Phenomenological Research Method, Design and Procedure:
A Phenomenological Investigation of the Phenomenon of
Being-in-Community as Experienced by Two Individuals Who Have
Participated in a Community Building Workshop

by Carl Holroyd

Abstract

This project was conceived to determine the feasibility of using a phenomenological method of
enquiry, based on Giorgi’s existential psychological method, for explicating the experience of
being-in-community as experienced within a Community Building Workshop. This project served
to inform a larger Master of Social Science research project concerned with building community
within business.

In approaching this project it was decided to interview two people who had participated in
separate CBWs, but not within a business context. The reason for this was purely pragmatic as I
had access to two co-researchers (participants) who were available for interviews within given
time constraints. Therefore the focus of this project is on being-in-community as experienced in a
CBW™.

Background to the project

There is much debate in phenomenological circles as
to the ‘method’ of research one should use in a
phenomenological enquiry. What is quite clear,
however, is that there is no single method that will
suffice for all and every enquiry. Phenomenological
researchers in professional areas ranging from
pedagogy and nursing to existential psychology agree
on some basic guidelines and indicate that the
approach to a phenomenological method design
should be flexible and adapted to suit the phenomena
under investigation (Crotty, 1996; Crotty, 1998;
Giorgi, 1994; Giorgi, 1997; Pollio, Henley &
Thompson, 1997; Valle, 1998; Valle & King, 1978;
Van Manen, 1990). This project will concentrate on
Giorgi’s existential psychological method of
phenomenological enquiry as adapted by Schweitzer
(1998) and its suitability to explicate the phenomenon
under investigation.

This project was conceived to determine the
feasibility of using a phenomenological method of
enquiry, based on Giorgi’s existential psychological
method, for explicating the experience of being-in-
community as experienced within a Community
Building Workshop (henceforth referred to as
CBW™). This minor project will inform a larger
Master of Social Science research project which is
concerned with building community within business.

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not within a business context. The reason for this was
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interviews within given time constraints. Therefore
the focus of this project is on being-in-community as
experienced in a CBW™.
Development and structure of a CBW

Peck’s model of Community-Building has four stages. Jason (1997) describes these as:

- **pseudo-community**, in which people avoid disagreements and just pretend to be a community. During the next stage (chaos), healers attempt to heal and convert others; this is a time of considerable fighting and struggle. Then, during the third stage (emptiness), people begin to remove barriers to communication, such as expectations, prejudice, and ideologies. During the final stage - aptly called community - a peaceful, soft sense of quietude descends. People feel safe to share their vulnerabilities, their sadness, and their joy (brackets in original, italics added, pp. 73-74).

These stages can be present at any time during the course of a workshop/process. However, Peck and others point out that although pseudo-community and chaos are not necessary stages in reaching community, in their observation you cannot reach community before experiencing and going through the third stage of emptying (Gozdz, 1995; Peck, 1990).

It was, what Peck saw as, the necessity for 'authentic communication' in relationships which led him to develop this process of community building, called the Community Building Workshops (CBW). These workshops are a synthesis of ideas and methodologies and experiences that Peck was exposed to or used during his training and professional practise as a Psychiatrist. In his internship as a psychiatrist Peck was required to become a member of a ‘tech-group’ or ‘t-group’ formed to investigate and participate in various forms of psychological exercises. He noticed that the “T-group” was a place where he had ‘no trouble being authentically… [himself] (Peck, 1990, p. 47), i.e., being able to share exactly what his emotions, feelings and thoughts were without self-censoring. Abraham Maslow (1965) in his chapter on unstructured groups felt that in his observation T-groups gave people a place where they could be exposed to or experience a “new kind of conceptualization.” Included in this were “a sharp recognition of individual differences, that people really are different” (pp. 154-187, italics in the original), the breaking down and restructuring of concepts to include “both the real world of things and objects and the psychic world of sensitivities, fears, wishes, and hopes.” Peck’s community building workshops offer a way of experiencing a “new kind of conceptualization” resulting from the experience of being-in-community.

Being-in-community as experienced in the last stages of a Community Building Workshop has both a personal meaning and a group meaning which, because of it’s very nature, cannot be definitively explained (Peck, 1990). The following is an attempt at explicating the essence of being-in-community, which tests Peck’s idealised stages of community using a method of phenomenological enquiry adapted by Schweitzer from Giorgi's step-wise method.

