

Research question 2 = *What do you 'get out' of attending your men's group?*

→ Analysis ↓

→ *Grounded and Emergent Concepts*

Second Most Relevant Concept: THE 'CONTAINER'

The shared space – or group experience - constructed as a result of circular meetings of men's groups is conceptualised as a 'container'. This term is used ubiquitously within the groups and was also an emergent and relevant finding in undergraduate work associated with this research (see appendix).

Figure 2 illustrates the physical components of the container. As such, men's group members are conceptualised as being tightly connected together because of attributes of the groups discussed above (openness, inclusivity, equality). Consequently men sitting shoulder and shoulder are described as somehow 'knitted' or 'weaved' or 'bonded' together

it does make a difference when you're with the lads when you're talkin..[because]..it's close knit, (Gerry)

[men] each side of ye..you're supporting one an you're..maybe leaning on the other (Andrew).

Yeah..it..creates..a bond with the group, yeknow..ye go to other meetins, you're kinda..you're sittin in rows..yeah..so it's more open..there's a lot more openness in a circle, yeknow (Dessie, p.18);

The terms knitted and bonded – along with openness, equality and inclusivity – are used and understood with reference to the psychological as well as the physical. As such a potentially neutral container becomes a positive and supportive ‘sanctuary’

I remember sittin in a huge circle..there was man, John Moriarty..leading it..and he described..he kept talkin about the container..that was created..the container..and he referred, ‘cause of his background..he referred to the phrase Termon..Termonfeckin and Termonbarry..it’s sanctuary..is what that translates as (Liam)

*[men’s group] is one of the supports [I use], an I use that word in its full meaning..like, is a support ..it **supports** me*

Dimensions of the container: men’s groups are inherently flexible entities, reflective of their open and voluntary nature and therefore different men and different amounts of men turn up for individual meetings – or circles (see appendix). Notwithstanding these variables however, the circle remains constant. Another constant is depth.

Depth: the circular structure of men’s groups - and the attributes of this structure (or those that might be created by this structure) – results in a depth to men’s groups that is considered substantial, far reaching and profound. For the purpose of coherency, for now depth is applied to the verbal contributions of participants, but it equally applies to other facets of the groups that will be discussed below and in further chapters.

Accordingly, although there is significant variability among participants and indeed groups, it is a general finding that participants in men’s groups tend to articulate personal and other experience in an open and forthright manner. These experiences are generally conceptualised as sensitive – or highly sensitive outside men’s groups and are of the type contained in figure 1.

Thus Neil and Eoin, who have extensive experience of various ‘healing groups’ as well as men’s groups, make the following observations pertaining to ‘depth’:

*its Unique Selling Point..is that there is a depth of sharing..on an emotional side, which I find very healing..an I haven't found that..as safe..elsewhere..me sharing whatever is goin on emotionally. I think the level of sharing is very deep, eh, very honest em..I'd nearly say sacred..and...I think that happens because it's safe..it's a safe place. But other groups I've been to...eh, you wouldn't get that level of safe..safeness and depth..an I think they go together..if you feel very safe, you will truly open up. Some groups I go to I feel - this is a safeish place- ...so there's certain things I would say..but there's certain things **I would not say**..whereas in our men's group I think..I think I can almost say anything..**genuinely**..because I've heard almost anything...so that's..that is a difference (Neil)*

I shared stuff in the group that I never thought I'd share with anyone..let alone a group of men..and then te be..te have it sort of eh..very warmly received and sortef understood..it's a very liberating thing..kinda..frees ye from a lot of shite (Eoin)

Depth forms an important – and relevant – concept in men's groups which is why it is illustrated in figure 2. However it is also a difficult concept to pin down for the purpose of scientific analysis containing as it does numerous different indicators – and thos indicators being relevant and included in other different and related concepts. For this reason the concept of depth marks a departure point in this research – or bridge - where we leave the primarily tangible relevant concepts and enter the domain of the less tangible and fluid – though no less relevant concepts. As such the remaining concepts of this analysis are understood as complex, dynamic and ever-changing – or fluid - and illustrated as such by figure 2. The conceptualisation of the fluid nature of men's group's concepts was achieved largely through collective analysis conducted through the focus group element of this study. Although conferring a degree of puzzlement to explanation and analysis, fluidity was far from being understood as inherently negative and was instead seen as simultaneously mysterious and positive.

so trying to measure this and analyse it, it's gointa be like..it's..it'll be there one minute and it's be flu..it'll be gone..it'll be something else in..yeknow..it's in constant flux I think (Derek)

[the content within men's groups] is messy..but I think the messiness is em, the..the real gift of it all, yeknow, because it's probably hard to get that..you mentioned what's real and what's true..it's very hard to connect with that..only through some kind of form like this (Andrew)