

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon of letting go by approaching it from an experiential rather than a quantitative perspective. The decision was to focus on the unique personal meanings of the phenomenon as lived by the participants, rather than focusing on facts deduced by statistical findings. The implicit structure regarding the way in which an individual undergoes a significant letting-go experience had to be made explicit.

My investigation began by asking the question: What is the experience of letting go? In other words, what do we mean by “letting go”? The essence and meaning of the experience had to be revealed. Descriptive answers to these questions procured a starting point regarding the process of letting go, which involves a mobility that is foundational to human development, constituting the very structure of life itself. Thus far, the present study has evoked the phenomenon of letting go, revealed its structure and explicated its general psychological meaning. The phenomenon was approached and explored in its diversity, rather than studied within a single specific situational context. The choice of the situated experience of letting-go was left to the Research Participants. Their descriptions of significant letting-go experiences made it possible to investigate the ubiquitous and general psychological meaning of the phenomenon.

Letting go is revealed as a transitional process that evolves with time, confronting the self with the necessity to meet with change and move on. Letting go is more than separation. It is the experience of self in the process of change through separation. The process is rotational and continuously in motion, as the past has to be returned to before the self can meet with the present and face the future in a meaningful manner. Memories are significant in retaining continuity of self, while new meaning and a positive focus on the future facilitate the process. To let go is to submit to, and enter, the unknownness of space and time.

While an attempt is made to weave the findings with existing theory and the literature reviewed, in the process of writing and exploring, new horizons became visible, so that fresh theoretical

references have been included in addition to the original literature. The phenomenon revealed itself as encompassing more than had first been envisaged.

6.1 Theory and Findings

6.1.1 Paradox and Polarity

The current study found that the most salient aspect of letting go is the paradoxical experience of the process. This was evidenced in all the protocols, as the participants, confronted with the reality of change, found themselves in an existential crossroad, not knowing which direction to pursue, whether to remain with the familiar or change to the new. Even after their arrival in the new environment, both participant B and participant P continued to perceive ambiguities in relation to their new world. For B, what ostracised him and made him feel excluded, was also the promise of a secure world that he would soon enter. In the study though the ambiguities often involved negative valuations at first, their ambiguity provided a dialectical capacity for change. In the transitional space, where the experience of ambiguity intensifies, opposing polarities emerge. Polarity is evident in the dialectics of consciousness. Rychlak (1979) identifies this dialectical feature of human consciousness, and, like Kant, accepts the “dialectical transcendence” or implied capacity of consciousness to be self-reflective and to stand apart from the mere imprint of stimuli.

Nicolaus Copernicus, the founder of present-day astronomy, recognised the earth as a moving planet and took us beyond our sensory experience of the rotating sun. We no longer only believe what we see, and do not merely receive stimuli in a receptive and passive manner, but actively confront our perceptions and give them meaning. Meaning fills the gap of unknownness. Prior to Rychlak, Kant, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle had recognised the dialectical feature of consciousness. In the process of letting go, the emerging paradoxical struggle appears to involve an intensified dialectic of consciousness. In the words of Rollo May (1972), “human consciousness works in polarity: the positive cannot come out until the negative does also” (p.148). In the present study, this became evident during the struggle of letting go, as well as during the participants’ pursuit of stability. May notes that both Alfred Whitehead and Paul Tillich consider the ontological character of opposing polarities as fundamental to reality, where

reality is a dynamic process of mobility between positive-negative poles, rather than something that is fixed and unchanging. In the dynamic mobility between the opposing polarities of letting go, change is part of the process, and ambivalence and ambiguity pervade the entire phenomenon. Tageson's (1982) explication of Georg Hegel's proposal of the alternating mind is an apt description of the paradoxical struggle and conflicting polarities that arise in the process of letting go. He writes: "the mind innately leaps from any proposition (thesis) to its opposite (antithesis), often resolving the apparent contradiction by a new proposition, which incorporates elements of both (synthesis) and so on indefinitely"(p.29). This became clearly evident in the findings during the struggle of the conflict.