Outline of Schweitzer's adaptation of Giorgi's phenomenological method

Phenomenological methodology attempts to explicate the meaning structures developed through the experience of the person being questioned. The model below has been adapted by Schweitzer (1998) from Giorgi (1997) and summarizes one methodological approach to explicating experience.

**Stage 1. Intuitive/Holistic Understanding of the Raw Data**
This stage requires reading data, repeatedly if necessary, in order to achieve a holistic and intuitive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. It is necessary that all preconceptions and judgments be bracketed.

**Stage 2. Forming a Constituent Profile**
This stage summarizes the raw data from each participant.

**2.1 Natural Meaning Units (NMUs):**
NMUs are self-definable, discrete segments of expression of individual aspects of the participant’s experience.

**2.2 Central Themes:**
Central Themes reduce the NMUs to recognizable sentences conveying a discrete expression of experience.

**2.3 Constituent Profile:**
The reconstitution of Central Themes that provides a non-repetitive list of descriptive meaning-statements for each participant, is termed the Constituent Profile.

**Stage 3. Forming a Thematic Index**
Constituent Profiles from each participant are used as a basis to construct a Thematic Index, which highlights major themes that have emerged.

**3.1 Delineating Constituent Profiles:**
As with Central Themes, Constituent Profiles are reconstituted to remove any repeated or non-relevant statements.
3.2 Extracting Referents:
Referents are defined as specific words that highlight the meaning of the experience being researched. Constituent Profiles are searched for Referents, which are extracted and listed separately.

3.3 Thematic Index:
The Thematic Index establishes a non-repetitive, sequenced list of meaning statements and Referents used to search for interpretive themes. The Thematic Index contains the Constituent Profiles, statements attributed to singular meanings of experience. From this point on the data is examined collectively.

Stage 4. Searching the Thematic Index
This enables the comparison of Referents, Central Themes and Constituent Profiles to form a set of Interpretive Themes. It is important to note that the focus is on the explication of data that reports the meaning of experience.

Stage 5. Arriving at an Extended Description
Interpretive Themes are used to rigorously explicate meaning attributed to the phenomena under investigation.

Stage 6. Synthesis of Extended Descriptions
This is a summary of the Interpretive Themes to produce an in-depth picture of participants' experience of the phenomena under investigation (Sherwood & Silver, 1999, pp. 10-13).

Application of a phenomenological method to two interview transcripts

Participant Profile
The participants in this project are both Australian Anglo-Saxon females, aged between 35 and 45. Both participants run their own business, one as an organizational consultant, the other as a psychologist who, along with private clientele, also consults to organizations. Both women travelled from Australia to America in 1999 to participate in two separate CBWs. They were interviewed individually in August 2000.

Data Collection
I interviewed and recorded via audiotape the participants regarding their experience of 'being-in-community' during their participation a CBW. The interviews, conducted separately, were unstructured and proceeded with the question: What was your experience of being-in-community? This facilitated a free dialogic flow between co-researchers, which allowed other open-ended questions to be asked during the interview based on the emergent data. The interviews were transcribed and subjected to the procedures outlined below. However, the procedure for the one of the transcripts was subject to modifications I made to Schweitzer's method. These modifications are indicated in the proceeding sections.

Before reading the transcripts, the first stage of the phenomenological procedure used, I assumed the 'phenomenological attitude'. This is a two-fold procedure consisting of the epoché or bracketing and the eidetic reduction. Both steps are essential to phenomenological methodology. Bracketing consists of suspending ones 'natural attitude', or our taken-for-granted approach to everyday living informed by culture and education, including our “past knowledge of the phenomenon encountered” (Giorgi, 1997, p. 240). Bracketing requires a rigorous reflection on one’s bias, opinions, and cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. McKenna (1997, p. 177) succinctly captures this in saying: “…epoché then is a way of making the transition from our more normal way of considering consciousness and the world to the properly phenomenological way of considering them.”

