44/47, 107/110, 187/190
Seek validation 86/89
Employ loose construing

**1.4 Ross**

**Study: 2 Strong negative feelings**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Irrational	3	9	9	10	6	4	Rational
Searching	1	5	10	10	2	4	Settled
Doesn't like change	2	6	2	1	5	5	Does like changes
Anxious	8	3	9	5	2	4	Security
Traditional thinker	5	8	5	1	7	6	Open to new things
Frightened	9	9	8	8	5	5	Trusting

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Unstable	4	8	10	6	2	4	Stable
Broken	6	3	10	4	5	5	Happy
Afraid	9	5	6	5	9	8	Adventurous
Dissatisfied	5	2	10	7	3	6	Contented
Boring	5	6	6	2	8	9	Mischievous
Resignation	10	10	10	3	6	5	Hopeful

Name: Ross

Age: 25

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V						6	
4 V							7
6 V					5		
7 V					5		
9 V					5		
12 V				4			
15 V							7
16 V						6	
18 V					5		
21 V						6	
22 V					5		
24 V					5		
26 V					5		
29 V					5		
30 V					5		
32 V					5		
34 V					5		
36 V					5		
2 G			3				
3 G			3				
5 G			3				
8 G			3				
10 G	1						
11 G			3				
13 G			3				
14 G		2					
17 G		2					
19 G		2					
20 G			3				
23 G			3				
25 G				4			
27 G			3				
28 G			3				
31 G			3				
33 G			3				
35 G		2					

Growth seeking score: 49

Validation seeking score: 96

Ratio 2:1

Name: Ross

Study: 2

Group: Maintainer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 15/16
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful
Believe that the past and present are separate 25/27
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 50/53, 57/58, 66/71
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 49/50, 106/109, 180/183
Believe that performance indicates their worth 35/39, 85/87, 94/95, 135
Believe that there are standards to attain 6/10, 27/29, 100, 159/160
Experience strong negative emotions 127/130, 158/159
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 142/145, 173/175
Seek validation 122
Employ loose construing 116/118

**1.5 Pam**

**Study: 3 Strong negative feelings**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Low self-esteem	3	6	7	2	5	7	Self-assured
Self-centred	2	7	7	7	4	5	Self-less
Avoid social situations	6	3	7	1	3	7	Good in social situations
Unaware of others	3	7	6	7	5	6	Caring of others

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Inadequate	3	5	7	3	5	7	Confident
Discontented	2	5	5	6	4	4	Contented
Frightened	6	2	7	2	2	5	Secure
Selfish	2	6	6	7	3	5	Considerate

Name: Pam

Age: 46

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V				4			
4 V						6	
6 V						6	
7 V							7
9 V					5		
12 V					5		
15 V					5		
16 V					5		
18 V			3				
21 V			3				
22 V			3				
24 V				4			
26 V			3				
29 V			3				
30 V				4			
32 V			3				
34 V			3				
36 V			3				
2 G					5		
3 G					5		
5 G				4			
8 G				4			
10 G				4			
11 G					5		
13 G				4			
14 G					5		
17 G					5		
19 G						6	
20 G					5		
23 G			3				
25 G				4			
27 G					5		
28 G				4			
31 G				4			
33 G				4			
35 G						6	

Growth seeking score: 78

Validation seeking score: 75

Ratio Equal

**Name: Pam**

**Study: 3**

**Group: Maintainer**

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 236/238
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 17/19, 27/30, 103/107, 177/181
Believe that the past and present are separate 156/162
Can identify what made a difference 23/27, 30/34, 45/53, 92/102
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 34/35, 186
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 63/66, 74/78, 85/87, 114, 117/119, 162/164, 186/188
Believe that performance indicates their worth 68/71, 188/189, 220/223, 250/255
Believe that there are standards to attain 71/74, 190/194
Experience strong negative emotions 5/12, 134/138, 143/148, 169/170, 176/177, 212/214, 224/226, 263/283
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 12/15, 41/45, 59/60, 79/84, 119/120, 125/126, 138/142, 170/176, 200/203, 232, 255/263, 277/283
Seek validation 60/63, 101/103
Employ loose construing 107/108, 148/150, 203/205, 223/224, 238/243, 272/277

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 258/260, 268/272
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 35/36, 244/248, 732, 737/742, 867/871
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference 73/75, 396/399, 606/608, 612/618, 676/678
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 135/139, 143/144, 350/358, 440/449, 525/526
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 3/5, 148/150, 181/183, 187/188, 284/288, 293/296, 300, 306/307, 311/315, 328/330, 595/596, 635/636, 645/650, 656/662, 698/700, 715/716, 720/722, 753/757, 831/832, 837/838, 843/8451,
Believe that performance indicates their worth 544/545, 582/587, 591, 854/855
Believe that there are standards to attain 24, 488/491, 825/826
Experience strong negative emotions 50/51, 67/68, 157/158, 318/322, 487/488, 495/496, 513/514, 602/205, 623/626, 674/676, 689/692, 700/701, 705, 746/749, 777/778, 782
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 76/79, 207/208, 372/375, 379/381, 385/387, 403/412, 518/521
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 110/113, 412/415, 726, 838/843

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 144/146 & 150/152, 229/235, 266/267, 466/468, 527/529
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference 160/161, 545
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 260/262
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 4/8, 12/13, 18/23, 29/30, 36/38, 101/103, 198, 380/383, 475, 579/580
Believe that performance indicates their worth 134/138, 152/154, 178/179, 188/190, 365/366, 376, 455/458, 559/563
Believe that there are standards to attain 370/372, 445/451
Experience strong negative emotions 128/130, 298/299, 304, 321/324, 479/488
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 116/118, 122/124, 174, 183/185, 393/397, 401/402, 592/594
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 82/86, 259/260, 379/381
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective 13/16
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 114/116, 237/245, 277/279, 332/336
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 192/195
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 59/63
Believe that performance indicates their worth 180/183, 307/308, 336/340, 347/351, 443/447
Believe that there are standards to attain 86/93, 124/127, 144/150, 162/169, 352/356
Experience strong negative emotions 68, 73, 123/124, 143/144, 184/187
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 133/139, 284/285, 313/323, 363/367, 426/430
Seek validation 104/109
Employ loose construing 150/152

**Sub category 2: Those participants who were described as 'very frustrated'.**

**2.1 Suzy Study: 2 Very frustrated**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Career oriented	3	5	3	10	2	1	Home oriented
Disorganised	8	6	2	9	6	9	Highly organised
Self-centred	2	9	8	9	6	6	Aware of needs of others
Uptight	7	2	8	8	4	5	Laid back
Rigid views	5	9	9	9	5	3	Tolerant
Single-minded	6	7	7	10	5	4	Flexible

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Threatened	6	6	6	6	6	6	Comfortable
Irritated	7	4	7	10	4	4	Calm
Anxious	2	5	6	8	6	6	At ease
Hurt	7	7	7	8	7	7	Happy
Wound-up	4	2	5	8	4	4	Relaxed
Sad	5	5	5	5	5	5	Optimistic

Name: Suzy

Age: 44

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V					5		
4 V				4			
6 V							7
7 V							7
9 V							7
12 V			3				
15 V						6	
16 V						6	
18 V				4			
21 V					5		
22 V						6	
24 V						6	
26 V					5		
29 V					5		
30 V					5		
32 V					5		
34 V				4			
36 V						6	
2 G			3				
3 G		2					
5 G			3				
8 G		2					
10 G	1						
11 G		2					
13 G	1						
14 G			3				
17 G		2					
19 G			3				
20 G				4			
23 G			3				
25 G		2					
27 G		2					
28 G	1						
31 G		2					
33 G		2					
35 G		2					