The study reveals that in the process of resolution, a vacillating push-and-pull rhythm between the poles repeats itself in approaching and avoiding change. Vacillation arises from the outset, reaching a climax during the struggle. The struggle of the conflict intensifies to the critical point of chaos, but decreases as stability is gradually attained. Lacan's (1988b) non-acceptance of Hartmann's (1958) 'conflict-free ego' seems justified, for conflict and chaos are essential experiences to the process of change and, though overpowering and immobilising, growth does unfold. As with birth, where the "paroxysms of the womb force a 'letting go' to begin" (Tien's, 1992, p.22), so, too, does the conflict of polarities create an opportunity for the new to emerge. Conflict is not pathological. In laying the foundation for psychoanalytic developmental thought, Freud (1905) focused primarily on psychopathology, with the idea that intrapsychic conflict preceded psychic growth. Wittine's (1989) citation of Trungpa's words, rings profoundly when he states: "Chaotic situations must not be rejected. Nor must we regard them as regressive, as a return to confusion. We must respect whatever happens to our state of mind. Chaos should be regarded as extremely good news" (p.282). The study reveals that prior to growth and commitment to change, the self's experience of conflict intensifies, to the extent of being immobilised, "running around in circles" (M34), "going back and forth" (P27) and going nowhere. The conflict would precede the decision-making process. Bowlby (1979) accepts conflict as a normal state of affairs that has to be lived with. Similarly, Maslow (1968) speaks of the resolution of dichotomies, where oppositions and polarities are not straight-line continua, and with self-actualising individuals, both polarities can co-exist, not as incompatibilities, but in a dynamic synthesis. Understanding oppositions as dialectical is essential to understanding change. Lacan's topology of the 'moebius strip' is useful in comprehending such a dialectic, for,

although separate, two opposing sides can continuously be with each other. Such polarity and separateness are evidenced in the dialectical concept of a related-separateness revealed as a constituent of letting go. With the need to separate, the need to relate remains. Mobility between the two poles (holding on vs letting go) is dialectical and dynamic, contributing to the spiral process of growth and continuity. As development moves to and fro, towards and away from change, psychological growth is rhythmic. With psychological growth, going back (regression) precedes going forward (progression) and, though initially slow, the process gradually increases in intensity to the peak of an ontological spin and a maturational (resolution/revolution) leap forward. This is the mobility of letting go.

The findings of this study agree with the Heideggerian (1962) view that human development occurs in a growing spiral, rather than in a linear or chronological line. Like the hermeneutic circle, “one returns to the point of origin again and again but never at the same level” (Valle, King & Halling, 1989, p.15). The past is re-turned to, re-viewed and re-lived, re-peated over and over again in an attempt to find re-solution and new meaning with which to continue. Returning to the past and finding understanding in the present, precedes and facilitates mobility forward. The process is aptly expressed in the words of T.S. Eliot (1979):

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time (p.43).

(Eliot, T.S ‘Little Gidding’, *Four Quartets*)

The repetition evidenced in the study is akin to Freud’s (1971) “compulsion to repeat”, or what he describes as “a force to overcome the repression” of what remains hidden in the self. The force of repetition is a recurring and necessary attempt to unveil and bring to awareness what has receded in memory and been forgotten. To return to the past and repeat one’s history does not appear pathological, but provides a sense of continuity necessary to the process of mobility. With letting go, fundamental aspects of self that are no longer part of the conscious awareness of self (ego), either resurface or are recalled, to be integrated with the self in the present, a necessary step before continuing with the mobility of life. Alapack (1984), concisely and descriptively explicate the process. To reiterate:

We face certain life issues repeatedly; rarely do we deal with them once and for all. We return to certain meanings again and again in a spiral fashion. Optimistically we return with experience under our belt which we have parlayed into accumulated wisdom. Optimistically we come to a familiar situation with the liberating distance of a retrospective perspective. But often we stumble as Freud's repetition compulsion indicates (p.3-4).