Following epoch comes the eidetic reduction which “involves the movement from objects as facts to objects as exemplars (essences). In this process, particular features of a phenomenon are reduced or set aside so that note can be taken of that which shows itself as universal” (Ehrich, 1999, p. 25). The following steps form the process of eidetic reduction and are carried out within an attitude of bracketing:

a) The transcripts were read a number of times in order to achieve a holistic and intuitive understanding of the phenomenon. 

b) The transcripts were then divided into discrete segments of expressions of the participant’s experience; these are called Natural Meaning Units (NMUs).

c) The NMUs were then simplified, that is redundant or repeated words were removed, taking care that the essential experiential description was not altered, and each NMU was given a number. This was a sub-step included by me in Schweitzer's procedure to facilitate the searching of transcripts.

d) The simplified and numbered NMUs were then organized into Central Themes which are sentences conveying a ‘discrete expression of experience.’ Note: As an experiment I applied the following variation to the transcripts. I sorted Central Themes into key groups under particular headings e.g. ‘family’, ‘community’, etc. I then reconstituted the Central Themes into succinct statements relating to the key words. These were then sorted as outlined...
below. An initial Referent search (see step g) was conducted and the results listed.

e) Central Themes were then searched for repetitive statements, which were removed, leaving a non-repetitive list of descriptive meaning statements for each participant, termed a Constituent Profile.

f) The Constituent Profile was reconstituted to form a Thematic Index, which highlights major themes that have emerged.

g) The Thematic Index was then searched for words or referents which conveyed meaning relevant to the phenomenon under investigation; for example the word ‘reflect’ and its derivatives, reflection and reflected were mentioned a number of times by one of the participants, Brenda.

h) Using these Referents I then removed any repeated or non-relevant statements to produce a combined Thematic Index of the essential aspects of the phenomenon of being-in-community. 1

The above steps are carried out for each individual participant and the Thematic Index is an ideographic or personal list of relevant themes. The next step was to combine the individual Thematic Index’s into one document. From this point on, the data is examined collectively. With this step the phenomenological investigator moves from an ideographic explication of an individual’s experience to a more generalized nomothetic description.

The combined Thematic Index was read thoroughly a number of times and I became immersed in the data. Through meditating and reflecting on the data the following seven Interpretive Themes emerged which reported the meaning of experience. Interpretive Theme four was further divided into three sub-themes relating various aspects of the experience of speaking. It is important that the relationship between Interpretive Themes and the context in which they arose in the Central Themes and Constituent Profiles is kept in mind.

Interpretive Themes

The following Interpretive Themes were explicated from the data:

1. Self-boundaries/feeling overwhelmed

2. The reflected self
3. Experience of god/spirit/wisdom
4. Speaking as a: threshold experience clearing/emptying process transformational event
5. Community as connective and healing
6. Encountering the other
7. Community as a transcultural, transgeographical and transgender space

The Interpretive Themes were again checked against the original transcripts for verification and accuracy using a process of ‘imaginative free variation’ where the context is imaginatively altered in order to test the invariant structure of the experience of being-in-community as captured in the Interpretive Themes. That is, if the themes remain the same through this process they are taken to be universal and invariant aspects of the essence of the phenomena under investigation. As Haney (1994, p. 8) says: “the ‘unbuilding’ of the first phase of phenomenological method [the eidetic reduction], must be complemented by the rebuilding of the world as intentional constitution [interpretive themes and the extended description].” The ‘rebuilding’ phase commences by using the interpretive themes to explicate meaning attributed to the phenomena under investigation.

Explication of the phenomenon via Interpretive Themes

The following Interpretive Themes are not exhaustive and are restricted by a number of factors. First, as only one interview per participant was conducted, the data is not as deep and representative of the phenomenon as it could be. Second, only two participants were interviewed which again means that the data is not exhaustive or representative of a ‘universal essence’ of the phenomenon. Third, as phenomenology is interested in the inter-relationship between aspects of a phenomenon, the data is lacking in terms of quantity and variety of description. Given this, however, I believe the Interpretive Themes to be representative of some aspects of the phenomenon of being-in-community.

An existential psychological investigation would always interpret these themes from a psychological perspective, changing the language to that which is properly psychological (Valle & King, 1978). For this project I have chosen to depart from this procedure and give a participant-descriptive explication of the interpretive themes. In doing this, it must also be noted that as this project stands, the explications are more in line with what Crotty (1996) calls the ‘new phenomenology’, arising out of the North American developments in humanistic psychology exemplified...
by Carl Rogers. Further explication of the themes uncovered in this paper would see a critical rendering of the phenomenon more closely aligned with classical or Husserlian phenomenology. I would also expect the Interpretive Themes, along with the Extended Description, to progressively deepen with second interviews and/or the inclusion of more participants.