Growth seeking score: 46  
 Validation seeking score: 92  
 Ratio 2:1

**Name: Suzy**

**Study: 2**

**Group: Maintainer**

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 34/37, 386/396, 403/407, 421/424, 442/445
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 15/20, 68/70, 127, 176, 341
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 59/62, 89/92, 146/149, 187, 199/200, 259/266, 309, 317/321, 331/332
Believe that performance indicates their worth 206/209, 213/214, 229/238, 270/271, 282/286, 309/312, 321/327
Believe that there are standards to attain 106/108, 119/122, 137/140, 140/146, 243/253, 271/275, 291/296, 345/346
Experience strong negative emotions 70/71, 77, 81, 98/106, 149/152, 215/217, 296/298
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 50/51, 114/119, 165/167, 187/189, 361/169, 374/380, 407/411
Seek validation 374/380
Employ loose construing 5, 10, 189/190, 333/336

**2.2 Molly****Study: 3 Very frustrated****Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Withdrawn	7	3	7	3	7	6	Confident
Blinkered views	7	7	7	1	6	6	Open views
Burdened	5	2	6	2	6	6	Carefree
Unsupportive	7	7	6	1	6	3	Supportive

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Silenced	7	4	7	4	7	7	Sociable
Stressful	5	2	6	1	6	7	Relaxed
Helpless	4	2	7	2	7	7	Optimistic
Resentful	6	3	5	1	6	5	Encouraged

Name: Molly

Age: 23

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V							7
4 V						6	
6 V							7
7 V							7
9 V							7
12 V						6	
15 V						6	
16 V						6	
18 V						6	
21 V							7
22 V							7
24 V						6	
26 V					5		
29 V							7
30 V							7
32 V							7
34 V							7
36 V						6	
2 G		2					
3 G			3				
5 G			3				
8 G		2					
10 G		2					
11 G				4			
13 G				4			
14 G			3				
17 G			3				
19 G			3				
20 G			3				
23 G				4			
25 G				4			
27 G				4			
28 G				4			
31 G			3				
33 G			3				
35 G				4			

Growth seeking score: 58  
 Validation seeking score: 117  
 Ratio 2:1

**Name: Molly**

**Study: 3**

**Group: Maintainer**

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 6/15
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 258/262
Believe that the past and present are separate 15/17
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 263/264, 270/275
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 44/46, 169/174, 202/204, 206/207, 214/217
Believe that performance indicates their worth 20/24, 29/33, 113/114, 134/140, 147/151
Believe that there are standards to attain 61/66, 88/92, 142/147, 154/156
Experience strong negative emotions 60/61, 92/95, 118/125, 158/163, 174/175, 181, 191/192, 198/199, 207/209, 236/239, 250/252, 275/276
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 24/28, 33/37, 47/53, 56/60, 66/71, 76/88, 101/104, 110/113, 125/127, 151/154, 174/178, 187/190, 209/212, 226/236, 246/250, 277/283
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 53/54

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Unsure about learning	8	3	9	6	10	6	Enjoys learning
Will try easy things	9	3	9	7	9	9	Tries lots of new things
Only necessary changes	9	4	8	5	9	9	Embrace changes
Team person	9	5	8	8	9	9	Independent
Mistakes reflect on you	9	5	9	7	9	7	Don't get upset by mistakes
Always busy	8	4	8	7	8	7	Take time out

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Anxious	9	3	9	8	9	9	Stimulated
Nervous	8	4	8	6	8	9	Excited
Unsure	8	4	8	6	9	7	Challenged
Tense	8	6	9	7	9	8	Confident
Inadequate	9	6	9	8	9	7	Competent
Rushed	8	6	7	7	7	7	Relaxed

Name: Holly

Age: 37

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V						6	
4 V						6	
6 V					5		
7 V						6	
9 V						6	
12 V						6	
15 V						6	
16 V						6	
18 V					5		
21 V					5		
22 V						6	
24 V						6	
26 V					5		
29 V						6	
30 V						6	
32 V						6	
34 V						6	
36 V						6	
2 G		2					
3 G		2					
5 G		2					
8 G		2					
10 G		2					
11 G			3				
13 G		2					
14 G		2					
17 G		2					
19 G		2					
20 G		2					
23 G		2					
25 G		2					
27 G			3				
28 G		2					
31 G		2					
33 G		2					
35 G		2					

Growth seeking score: 38

Validation seeking score: 104

Ratio 2:1

Name: Holly

Study: 2

Group: Maintainer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 67/70
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 114/116, 223/225
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 181/185
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 38/41, 43, 51/59, 76/80, 87, 96/98, 171/176, 215/219, 221
Believe that performance indicates their worth 34/38, 43, 46, 71/76, 82/85, 142/145, 191/192
Believe that there are standards to attain 17/22
Experience strong negative emotions 14/15, 22/23, 98/100, 154/156, 209/215
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 6/14, 46/51, 87/94, 100/104, 131/133, 138/142, 198/203
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 120/121, 123/124, 222/223, 225/226

**2.4 Peter**

**Study: 2 Very frustrated**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Rigid beliefs	6	8	8	2	9	9	Open to review
Judgemental	8	8	8	3	10	10	Accepting of people
Selfish	9	7	9	2	9	9	Giving
Clueless	5	2	8	8	8	7	Personal vision
Individual first	9	8	6	1	8	10	Family oriented
Apathetic	8	7	8	2	8	10	Determined to change

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Frustrated	5	3	8	3	7	5	Stimulated
Anxious	2	6	7	7	4	2	Relaxed
Not valued	5	6	2	2	8	2	Appreciated
Unsettled	3	1	8	8	9	8	Purposeful
Cross	6	5	6	4	6	2	Contented
Lethargic	8	5	8	5	9	9	Drive

Name: Peter

Age: 47

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1					6	
4 V						6	
6 V					5		
7 V						6	
9 V						6	
12 V						6	
15 V						6	
16 V						6	
18 V				4			
21 V					5		
22 V							7
24 V				4			
26 V					5		
29 V						6	
30 V						6	
32 V					5		
34 V					5		
36 V				4			
2 G		2					
3 G		2					
5 G				4			
8 G		2					
10 G		2					
11 G		2					
13 G		2					
14 G	1						
17 G		2					
19 G		2					
20 G		2					
23 G	1						
25 G	1						
27 G		2					
28 G							
31 G			3				
33 G				4			
35 G		2					

Growth seeking score: 36

Validation seeking score: 98

Ratio 2:1

Name: Peter

Study: 2

Group: Maintainer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference 112/113
Can identify their beliefs and feelings
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 34/37, 125, 157, 167/171
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain 52/55, 65/60, 104
Experience strong negative emotions 70/71
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 6/8, 21/25, 55/59, 63/65, 80/87, 149/152
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 96/98, 143/144, 175/176

2.5 Eva

Age: 17

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V					5		
4 V						6	
6 V						6	
7 V				4			
9 V							7
12 V					5		
15 V							7
16 V					5		
18 V				4			
21 V						6	
22 V					5		
24 V						6	
26 V					5		
29 V						6	
30 V					5		
32 V						6	
34 V				4			
36 V						6	
2 G				4			
3 G				4			
5 G			3				
8 G			3				
10 G		2					
11 G		2					
13 G			3				
14 G		2					
17 G			3				
19 G			3				
20 G			3				
23 G			3				
25 G			3				
27 G		2					
28 G				4			
31 G			3				
33 G			3				
35 G			3				

Growth seeking score: 53

Validation seeking score: 88

Ratio 2:1

Name: Eva

Study: 3

Group: Maintainer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 89/93
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 62/68, 102/106, 122/125
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 24/26, 120/122, 175/178, 194/198, 211
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain 69/71, 94/96, 111/113, 119/120, 131/138, 141/143, 148/152, 159/163, 183, 216/219
Experience strong negative emotions 20/24, 73/76, 93/94, 166
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 41/50, 114/115
Seek validation 13/20, 26/28, 33/35, 50/56, 138/141, 144/148, 163/166, 178/182, 189/194, 198/206
Employ loose construing