6.1.2 Rhythmic Development

In its continued efforts to understand human development, psychology provides a primary source of order and a predictable sequential progression of growth, referred to as consisting of phases, stages or periods of development. While we cannot dispute the presence of developmental phases that appear regarding childhood, adolescence, adulthood, midlife and the later years, life and the process of human development appear to be more than the definition of the phases identified.

Within the context of adult development, Daniel Levinson (1978) and his colleagues view this as a sequence of alternating periods through which the life structure evolves. To this theorist, the sequence of alternating periods involves "a relatively stable structure-building period...followed by a transitional structure-changing period" (p.317). The description is reflective of the to-and-fro rhythm evidenced in the present study regarding the conflicting decision, as well as in the participants' need to return to their past. Periods of growth do not only appear to be chronologically related and evident in the broader perspective of developmental phases, but are revealed too, in the cyclic process of letting go, present in the living of our daily lives. The cyclic process of letting go is ubiquitous. Erikson (1971) has indicated that mobility occurs within and between the developmental phases. The concept of "individual life structure" is foundational to Levinson's (1978) theory and described as "the underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time" (p. 41). To speak of life structure is to consider the self in relation to the world. According to Levinson, life structure evolves through sequential developmental periods that shape the course of adult psychosocial development, where transitional periods are crucial turning points in the life cycle. Levinson speaks of stable or structure-building periods followed by structure-changing periods that last six to eight years and four to five years respectively. The alternating sequence of stable and transitional periods is considered the rhythmic movement of

development in the developmental phases. With letting go, the present study reveals a more specific rhythmic process of development and growth. While letting go is transitional and structure-changing, it is neither predictable nor chronologically linked, but provoked by sporadic contextual life-situations and the meanings we attach to them. In the process of change, while the familiar continues, its presence is gradually reduced. Change is not absolute, as letting go is dialectical to holding on. Where established meanings are confronted with change, a crisis emerges and the struggle to let go is a challenge in development.

The foundational concept of my thesis is that development is not merely chronologically phase-related. In the process of resolving the challenge of change, letting go continues to unfold in the daily structure of our lives. Growth and development are continuous, as change is omnipresent: “*J’y suis, j’y reste; plus cela change, plus cela est meme chose; esto perpetua* (Here I am, Here I remain; The more things change, the more they stay the same; This continues)”. Change is not merely phase-related. Change is development and continues to unfold in the experience of transition. To meet with change is to meet with crisis. Naomi Golan (1981) defines transition as “a period of moving from one state of certainty to another, with an interval of uncertainty and change in between” (p.12). In the uncertainty or unknownness of letting go, decisions are an attempt to define a sense of certainty regarding the future. Until the decision is made, the future remains unknown and anxiety threatens. There is the fear of loss and fear of the unknown. The transitional process of letting go arises in the context of the unknown, as a challenge to meet with change. Decisions provide structure to the process.

Letting go is the transitional and rhythmic mobility of life that occurs within and between the various developmental phases. With the challenge of change, in the process of living, letting go is an entry into the unknownness of space and time. In being born we let go, in dying we let go, and in the process between we live the story of our life or human journey in the unknownness of our spatiality and temporality. As members of individual communities, we reflect the cultural context and social world to which we belong, but also contribute creatively to the pattern of social continuity. We effect cultural change and are affected by cultural change. As we let go, change is inextricably woven into the fabric of our lives. The study reveals that in the struggle of our transitional journey forward, we submit to life’s temporality, for time is not separate to us, time is in us. We embody its existence and surrender to its power.

The rhythmic movement of development is akin to Freud's original life and death instinct of the conflicting life forces. The force to progress, to live and extend beyond oneself (push) and the force to regress and return to an earlier less complex state (pull) comprises a polarity. As revealed, crises are essential to man's struggle and the mobility of life. To resolve the struggle is to let go. Erik Erikson (1969) identifies the conflict of polarity as a developmental challenge that confronts the self. He places the conflict within the developmental framework of his eight ages of man, where each developmental phase constitutes the challenge to resolve the presenting crisis. As evidenced, resolution of crises is seldom complete, yet is sufficiently adequate to move on and meet with subsequent new challenges. In the context of environmental circumstances, residues of an experience remain and are returned to, to be rekindled and possibly resolved. In returning to the past, memories play a significant role in maintaining a sense of continuity, onto which we hold in our mobility forward.