The following descriptions need to be understood from a physical space perspective. In a CBW, participants are seated in a circle for the entire process. They may change seats regularly, but the circle is rarely broken.

1. Self boundaries/Feeling overwhelmed
Both participants reported that at some stage in the CBW they experienced reaching the limits of their bodily boundaries. This was explained in both cases as a sense that they would ‘explode’ if they proceeded with the moment; Brenda “I wasn’t going to be able kinda to continue it … because it felt very explosive” and Sarah “I would explode, if I kept going, I would explode”. Sarah also describes feeling existentially threatened by this feeling “it would almost be like … I didn’t exist.” Both participants sought to resolve this internal intensity by placing limits on it or trying to ‘stop’ the experience continuing; Brenda “[there was] an incredible immediacy, an urgency, … to put the emotional intensity at rest …” and Sarah “[I chose to cap it and it was like I will stop there.” Along with experiencing bodily boundaries was the sense of being overwhelmed. Brenda also reported feeling overwhelmed by both other’s expression of emotional pain and her own inner emotional intensity. She reported her “capacity to tolerate too much [of others pain] all at once, overwhelmed me” and that this experience felt like “internal shaking”.

The above indicates a heightened awareness of the internal self of being pushed a little too far, somewhat like a balloon that has been filled up to the point where, with one more breath, it will burst. This experience shows itself as fundamental to the CBW experience, and is reported by both participants as being prior to transformational shifts and/or the experience of being-in-community. It is inextricably bound up in the experience of others (see interpretive theme 6).

2. The reflected self
Although only one participant reported experiencing ‘being reflected’, it is included here as it was fundamental to her ongoing experience of being-in-community. It is my view that further interviews with other CBW participants would reveal similar experiences.

Brenda reported that the circular space became “like a pond” in which she experienced “looking and being reflected” which was for her “the most powerful experience [in community].” The other participants became like mirrors for Brenda. To “look in somebody else’s eyes” and feel “truly understood” was a major transformational shift for her. The power of the other to mirror self and reflect her in a different light, to be deeply understood in the core of her being was not only self-revelatory, but also transformed Brenda’s experience of her self and others dramatically. Up to that point Brenda had reported that she was “pissing people off” and being a “pain in the arse” feeling isolated and disconnected from the group and then all of a sudden she experienced for the first time in her life “being reflected in an incredibly profound way.” Paradoxically the intensity of this experience became too much and Brenda had to “kind of shut down from there.” These descriptions point to a fundamental experience of feeling truly seen at the same time as feeling completely exposed and overwhelmed (see interpretive theme 1).

From the above experience, a CBW could be seen to provide a unique and powerful opportunity to observe oneself with new eyes. The reflection of new or different facets of one’s being is received by this same being. It is like standing in a hall of mirrors where one can see aspects of oneself usually hidden from oneself. Every way you turn there you are, confronted by self, exposed to the bright light of new self-perception. It is the intensity of this reflected self that Brenda withdrew from. Reflection seems to function as a reminder of our other facets, that there is more to us than meets our eyes. This experience has an essential quality of otherness, i.e., without others Brenda’s ability to perceive hidden aspects of herself is reduced; the other also becomes a pivotal reference for “feeling understood.”

3. Experience of god/spirit/wisdom
Both participants described the experience of being-in-community as a moment when they became aware that something greater or other than them-selves was present. After experiencing moments of agitation, struggle with self and others, of overcoming fear, of confronting self behaviour, after ‘emptying’ inner content through speaking their stories, when they were left with nothing else to say and nothing left to do, spirit entered the CBW. As Brenda reported “it felt … like in the presence of spirit … it felt very much like something intangible became present.” This was echoed by Sarah in saying, “you are left with the emptiness, then you are left with something else … the real moment when universal spirit comes through.” Spirit was described as a connective, unifying force; Sarah “I saw the movement of spirit between all of us, the movement of wisdom … it just flowed, it bubbled.
it ... kept popping up.” Brenda reported that “[spirit] connected us, for that period and ... that’s what I experienced as community.”

Both reported that their insights and inner knowing was provided by something they experienced as outside of themselves. Sarah said “that moment of seeing what I saw [insight into her behaviour], I knew that that came from somewhere beyond me,” whilst Brenda observed “the ether or something provided me all my knowing, provided me with the answers.”