**2.6 Paul**

**Study: 3 Very frustrated**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Retentive	2	5	6	1	4	7	Communi- cative
Compulsive self-monitoring	1	3	5	4	3	3	Sees bigger picture
Intensely critical	5	4	7	2	3	6	Non judge- mental
Not worthy	2	4	5	4	1	5	Worthy

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Insecure	1	5	6	5	2	4	Confident
Frustrated	1	4	7	2	3	5	Inspired
Aggressive/ inhibited	2	5	7	2	5	6	Stimulated
Depressed	2	4	6	3	5	4	Motivated

Name: Paul

Age: 21

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V						6	
4 V					5		
6 V							7
7 V						6	
9 V						6	
12 V						6	
15 V				4			
16 V						6	
18 V						6	
21 V						6	
22 V						6	
24 V						6	
26 V						6	
29 V				4			
30 V						6	
32 V						6	
34 V						6	
36 V						6	
2 G	1						
3 G	1						
5 G		2					
8 G		2					
10 G		2					
11 G		2					
13 G			3				
14 G		2					
17 G	1						
19 G	1						
20 G		2					
23 G	1						
25 G			3				
27 G			3				
28 G		2					
31 G	1						
33 G	1						
35 G				4			

Growth seeking score: 34

Validation seeking score: 104

Ratio 3:1

Name: Paul

Study: 3

Group: Maintainer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 24/25, 152/153, 162/164, 223
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 33/38, 56/58, 76/79, 129/131, 144/146, 177/179
Believe that performance indicates their worth 12/19, 46/52
Believe that there are standards to attain 78/79
Experience strong negative emotions 74/76, 85/86, 104/105, 142/144, 190/198
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 20/23, 52/56, 83/85, 124/128, 169/177, 185/190, 208/219
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 6/12, 80/83, 245/250

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 45/61, 106/107, 429/431 & 435/439
Believe that the past and present are separate 349/357
Can identify what made a difference 333/335, 339/344
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 13/15, 25/32, 76/82, 132/135, 140/143, 172/177, 182/185, 261/268
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 37/41, 87/89, 94/95, 99/101, 150/155, 218/220, 236/241, 251/254, 275/280, 314/318, 371/372, 406/408, 450/458, 469/475, 480/489, 496/503, 536/539, 558/570, 595/597, 602/606
Believe that performance indicates their worth 156/164, 197/200, 367/371, 597/602, 622/627
Believe that there are standards to attain 220/228, 241/246, 421/423, 459/469, 503/516, 521/536, 540/544, 634/640, 644/650
Experience strong negative emotions 118/122, 139/140, 143/144, 283/289, 304/306, 309/314, 373/378, 414/416, 520/521
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 280/283, 331/333, 388/393, 402/406, 544/547
Seek validation 289/290
Employ loose construing 318/319, 394/395, 408/410, 423/425, 610/621

**2.8 Joan**

**Study: 2 Very frustrated**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Selfish	7	5	10	2	4	6	Concerned about others
Pushy (aggressively assertive)	9	5	9	2	3	8	Gentle
Unworthy	2	6	8	7	6	6	Assertive (+)
Compulsively busy	2	7	9	2	1	7	Laid back
Takes offence easily	8	9	8	1	4	6	Accepts people
No sense of duty	9	9	10	1	4	7	Perseveres

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Introverted	4	2	8	8	7	5	Free
Cornered (trapped)	5	2	8	7	7	6	Comfortable
Intimidated (threatening)	2	4	8	7	7	4	Genuine
Guilty about not doing enough	2	8	8	6	7	5	Confident
Nervous	3	6	8	6	6	6	Relaxed
Discouraged	4	5	8	6	8	6	Optimistic

Name: Joan

Age: 43

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V				4			
4 V					5		
6 V					5		
7 V				4			
9 V						6	
12 V		2					
15 V			3				
16 V					5		
18 V				4			
21 V					5		
22 V			3				
24 V			3				
26 V				4			
29 V				4			
30 V					5		
32 V					5		
34 V				4			
36 V						6	
2 G						6	
3 G						6	
5 G							7
8 G				4			
10 G					5		
11 G				4			
13 G			3				
14 G						6	
17 G					5		
19 G					5		
20 G						6	
23 G						6	
25 G					5		
27 G						6	
28 G					5		
31 G						6	
33 G					5		
35 G							