Whether we are rocked in the arms of our (m)other, or move to the rhythmic beat of music in a dance, the push-pull rhythm of life is integral to our existence. In letting go, the rhythmic movement of the push-pull constituent revealed with the polarity is reflected in the to-and-fro movement manifested in the somatic experiences of breathing, eating and most bodily experiences. Erik Erickson (1969) notes the paradoxical lived-body experience of holding on (control) and letting go (submission), and describes the co-ordination of muscular maturation during this phase of early development. This theorist specifically attends to the phenomenon of letting go as it appears during the second (Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt) phase of development. At this time, the oppositional modes of retention and elimination come into play, where the contradictory experience of holding on (control) and letting go (submission) regarding mobility are challenged in order to find resolution and move on. To illustrate, participant P appeared to reflect a somatic experience of her conflict regarding the decision to leave her home. The extent of the intrusion into her space, and her ability to breathe appear to be co-related. Where the presence of the intrusion was felt the environmental air was difficult to inhale, but the air was found to be clear in the absence of the intrusion. The vacillation between submission (letting go) and control (holding on) is reflected in the exhaling and inhaling pattern of breathing, reflective, too, of the conflict she was in. The early process of muscular mobility is perhaps initiated perinatally with the paroxysms of the womb, but appears to continue psychologically

through life. The early experience of muscular control (holding on) and submission (letting go) is dialectically significant. The manner in which the challenge of holding on (control) versus letting go (submission) is dealt with and the conflict resolved during the early developmental phase, is fundamental to subsequent experiences of letting go. Developmental resolution of the polarised conflict (control-submission) influences the efficacy of further resolutions regarding polarisations. To let go is to relinquish control. To concur with Erikson (1969), Mahler (1975) and Alapack (1984), meeting with the challenge of a crisis (of polarities) and finding resolution is a developmental achievement.

Though idiosyncratic in nature, every conflict reveals the ontology of our being, where being and non-being co-exist existentially. Conflict is essential to man's struggle. The confronting question is whether to let go or to hold on; whether to submit to life and define a separate sense of being, or retain the state of oneness and immobility by denying life. The soliloquy of Shakespeare's Hamlet reflects the ubiquitous ambiguity and conflict of being. Hamlet poses the question: "To be, or not to be...". To "be" is to let go and define the self by submitting to life, while "not to be" is to continue holding on and to withdraw from life. The present study reveals the conflict of holding on and letting go, of presence and absence, of life and death. In living and letting go, attempts are made to avoid entering the emptiness of the gap, "where death makes itself felt" (Lacan, 1988b, p.210). The gap is omnipresent. Meaning appears to fill the gap, while an absolute experience is an illusion and merely reflects the dominance of a polarity. Our pursuit for the absolute is deceptive, and yet, in the need for stability, we seek a sense of wholeness.

6.1.3 Stability

Throughout the rhythmic process of letting go, there is a continuous struggle to restore balance and stability. Paradoxically, it is in the presence of polarities that stability can be attained. In achieving stability and a balanced sense of self, both polarities are required. We live in the balance of differences, rather than in what is absolute. Our sense of wholeness is imaginary, and in our quest for stability, we become attached to an illusion and are deceived in the process. Our sense of stability is illusionary. Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) was first to argue that there are no positive terms that comprise a linguistic system, only conceptual and phonic *differences*. This

linguist explicates that the value of a word is paradoxical and not fixed. A word is endowed with value and signification. Similarly, as revealed in the present study, meaning is paradoxical and dialectical. It is not fixed and can change. Ironically, however, in order to let go and move on, the self seeks to fill the gap through stability in meaning.