In contrast to this feeling of spirit being external to the individual, both participants reported feeling at some stage almost omnipotent. According to Brenda “I became the Messiah2 and it completely transformed me.” Sarah said “It was almost like being God.” Both of these feelings were in relation to their experiences of speaking. As Sarah says “when I was speaking [to others], I was speaking to that essence within them.” Sarah found the experience of being like God “a bit scary actually” (see interpretive theme 6). This points to an extremely heightened awareness of one’s own being as a powerful and profound presence emanating from one’s core and capable of self-transcending actions.

The CBW became a space where the participants felt something larger, something beyond their normal experience of themselves. This experience became tangible to their senses and, again, was an integral ‘self-in-relation-to-others’ experience. However, it was reported as transcending self and being other than self.

4. Speaking: a) as a threshold experience, b) as a clearing/emptying process c) as a transformational event

a) As a threshold experience

The experience of ‘speaking’ in the presence of others, was for both women the pivotal point around which community revolved. Both participants reported being ‘moved to speak’3 about themselves and their lives. Brenda “I knew I had to speak, it was a very different body feeling ... I was going to be physically ill if I didn’t speak ... It was so move to speak from some place that I’d never spoken from before in my life ... [and] I told my story in a way in which I’ve never told anyone my story before in my life.” Sarah “I just started to talk about how I really felt about some things that were going on in my life.”

However, both reported the build up to speaking as emotionally intense and scary; Sarah “The build up to the expression of that [talking about her life] was ... quite tense and quite emotional” and Brenda “[taking the step to speak] was scary absolutely like life and death.” Historically, both women reported coming from a family environment which did not encourage their self-expression. As Brenda says “sadness and anger were things that I wasn’t allowed to actually express” and Sarah also relates a similar family dynamic “My whole family rules are that you don’t speak.” Given this, the build up to self expression manifested as a ‘threshold’ experience which Brenda expressed as a move to “speak from thin space” and Sarah as going “over the threshold.” Brenda also said she was so scared “I couldn’t open my eyes; I spoke with my eyes closed.”

The urgency or wish to speak created a situation in which the past had to be confronted by taking a risk. In both cases, choices were made to cross an invisible interior line, which was experienced as a threshold of self.

b) As a clearing/emptying process

Both participants reported feeling clear after speaking. Brenda “when you speak from the heart space the communication is clear, there’s no static, no crap, it feels very clear” and Sarah “once it was done ... I felt clean, clean, clear, fresh, new, new.” However, there was a difference in how they felt post-speaking. Brenda reported feeling “…very small, like a child ... I didn’t have much energy for anyone else at that point, I was exhausted” whilst Sarah reported feeling “… alive, incredibly alive, very energized ... [like] the physical boundaries of my body didn’t exist.” So, speaking in this context has both an expansive, extroverted, transcendent bodily aspect and a contracting, introverted, withdrawn aspect. As Sarah said “I wanted to withdraw [after speaking], take away the focus from me.” Speaking was seen as an ‘emptying’ process where Brenda says “everything just gets kind of moved away.” This clear space seems then to be a place where new aspects of self can emerge, where transformative processes occur.

2 The Messiah here refers to a story, generally read out at the start of a CBW, called ‘The Rabbi’s Gift’. A monk tells the priest of a dying monastery that one of the monastery priests could be the Messiah. From that point on each priest starts treating the other priests with extraordinary respect. This respect gives of a special aura that attracts people back to the monastery, which begins to thrive once again.

3 One of the few guidelines for a CBW is that participants speak when ‘moved’. This manifests in many ways such as sweaty palms, racing heart, a sense of urgency and other physical and emotional signals. Peck (1990) asserts that one of the barriers to reaching community is people speaking when they are not moved or not speaking when they are moved.
6. Encountering the other

Community cannot be separated from our interaction with or encounters with others. As Jason (1997, p. 108) says “social settings … provide a sense of community to all members and a sense of meaning to one's own individual needs.” The encounter with the other emerges as one of opposing qualities. The tension between these qualities defines the participant’s experience of the other. According to Goff (1992, p. 43) “Peck’s community building model focuses upon otherness and the dilemma provided by such an encounter.” The resultant tension provokes a series of responses in participants which enables their own barriers to community to become evident.

The following table is an illustration some of the opposing dynamics between aspects of the other, experienced as tension by Brenda and Sarah.