Growth seeking score: 90

Validation seeking score: 77

Ratio No match

Name: Joan

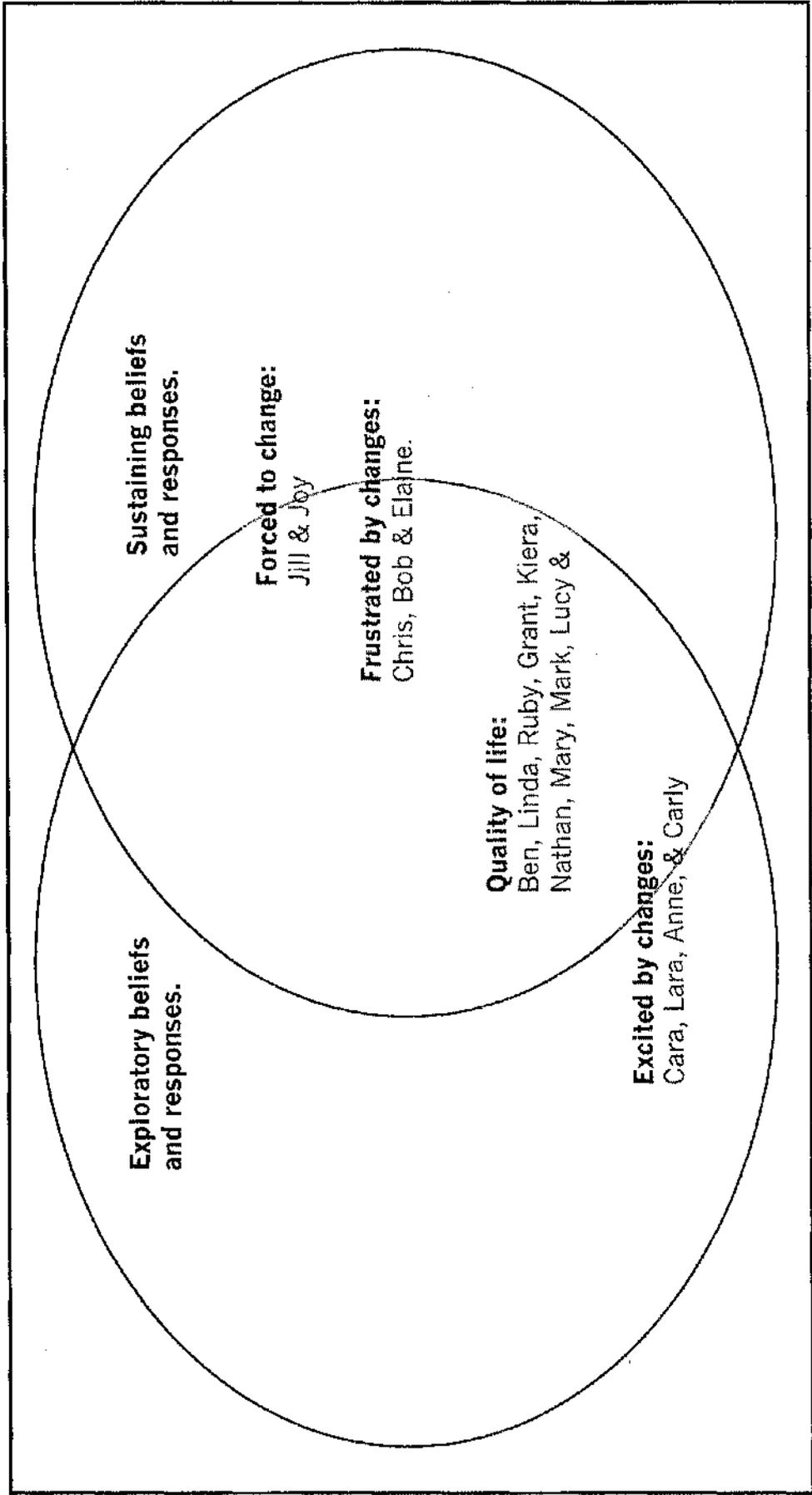
Study: 2

Group: Maintainer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 211/227
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference 13/16, 33/38, 44/46, 84/93
Can identify their beliefs and feelings
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 17/21, 25/26, 55/60, 128/131, 203/209, 235/237
Believe that performance indicates their worth 53/57, 62/67, 76/82, 103/107
Believe that there are standards to attain 93/95, 131/138, 153/157, 197/198, 237/240, 262/266
Experience strong negative emotions 66/71, 175/177, 242/246, 253/262, 277/279
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 21/23, 26/31, 100/102, 138/148, 198/201, 270/271
Seek validation 186/188
Employ loose construing 280/285

## **The Changer's Data**

**Venn Diagram**  
**Table 27: Locating the Changers on the 'change dimension'**



**Sub category 1: Those participants who were described as 'forced to change'.**

**1.1 Name: Jill Study: 1a**

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 430/433, 515/516, 520/524, 550/551, 580/589, 599/601, 632/636, 695/696, 795/797
Anticipate elaboration and change 603/605, 677/685, 700/706, 732/737, 828/831
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 163/166, 170/179, 183/189, 253/263, 281/286, 306/307, 436/440, 453/456, 563/571, 575/579, 716/718, 782/784
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference 611, 614/615
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 110/116, 272/273, 354/359, 741/742
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 4/7, 95/96, 331/334, 349/354, 384/388, 388/392, 401/405, 456/458, 551/554
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain 334/337, 428/429, 496/499, 554/563, 616/618, 625/628
Experience strong negative emotions 524/526, 534, 593/595
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 341/347
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

## 1.2 Joy

## Study:1a Forced to change

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 4/10, 533/535, 1367/1369, 1349/1351
Anticipate elaboration and change 471/472
Believe effort is effective 154/155, 1157/1158
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 417/418, 422/430, 617, 629/630, 678/679, 683/685, 716/719, 723/725, 738/740, 1081/1085
Believe that the past and present are separate 14/17, 1122/1126, 1410/1418
Can identify what made a difference 465/466, 489/490, 744/751, 773/778, 980/981, 985/991, 1331/1333, 1397/1399, 1342/1245, 1361/1364,
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 499, 672/674, 782, 944/946, 950/953, 975/976, 995/1001, 1075/1077, 1195, 1199/1200
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 52/54, 455/456, 764/765, 769, 884
Believe that performance indicates their worth 20, 460/461, 598/599, 760
Believe that there are standards to attain 67/70, 83/86, 433/435, 508/510, 519/523, 556, 634/639, 755, 799/802, 844/847, 858/859, 1152/1153
Experience strong negative emotions 436/438, 1030/1031
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 821/831
Seek validation 28/30, 625/626, 835/837, 840, 1176/1177
Employ loose construing 450/451, 526/529, 570/572, 694/695, 699, 1279/1281

**Sub category 2: Those participants who were described as 'frustrated by change'.**

**2.1 Chris**

**Study: 2**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Apathetic outlook	2	5	7	2	4	5	Energetic outlook
Submissive	4	6	6	3	3	6	Assertive
Inflexible	3	5	7	2	5	5	Aspirations
Self-centered	2	4	4	5	7	5	Compassionate

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Frustrated	4	3	6	4	5	6	Content
Useless	3	5	7	3	4	5	Valuable
Discontented	4	4	6	3	5	5	Fulfilled
Irrelevant	3	5	7	2	4	6	Appreciated

Name: Chris

Age: 46

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly Disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V			3				
6 V	1						
7 V				4			
9 V		2					
12 V		2					
15 V			3				
16 V		2					
18 V			3				
21 V				4			
22 V				4			
24 V		2					
26 V		2					
29 V	1						
30 V	1						
32 V	1						
34 V		2					
36 V	1						
2 G							7
3 G						6	
5 G				4			
8 G					5		
10 G				4			
11 G						6	
13 G							7
14 G					5		
17 G					5		
19 G				4			
20 G					5		
23 G							7
25 G						6	
27 G							7
28 G						6	
31 G						6	
33 G							7
35 G							

Growth seeking score: 103

Validation seeking score: 39

Ratio 1:3

Name: Chris

Study:2

Group: Changers

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 71/75, 177/183
Anticipate elaboration and change 10/13
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 18/23, 34/36, 150/153, 196/203, 248/250
Believe that the past and present are separate 5/10, 60/66, 108/113, 162/177, 259/265
Can identify what made a difference 66/71
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 53/60, 101/108, 115/118, 270/273
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 44/45
Believe that performance indicates their worth 81/91, 118/126
Believe that there are standards to attain 128/130, 240/243
Experience strong negative emotions 36/39
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 39/44, 133/135, 144/149, 153/155, 184/187, 230/235, 244/247, 273/277
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 140/144, 209/212

**2.2 Bob****Study: 2 Frustrated by changes****Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Racist	2	6	5	1	3	6	Tolerant
Unsociable	3	6	6	6	2	5	Forever friends
Stuck in career	5	2	6	6	6	3	Flexible career
Shy/retiring	2	5	6	4	5	6	Confident

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Angry	5	6	7	2	5	6	Respect
Disappointment	5	4	6	4	3	5	Enjoyment
Resigned	5	2	6	2	4	6	Opportunities
Sympathetic	3	6	6	4	5	5	Admiration

Name: Bob

Age: 37

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V					5		
6 V					5		
7 V						6	
9 V					5		
12 V		2					
15 V					5		
16 V						6	
18 V						6	
21 V					5		
22 V		2					
24 V					5		
26 V	1						
29 V	1						
30 V			3				
32 V				4			
34 V					5		
36 V		2					
2 G							7
3 G						6	
5 G		2					
8 G					5		
10 G						6	
11 G							7
13 G						6	
14 G						6	
17 G					5		
19 G						6	
20 G							7
23 G						6	
25 G					5		
27 G						6	
28 G							7
31 G						6	
33 G						6	
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 106

Validation seeking score: 69

Ratio 1:2

**Name: Bob**

**Study: 2**

**Group: Changer**

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 173/175, 209/212,
Anticipate elaboration and change 87/95
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 184/187, 177/178
Believe that the past and present are separate 8/13, 41/45, 82/87, 105/109, 221/224, 227/234
Can identify what made a difference 6/8, 13/15, 27, 45/52, 64/67, 109/116, 198/202, 224/227
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 95/99, 116/119, 202/205
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 67/74, 127/132
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 29/32, 61/64, 76/77
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 126, 133/136
Seek validation 145/156
Employ loose construing

**2.3 Elaine**

**Study: 2 Frustrated by changes**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Doubt own ability	4	7	8	4	10	8	Greater belief in own ability
Committed to needs of others	3	8	8	3	5	8	Committed to own learning
No need to learn	9	9	9	5	5	7	Great need to learn
Conforming	2	5	8	1	2	7	Pushing boundaries
Need for acceptance	3	6	8	1	1	6	Need for self-acceptance
Don't rock the boat (r.ships)	2	7	8	1	4	5	Accepted as I am by them

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Opting for safety	1	6	8	1	3	6	Opting for challenge
Trapped	1	5	8	1	3	5	Excited
Stagnated	1	6	8	4	5	7	Stimulated
Afraid	1	5	9	2	1	4	Satisfying
Dependent	2	6	8	2	2	5	Alone but free
Out of step with self	2	5	9	2	4	5	Congruent with self

Name: Elaine Age: 61

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly agree
1 V		2					
4 V			3				
6 V		2					
7 V		2					
9 V		2					
12 V		2					
15 V		2					
16 V		2					
18 V		2					
21 V		2					
22 V		2					
24 V	1						
26 V	1						
29 V		2					
30 V		2					
32 V		2					
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G					5		
3 G					5		
5 G						6	
8 G						6	
10 G					5		
11 G						6	
13 G					5		
14 G						6	
17 G							7
19 G						6	
20 G					5		
23 G						6	
25 G						6	
27 G							7
28 G						6	
31 G							7
33 G						6	
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 107  
 Validation seeking score: 33  
 Ratio 1:3

Name: Elaine

Study: 2

Group: Changer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Sub category 3: Those participants who were described as seeking "quality of life".**

**3.1 Ben**

**Study: 2**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Unfocused	4	7	8	2	9	6	Level-headed
Inexperienced	2	6	8	2	7	4	Very capable
Inability to cope	2	5	9	2	9	4	Copes well with adversity
Fails to respond to help	3	7	9	2	7	9	Responds to help
Negative	2	6	8	2	7	3	Positive outlook
Hesitant & over cautious	2	6	7	2	7	3	Confident & capable

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Tense	2	6	8	2	9	6	Confident
On guard	8	2	5	2	7	4	Relaxed
Lack of respect	8	4	8	2	9	4	Admiration
Frustration	1	6	4	2	7	9	Satisfaction
Annoyed	2	4	2	2	7	3	Comfortable
Uncomfortable	1	6	7	2	7	3	Relaxed

Name: Ben

Age: 45

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V	1						
6 V	1						
7 V				4			
9 V		2					
12 V	1						
15 V	1						
16 V	1						
18 V	1						
21 V	1						
22 V	1						
24 V	1						
26 V	1						
29 V	1						
30 V		2					
32 V	1						
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G						6	
3 G						6	
5 G							7
8 G						6	
10 G					5		
11 G							7
13 G						6	
14 G						6	
17 G				4			
19 G							7
20 G							7
23 G						6	
25 G						6	
27 G							7
28 G							7
31 G						6	
33 G							7
35 G						6	

Growth seeking score: 112

Validation seeking score: 28

Ratio 1:4 (No match)

Name: Ben

Study:2

Group: Changers

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 42/45, 48/53, 195/203
Anticipate elaboration and change 18/20, 255/258
Believe effort is effective 156/159
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 38/42, 84/90, 114/121, 125/127, 135/136, 161/163
Believe that the past and present are separate 12/13, 63/67, 102/105, 219/221,
Can identify what made a difference 15/17, 21/25, 192/194, 204/209, 210/212, 216/219, 244/248
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 73/76, 230/231, 249/253
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain 188/190, 227/230
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 34/38, 45/48, 61/63, 68/73, 183/184, 186/188
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 90/94

## Beliefs Grid

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Money defines a person	3	9	10	1	6	10	Accepted as you are
Determined	5	8	9	8	5	7	Content
Undermined	3	8	10	10	6	9	Confident
Controlling	10	10	10	3	9	10	Accepting of people
Belittles	9	7	10	7	9	10	Encourages
Has to be noticed	8	8	8	1	9	10	Can blend in

## Feelings Grid

	Past self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Anxious	1	8	7	5	2	5	Peaceful
Insecure about a challenge	1	5	9	7	5	8	Thrives on a challenge
Powerless	1	7	9	10	6	8	Confident
Inferior	1	7	9	10	5	8	Worthy
Unworthy	2	8	9	3	8	9	Good enough
Humbled	2	7	9	10	7	9	Self pride

Name: Linda

Age: 52

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V		2					
6 V		2					
7 V		2					
9 V		2					
12 V	1						
15 V		2					
16 V	1						
18 V		2					
21 V	1						
22 V		2					
24 V		2					
26 V	1						
29 V		2					
30 V		2					
32 V		2					
34 V		2					
36 V		2					
2 G						6	
3 G							7
5 G						6	
8 G					5		
10 G						6	
11 G						6	
13 G			3				
14 G							7
17 G						6	
19 G					5		
20 G						6	
23 G					5		
25 G		2					
27 G		2					
28 G						6	
31 G						6	
33 G						6	
35 G		2					

Growth seeking score: 92

Validation seeking score: 31

Ratio 1:3

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 210, 351/354, 430/432
Anticipate elaboration and change 73/75, 111/113, 124/125, 258/262, 277/278, 285/288, 376/379, 409/411
Believe effort is effective 88/93
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 61/65, 81/83, 108/111, 131/138, 234/235, 292/296, 338/340, 432/435, 440/443, 451/460, 475/478
Believe that the past and present are separate 94/97, 283/285, 321/323, 425/430
Can identify what made a difference 71/73, 79/81, 102/104, 119/120, 163, 190/191, 223, 256/267, 272/273, 277, 292, 296/299, 304/305, 383/386, 460/462
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 130/131, 240/241, 362/366, 400/405, 411/412, 417/420, 468/475, 496/497
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 30/34, 93/94
Believe that performance indicates their worth 327/329, 358/362
Believe that there are standards to attain 47/48
Experience strong negative feelings 44/47, 338
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 34/39, 51/52, 65/66, 320, 350/351
Seek validation 48/51, 329/330, 334
Employ loose construing

### 3.3 Ruby

### Study: 2 Quality of life

#### Beliefs Grid

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Negative outlook	5	9	9	1	7		Positive outlook
Winger	6	9	10	1	8		Dignified
Cynical	6	9	9	1	8		Optimistic
Emotions control them	5	7	9	1	7		In control of emotions
Rigid beliefs (being right)	6	8	10	1	1		Open minded
Self-destructive, absorbed	1	9	10	1	8		Outward looking

#### Feelings Grid

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Resentful	4	8	9	1	6		Peaceful
Irritated	5	7	9	1	6		Uplifted
Winds me up	2	8	10	1	5		Reassures
Immature	1	7	9	1	7		Mature
Frustration	2	7	10	1	5		Interested
Hopeless	3	8	10	1	5		Meaningful

Name: Ruby

Age: 50

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V				4			
4 V				4			
6 V						6	
7 V					5		
9 V				4			
12 V					5		
15 V		2					
16 V			3				
18 V			3				
21 V			3				
22 V	1						
24 V					5		
26 V	1						
29 V	1						
30 V		2					
32 V					5		
34 V	1						
36 V					5		
2 G			3				
3 G					5		
5 G				4			
8 G			3				
10 G			3				
11 G		2					
13 G					5		
14 G			3				
17 G			3				
19 G		2					
20 G					5		
23 G					5		
25 G					5		
27 G							7
28 G						6	
31 G			3				
33 G						6	
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 82

Validation seeking score: 55

Ratio HG

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 283, 301, 325/326
Anticipate elaboration and change 36/38, 69/75, 81/82, 167/172, 215, 219, 219/224, 224/229, 254/259, 341/343
Believe effort is effective 237/238
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 14/18, 104/106, 123/125, 130/134, 138/139, 233/237, 332/337, 386/389, 396/403
Believe that the past and present are separate 318/321, 326/332, 353/356
Can identify what made a difference 44/50, 58/60, 113/114, 127/130, 134/136, 144/147, 151/152, 191, 194/196, 199/200, 253/254, 271/274, 343/347, 349/353
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 8/10, 23/26, 139/144, 337/339
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 30/36, 38/44, 76/80, 106/111, 113/118, 262/267, 363/365
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 82/83, 119/122, 172/174, 178/184
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 26/30, 90/96, 200/203, 245/251, 259/262, 356/358, 394/396
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 375/377