The encounter with the other enabled participants to gain insight into their own behaviour. As Brenda said “it’s not about tolerating other people, it’s my own capacity for tolerance” and Sarah “It’s not dependent on what the people around me are doing … it’s more dependent on how I am seeing it.” Brenda reported how, when she was being difficult and manipulative in a group, a young ‘innocent’ girl spoke that gave Brenda a contrast of her self that "tempered me slightly." Although Brenda felt even more isolated after this encounter with the other, it was, nonetheless, instrumental in moving Brenda toward a different way of being. Husserl (1982, p. 128) brings a phenomenological sense of otherness to bear in writing "The only conceivable manner in which others can have the sense and status of existent others ... consists in their being constituted in me, as others.”

The CBW brings otherness into sharp contrast against the screen of self, thus enabling a perspective, derived from reflection and differentiation, to be achieved by participants, which highlights their personal barriers to community. These barriers have to be ‘let go’ or
Peck (1990, pp. 95-103) lists the most common barriers that people need to empty themselves of before they can enter genuine community as being: ‘Expectations and Preconceptions; Prejudices; Ideology; Theology and Solutions; The Need to Heal; Convert; Fix or Solve; The Need to Control’. Brenda demonstrates the need to fix and heal “I wanted to run over and solve it [others emotional pain], or save it, or fix it, or stop it, because it was all too much.

In his comments about emptying, Peck talks about how people or groups try to avoid the emptying stage by trying to organize themselves into community. Again, Brenda provides an example; “[I] became very arrogant and very defensive and ... tried to orchestrate this group ... into ... seeing this shit wasn’t necessary, and that we could actually get through to community and it didn’t actually have to be ... all this great purging stuff.” The personal and group effort to ‘let go’ of the need to organize, fix convert, etc., enables group members to acknowledge the difficulty of the transitional process in a way that moves them on. Emptying allows for a space within which something new can emerge and this leads to the CBW space becoming transcendent in nature.

### Quality Description
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difference &amp; Isolation</td>
<td>I was a foreigner, feeling very different and very isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnected</td>
<td>I felt incredibly separate from the group. I felt very isolated extremely disconnected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>There was a guy... who was dying of ashes ... he just kind of doped, his stuff and it just absolutely and utterly this was it, it was too permanent. We had a woman in our group she would constantly verbalize to the group what was going on in her head. At one point I just looked at her and I said: “We have a tape recorder and [listening to you]... it’s just like a tape recorder going... that’s when she told me to go fuck myself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic, Intuitive</td>
<td>My back was killing me and he [man next to her] just left and he put [his] finger on the exact spot in my back that was excruciating me, that shocked me. I said [to him] “you felt everything I was feeling didn’t you? yes he said yes! This guy that was next to me, he was extraordinary. I mean he was like, he was like my son, to the ground, he just intuitively anchord one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Summary of preliminary findings

Preliminary findings point to the CBW as being a powerful place where people can come together, no matter what their ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background or employment, and learn to strive together and transcend their differences on their way to building authentic community. In this case, both participants reported experiences that resembled Peck’s stages of community building, with a particular emphasis on ‘emptying’ being pivotal to the experience of being-in-community. Their experience of being-in-community, as shown by the explicated data, is both a personal and shared-with-others experience. The manifestation of community is contingent upon there being a ‘space’ where it can be revealed. The CBW creates this space through dynamic tension created by encountering the other, what Turner (cited in Goff, 1992, p.44) calls the “rite of intensification”.

The CBW is a meeting place for diversity and difference. It is a place where one can have an intense experience of oneself in relationship to the other. It is the interdependent relationship with the other which allows for the creation of a resilient community capable of embracing difference and diversity. In his book *The Web of Life*, Fritjof Capra shows that diversity in an ecological community is fundamental to its resilience. He draws a comparison with human community in saying:

A diverse community is a resilient community, capable of adapting to changing situations…. If the community is aware of the interdependence of all its members, the diversity will enrich all relationships and thus also enrich the community as a whole, as well as each individual member (1997, p. 295).

In explicating some aspects of the phenomena of being-in-community, as experienced in a Community Building Workshop, it can be seen that the process enables a ‘sensitive awareness’ of one’s self and the other as unique beings in an essential human relationship which is interdependent and connected. The CBW could well be a modern ‘rite of passage’, a path to reconnecting with a deep essence of community.

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About the Author

Carl Holroyd is a graduate student in the social sciences at Edith Cowan University, Bunbury, Western Australia.

References


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