### 3.4 Grant

### Study: 2 Quality of life

#### Beliefs Grid

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Incongruent	5	8	8	9	7	5	Congruent
Status conscious (things)	3	7	7	9	5	6	Focused on real life (r.ships)
Selfish	5	8	8	9	6	6	Considers others needs
Inconsistent	5	7	7	8	6	7	Consistent
Over confident	4	7	7	8	5	6	Self assured
Uncaring	5	8	8	8	7	8	Taking care of significant others

#### Feelings Grid

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Suspicious	7	5	5	9	5	6	Absolutely trusting
Greedy	3	7	7	8	6	6	Appreciative
Bitter	7	7	7	8	7	7	Caring
Wary	6	6	7	7	6	6	Relaxed
Defensive	4	6	7	8	6	6	Helpful
Apprehensive of people	5	7	7	6	7	8	Protective of people

Name: Grant

Age: 30

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V			3				
4 V			3				
6 V		2					
7 V			3				
9 V			3				
12 V		2					
15 V		2					
16 V		2					
18 V		2					
21 V		2					
22 V			3				
24 V		2					
26 V		2					
29 V		2					
30 V		2					
32 V			3				
34 V		2					
36 V		2					
2 G			3				
3 G					5		
5 G				4			
8 G				4			
10 G		2					
11 G					5		
13 G					5		
14 G					5		
17 G				4			
19 G					5		
20 G					5		
23 G				4			
25 G				4			
27 G						6	
28 G		2					
31 G				4			
33 G						6	
35 G							

Growth seeking score: 87

Validation seeking score: 42

Ratio 1:2

Name: Grant

Study: 2

Group: Changer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 185/187
Anticipate elaboration and change 177/182
Believe effort is effective 28/33, 197/203, 216/229
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 7/12, 24/26, 44/49, 111/114, 132/135
Believe that the past and present are separate 19/23, 65/70, 87/92, 209/212
Can identify what made a difference 26/27, 94/98, 158/166, 203/207, 230/234
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 55/58, 98/100, 114/118, 156/158, 234/239, 250/252
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 41, 53/55, 243/249
Believe that performance indicates their worth 70/79
Believe that there are standards to attain 23/24, 167/168
Experience strong negative emotions 181/183, 215/216, 249
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation 79/80
Employ loose construing

Lived 'as if' having the right objects would define his intrinsic worth as a person.

Generative metaphor

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
ignores new information	6	7	6	6	4	6	Receptive to ideas
Introvert	5	8	10	10	7	10	Outgoing, relates well to all ages
Dependent	4	9	10	10	8	10	Independent
Submissive	4	8	10	10	7	10	Persevering
Low self-esteem	4	9	10	10	7	10	Achieving
Stagnating	6	9	10	10	6	10	Pursuing learning

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Helpless	3	8	10	10	7	10	Confident
Hampered	3	8	10	10	6	10	Responsive, open and free
Pressured	2	7	8	8	3	7	Librated
Weak	2	7	9	10	6	10	Strong
Inadequate	2	9	10	9	6	9	Fulfilled
Frustrated (in a rut)	1	8	10	9	5	9	Stimulated

Name: Kiera

Age: 44

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V					5		
4 V							7
6 V				4			
7 V			3				
9 V				4			
12 V				4			
15 V					5		
16 V				4			
18 V			3				
21 V					5		
22 V			3				
24 V			3				
26 V		2					
29 V				4			
30 V		2					
32 V				4			
34 V			3				
36 V				4			
2 G					5		
3 G				4			
5 G						6	
8 G				4			
10 G			3				
11 G				4			
13 G					5		
14 G					5		
17 G			3				
19 G						6	
20 G						6	
23 G			3				
25 G				4			
27 G						6	
28 G				4			
31 G				4			
33 G						6	
35 G						6	

Growth seeking score: 74

Validation seeking score: 69

Ratio HG

Name: Kiera

Study: 2

Group: Changer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements,
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference
Can identify their beliefs and feelings
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

## Beliefs Grid

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Tries to hide from issues	2	6	9	2	7	8	Embraces issues and moves on
Going round in circles	3	6	9	2	7	7	Setting and achieving goals
Changing into a man	4	7	8	2	6	9	Depths to who they are
Closed to changes	3	6	8	2	7	7	Open to change
Events dictate who they are	2	6	8	1	6	8	Rise above circumstances
Can't see a way out	2	9	10	1	7	9	Believe there is a way out

## Feelings Grid

	Past self	Present self	Some one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Helpless	2	6	9	1	7	8	hopeful
Hopeless	2	7	8	1	6	7	Sense of purpose
Uncertain	1	6	8	3	6	8	Certain
Trapped	3	7	8	2	7	8	Freer
Angry	2	6	8	4	7	9	Contented
Faithless	1	9	9	3	7	9	Faith

Name: Nathan

Age: 31

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V	1						
6 V		2					
7 V		2					
9 V					5		
12 V			3				
15 V					5		
16 V				4			
18 V			3				
21 V				4			
22 V		2					
24 V					5		
26 V		2					
29 V		2					
30 V		2					
32 V		2					
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G			3				
3 G				4			
5 G						6	
8 G				4			
10 G		2					
11 G				4			
13 G			3				
14 G			3				
17 G		2					
19 G					5		
20 G			3				
23 G					5		
25 G			3				
27 G						6	
28 G				4			
31 G					5		
33 G					5		
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 74

Validation seeking score: 47

Ratio 1:2

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 105/107
Anticipate elaboration and change 37/43, 68/71, 92/95, 126/134, 142/144, 159/177, 296/298
Believe effort is effective 18/20, 34/35, 43/46, 88/92, 195/198, 371/374, 382/385
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 46/48, 54/60, 79/80, 84/88, 186/191, 215/216, 301/305, 405/411
Believe that the past and present are separate 107/111
Can identify what made a difference 12/18, 48/53, 61/62, 66/68, 88/89, 95/99, 111/119, 125/126, 211/215, 279/284, 298/301, 310/313, 328/333, 400/403
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 24/26, 225/233
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 11/12, 139/142, 144/149, 185/186, 199/210, 326/328, 335/338, 345/348, 356/360, 363/366, 393/399
Believe that performance indicates their worth 80/84
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 78, 184/185, 191/195, 344/345, 360/362
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 35/37, 227/279, 403/405
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

## Beliefs Grid

	Past Self	Present Self	Someone you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Hesitant about what to do	2	5	7	10	5	6	Sure about what to do
Self-conscious	1	5	8	9	6	6	Confident
Negative	2	6	8	10	6	7	Positive
Allows others to define her	1	9	8	9	6	5	Knows own worth
Inaccurate assessment of ability	1	5	7	9	7	6	Accurately assess their ability
Mistakes mean you are a failure	1	9	9	10	7	7	Mistakes don't define you

## Feelings Grid

	Past self	Present self	Someone you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Inadequate	1	5	7	10	6	6	Confident
Awkward	1	6	8	10	6	6	Relaxed
Pessimism	1	4	8	9	7	7	Happy
Uneasy	1	6	8	9	6	6	Comfortable
Nervous	1	5	8	10	6	6	Secure
Hopeless	1	6	8	9	6	6	Hopeful

Name: Mary

Age: 23

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V		2					
4 V		2					
6 V		2					
7 V		2					
9 V		2					
12 V	1						
15 V		2					
16 V	1						
18 V	1						
21 V		2					
22 V		2					
24 V		2					
26 V		2					
29 V		2					
30 V		2					
32 V		2					
34 V		2					
36 V		2					
2 G					5		
3 G							7
5 G					5		
8 G				4			
10 G							7
11 G						6	
13 G							7
14 G				4			
17 G						6	
19 G							7
20 G					5		
23 G						6	
25 G							7
27 G							7
28 G				4			
31 G						6	
33 G					5		
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 105

Validation seeking score: 33

Ratio 1:3

Name: Mary

Study: 2

Group: Changers

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 34/36, 72/73, 106/108, 151/153, 192/195, 214/217, 227/228
Anticipate elaboration and change 38/40, 171/174, 206/208, 210/212, 217/221
Believe effort is effective 106, 133/136, 147, 181/183
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 78/80, 125/130, 130/133, 183/186
Believe that the past and present are separate
Can identify what made a difference 40/42, 67/70, 80/82, 100/101, 108/111, 124/125, 138/142, 147/149, 208/210, 221/223
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 32/34, 75/78, 90/94
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 28/30, 34/36, 87/90
Believe that performance indicates their worth 16/19, 21/27, 50/53, 121/124
Believe that there are standards to attain 11/15, 27/28, 53/55, 63/67
Experience strong negative emotions 9/11, 15/16, 70/72
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 56/61, 84/87, 96/100
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**3.8 Mark**

**Study: 2 Quality of life**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Settled	3	8	9	3	10	7	Growth seeking
Self focused	4	7	10	2	4	10	Family/other focused
Avoid challenging situations	2	6	9	3	10	6	Enjoys a challenge
Conforms to traditional lifestyle	3	7	5	4	5	7	Driven to expand your life
Defined by mistakes	2	6	8	5	7	9	Learn from your mistakes
Believes there are limits	1	10	9	4	9	7	Anything is possible

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Contented	3	8	9	2	7	5	Challenged
Unsure	2	6	8	7	9	7	Secure
Anxious	4	6	10	5	9	6	Excited
Safe/secure	3	9	7	1	6	8	Stretching yourself
Overwhelmed	4	6	9	5	8	10	Rational
Confined	2	9	8	4	10	5	Free

Name: Mark

Age: 24

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V		2					
4 V		2					
6 V			3				
7 V	1						
9 V				4			
12 V		2					
15 V			3				
16 V	1						
18 V	1						
21 V			3				
22 V		2					
24 V	1						
26 V		2					
29 V				4			
30 V			3				
32 V	1						
34 V	1						
36 V	1						
2 G							7
3 G							7
5 G							7
8 G							7
10 G							7
11 G							7
13 G							7
14 G							7
17 G							7
19 G							7
20 G							7
23 G							7
25 G							7
27 G							7
28 G							7
31 G							7
33 G							7
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 126

Validation seeking score: 37

Ratio 1:3

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 63/66, 160/163, 199/201, 219/223
Anticipate elaboration and change 173/177, 234/235, 240/243
Believe effort is effective 91/99, 163/166, 171/173, 247/248, 276
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful
Believe that the past and present are separate 6/8, 17/19, 36/42, 66/67, 103/106, 208/210, 271/276
Can identify what made a difference 8/11, 13/14, 30/36, 44/48, 48/49, 56/63, 84/89, 98/103, 116/119, 142/144, 166/169, 191/193, 277/278
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 177/181, 224/227
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 71/75, 148/153, 181/187, 203/208
Believe that performance indicates their worth 26/30, 153/158
Believe that there are standards to attain 111/115
Experience strong negative emotions 75/82, 132/135
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 106/109, 135/140
Seek validation
Employ loose construing 187/188

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Stingy	4	6	4	6	5	3	Generous
Very negative views	3	6	6	2	5	4	Positive views
Downtrodden	3	5	6	4	5	6	Confident
Vegetating	5	6	6	2	5	7	Full life

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Miserable	5	6	6	2	5	6	Good about self
Oppressed	5	6	7	2	4	6	Uplifting
Depressed	4	6	7	3	6	5	Happy
Lethargic	5	6	5	2	5	5	Lots of energy

Name: Lucy

Age: 40

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly agree
1 V		2					
4 V				4			
6 V		2					
7 V		2					
9 V		2					
12 V					5		
15 V						6	
16 V					5		
18 V				4			
21 V		2					
22 V		2					
24 V			3				
26 V		2					
29 V			3				
30 V		2					
32 V			3				
34 V				4			
36 V				4			
2 G				4			
3 G			3				
5 G			3				
8 G				4			
10 G				4			
11 G				4			
13 G						6	
14 G						6	
17 G			3				
19 G					5		
20 G			3				
23 G			3				
25 G				4			
27 G				4			
28 G				4			
31 G					5		
33 G				4			
35 G					5		

Growth seeking score: 74

Validation seeking score: 57

Ratio HG

Name: Lucy

Study: 3

Group: Changer

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 117/119, 178/179, 306/309,
Anticipate elaboration and change 198/200
Believe effort is effective 246/248, 259/261, 270/275, 299/302
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 7/10, 39/42, 77/81, 97/100, 187/190, 243/246, 267/270, 275/279
Believe that the past and present are separate 32/33, 49/52, 88/90, 123/125, 156/157, 200/204
Can identify what made a difference 23/26, 33/35, 52/53, 129/133, 143/145, 157/158, 159/160, 166/170, 192/193, 249/252, 256/259, 265/267,
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 216/218
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain 62/63, 69/72
Experience strong negative emotions 133/134, 145/150, 159
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 90/92, 110/116, 218/220, 220/223, 229/234
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

### 3.10 Matt

### Study: 2 Quality of life

#### Beliefs Grid

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Intimidated by workload	3	6	5	1	4	4	Excited by workload
Require intensive approval	3	6	7	2	5	2	Self-sufficient
'all talk'	4	6	6	2	5	4	Action-based
Dreamy	5	6	5	2	5	4	Organised

#### Feelings Grid

	Past self	Present self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Annoyed	3	4	4	4	2	3	Encouraged
Burdened	5	4	3	3	5	5	Relaxed
Irritated	3	4	5	4	3	5	Excited
Violent	3	3	7	6	5	5	Calm

Name: Matt

Age: 18

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly agree
1 V		2					
4 V	1						
6 V		2					
7 V	1						
9 V						6	
12 V		2					
15 V					5		
16 V	1						
18 V		2					
21 V		2					
22 V		2					
24 V	1						
26 V			3				
29 V		2					
30 V		2					
32 V			3				
34 V		2					
36 V		2					
2 G						6	
3 G					5		
5 G						6	
8 G			3				
10 G				4			
11 G					5		
13 G						6	
14 G			3				
17 G			3				
19 G					5		
20 G				4			
23 G						6	
25 G					5		
27 G					5		
28 G					5		
31 G				4			
33 G						6	
35 G					5		

Growth seeking score: 86

Validation seeking score: 41

Ratio 1:2

**Name: Matt**

**Study: 2**

**Group: Changer**

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 173/174, 188/190, 192/195, 238/244
Anticipate elaboration and change 16/21, 82/84, 92/95, 96/109, 138/140, 244/264
Believe effort is effective 130/136
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 53/57, 63/67, 119/126, 174/187, 195/201, 222/224, 233/236
Believe that the past and present are separate 7/11, 58/60, 217/222, 230/233
Can identify what made a difference 21/22, 31/33, 48/53, 60/63
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 14/16, 117/119, 156/157, 212/215
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 11/14,
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 28/31, 39/40, 95/96, 147/149, 152/153
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self
Seek validation
Employ loose construing

**Sub category 4: Those participants who were described as “excited by changes”.**

**4.1 Cara**

**Study: 2**

**Beliefs Grid**

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Fixed beliefs	1	7	9	1	5	8	Feeling free
Negative	1	7	9	1	6	9	Optimistic
Controlled	1	8	10	10	7	10	Independent
Dependent	1	7	10	1	3	8	Making choices
Bleak outlook	1	7	10	1	7	10	Fun filled outlook
Functioning & existing	1	6	10	7	7	9	Taking risks

**Feelings Grid**

	Past self	Present self	Someone you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Trapped	1	8	10	1	5	7	freedom
Oppressed	1	7	10	1	7	9	Hopeful
Dead	1	6	10	1	7	9	Alive
Suppressed	1	6	10	1	7	9	Reborn
Distressed	1	8	10	1	8	9	Happy
Depressed	1	7	10	1	7	10	Glowing

Name: Cara

Age: 45

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V	1						
4 V			3				
6 V		2					
7 V				4			
9 V			3				
12 V			3				
15 V	1						
16 V		2					
18 V			3				
21 V		2					
22 V			3				
24 V		2					
26 V	1						
29 V		2					
30 V		2					
32 V	1						
34 V			3				
36 V			3				
2 G							7
3 G						6	
5 G							7
8 G				4			
10 G						6	
11 G						6	
13 G						6	
14 G					5		
17 G							7
19 G				4			
20 G						6	
23 G					5		
25 G						6	
27 G					5		
28 G					5		
31 G							7
33 G						6	
35 G							7

Growth seeking score: 117

Validation seeking score: 41

Ratio 1:3

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 49/53, 149/153, 176, 250, 254/256, 371, 375/379
Anticipate elaboration and change 130/131, 188/189
Believe effort is effective 33/35, 219/220, 272/273, 320/328, 348/349
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 67/70, 229/231, 285/288, 365/368
Believe that the past and present are separate 11/14,
Can identify what made a difference 15/18, 26/33, 42/45, 89, 95/98, 104/107, 263/264, 310, 318/319
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 40/42, 82,90/91, 91/94, 107/110, 129/130, 315/316, 329/330
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 136/137, 201
Believe that performance indicates their worth 279/280, 284/285
Believe that there are standards to attain
Experience strong negative emotions 132/136, 328, 346/348
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 153/155, 273/275, 316/318, 330/331, 339, 349, 353, 368/371
Seek validation 76/81,
Employ loose construing

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 22/24, 433/436, 771/772, 929/930
Anticipate elaboration and change 412/413, 1073/1076, 1120/1124
Believe effort is effective 189/190, 914/915, 1035/1037, 1045/1047
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 282/285, 289/290, 315/317, 365/367, 384/387, 451/454, 490/492, 604/610, 722/730, 780, 820/827, 1139/1142
Believe that the past and present are separate 629/635, 650/651, 803, 964/966, 970/973
Can identify what made a difference 422/425, 557/558, 563/564, 592/594, 639, 643/646, 990/994, 1015, 1023/1026, 1053/1054, 1097, 1128/1129
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 32/34, 38/40, 68/71, 92/96, 100/107, 240/242, 325/327, 392/393, 443/445, 458/461, 496/498, 520/522, 831/833, 1092/1093
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 54, 75/76, 80/81, 115/116, 157/158, 162, 271/273, 449/451, 479/483, 526/543, 760, 793/795, 838/839
Believe that performance indicates their worth (or possessions and worth) 473/475, 765/767, 943/948
Believe that there are standards to attain 218
Experience strong negative emotions 60/64, 405/408, 412, 656/658, 689/692
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 400/408, 485/486, 679/680, 684/685, 697/698, 745/752
Seek validation 920/924
Employ loose construing 133/134, 147/148, 194/196, 212/213, 571/574

**4.3 Anne****Study: 1b Excited by changes**

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 135/136, 207/209, 230/231, 269/271, 770/774, 797/798, 802/808, 904/906
Anticipate elaboration and change 181/182, 559/566, 718/723
Believe effort is effective 186/190, 863/864
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 108/111, 246/247, 271/273, 354/355, 364/365, 373, 386/388, 499/500, 658/663, 865/871
Believe that the past and present are separate 47/50, 206/207, 216/221, 235/245, 401/407, 729/733, 739/747, 853/858, 898/904
Can identify what made a difference 202/205, 284, 309/313, 427/429, 708/709, 759/761, 767/769, 779/780, 786/793, 834/840
Can identify their beliefs and feelings, 3/5, 40/41, 115/117, 255/259, 300/304, 413/418, 453/459, 467/470, 509/510, 529/532, 551/552, 817/819
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 55/56, 63/71, 78, 91/94, 146/147, 179/180, 265/269, 496/497, 848, 846/892
Believe that performance indicates their worth 201/202, 393/397, 668/669, 675, 679/683, 690/691, 695/702
Believe that there are standards to attain 632/633, 715/717
Experience strong negative emotions 140/141, 322/329, 491/492
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 137/140, 151, 156/159, 163/164, 429/432, 441/445, 475/482, 486/488, 878/882
Seek validation 641/644
Employ loose construing 94/1002, 121/125

#### 4.4 Carly

#### Study: 2 Excited by changes

##### Beliefs Grid

	Past Self	Present Self	Some-one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Cracking up	1	6	7	2	5	7	Copes well with change
Doubling	2	6	8	3	6	6	Trusting
Scared to change	1	7	8	3	8	8	Dares to be different
Serious	1	6	8	2	4	5	Light hearted
Try to ignore feelings	1	6	7	2	6	7	Take them into account
Dominated	1	7	8	10	7	6	Assertive

##### Feelings Grid

	Past Self	Present Self	Some one you admire	Stayed the same	Changed a little	Changed a lot	
Depressed	1	6	6	10	5	7	Pleased with self
Panic	1	6	8	5	6	6	Calm
Fearful	1	6	8	4	5	6	Excited
Anxious	1	6	9	5	5	6	Joyful
Scared	1	7	10	4	7	7	Secure
Weak	1	6	9	4	6	7	Strong

Name: Carly

Age: 37

Question Number	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly disagree	Equally Agree and Disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1 V					5		
4 V			3				
6 V					5		
7 V				4			
9 V					5		
12 V			3				
15 V					5		
16 V			3				
18 V					5		
21 V			3				
22 V			3				
24 V				4			
26 V			3				
29 V					5		
30 V					5		
32 V			3				
34 V			3				
36 V				4			
2 G				4			
3 G			3				
5 G					5		
8 G				4			
10 G					5		
11 G					5		
13 G				4			
14 G					5		
17 G		2					
19 G				4			
20 G				4			
23 G				4			
25 G				4			
27 G					5		
28 G				4			
31 G				4			
33 G				4			
35 G					5		

Growth seeking score: 75

Validation seeking score: 61

Ratio HG

<b>Exploratory beliefs and responses</b>
Good enough self seen in positive self-statements 74/75, 213/214, 250/251, 270, 302/306, 308/309, 344, 353/355
Anticipate elaboration and change
Believe effort is effective 102/105, 134/137, 143, 200, 390/392
Believe evaluating alternatives is helpful 33/34, 59/61, 76/78, 195, 219, 280/283, 306/308, 389/390
Believe that the past and present are separate 179/181, 185/186, 211/212, 350/353
Can identify what made a difference 55/59, 85/87, 93/94, 120/121, 159, 162, 170/173, 247/250, 275/293, 319/321, 335, 348/350, 371/372, 376/378, 392/394
Can identify their beliefs and feelings 21/22, 61/63, 150/151, 181/185
<b>Sustaining beliefs and responses</b>
Some beliefs are construed as truth 113, 147/150
Believe that performance indicates their worth
Believe that there are standards to attain 137/139
Experience strong negative emotions 105/106, 118/120, 131/133, 157/158, 209/211, 265, 279/280
Believe they are lacking in comparison to their 'ideal' self 74, 106/109, 133
Seek validation
Employ loose construing