In the process of change, the study reveals that the self vacillates and oscillates between the negative and positive poles in pursuit of positive meaning. Positive meaning provides the stability, with a concomitant ability to move forward. Stability connotes attachments to the familiar. The self seeks to continue to hold on to the familiar, experiencing a sense of oneness. In the process of change and in the demand to move forward, the self is confronted with the deceptive nature of stability and of the meaning held on to. However, with the inevitability of change, the integrity of the self is threatened with fragmentation. The negativity that threatens gives rise to the pursuit of new meaning, and with the decision to submit to the inevitability of change, positive meaning emerges. To submit is to relinquish control. In the context of ambiguity, negative attachments, are gradually transformed and replaced with positive valuations. Successful resolution of the crisis is an achievement that empowers the self with a sense of competence. Upon arriving in the new world, there is a desire to bridge the sense of aloneness and to be one with the new environment. Ambiguity prevails, but is dialectically, facilitative, for in the quest for stability, negative perceptions are gradually replaced and converted to positive valuations. Although the attachment continues, its meaning is creatively transformed. For example, Participant M's initial attachment to the (negative) loss of her baby was transformed, and replaced with a (positive) sense of gain and appreciation for her life. While the attachment to her "baby" continued, a new positive meaning had emerged. In the continued quest for stability, with the creation of new meaning, the negative is transformed into the positive as the self partakes in a creative process.

The present study concurs with Lacan that a sense of stability can be deceptive. A sense of stability accompanies the sense of wholeness and oneness that the self perceives. Though the attachment may be inauthentic, it is nevertheless meaningful. This was evidenced with participant M who remained attached to her baby despite the pain it offered her. She felt obliged to carry the pain, as it connected her to her baby and she continued to perceive herself as its mother. Such deceptive stability is also evident in the attachment to the social façade, for while the truth is concealed, a

connectedness is revealed in relation to the world. The façade or social attachment maintains an illusion or false belief of wholeness, essential to the process of letting go. On entering the unknown spatiality of letting go, the state of deception precedes the awareness of truth. Evidence of the deception is reminiscent of the *méconnaissance* that Lacan portrays as occurring during the mirror phase of infancy, but it is also reflective of the illusion that Winnicott describes as emerging in the intermediate area of experience. Winnicott (1951) explicates how the experience of “illusion” precedes the child’s disillusionment or acceptance of reality. Both theories appear to acknowledge illusion, or deception, as a necessary precursor to accepting reality. The façade is a paradoxical social instrument that masks and alienates, yet retains a necessary attachment in relation to the world. The façade is where the self and other unite. In our quest for stability and wholeness, we seek to remain attached to the familiar.

The infant’s initial visual image of (m)other is a further merger of (mouth, hand, labyrinth, skin) the “unified situational experience” perceived (Spitz, 1965). What is visually perceived supports the experience of oneness. Attachment reinforces the sense of wholeness and oneness perceived in the image of the (m)other, as well as in the “hold” of the mirroring experience. Perception is falsely regarded as synonymous with the experience. To most, “seeing is believing”. We believe what we see, but are deceived by that perception. In perceiving the image or mirroring of the self, a sense of stability and wholeness is accepted, along with a sense of unity and oneness. In the desire for oneness, the value of what is visible continues.

6.1.4 Oneness

The desired state of oneness returns us to the initial phase of human development with its basic trust (Erikson), narcissism (Kohut) or oneness (Kaplan) experienced in the early relationship with the (m)other. The experience of oneness develops a sense of ontological wholeness and security regarding the self. The early symbiotic relationship with the (m)other, experienced as wholeness and oneness, provides the stability and integrity desired through life. Through life, the early holding experience is retained and extended as a primary ontological security force. Laing (1960) speaks of the “primary ontologically secure” person, who, despite constantly encountering social, ethical, biological and spiritual challenges, continues to acquire a sense of identity. A sense of rootedness is established. This study reveals that throughout the process of letting go, stability is pursued in the desire for oneness and continuity. Indeed, the “homeostatic

equilibrium” that Mahler (1975, p.43) describes as the task of normal autism does appear to continue later in life.

In the need for equilibrium and balance, we seek to be one with the world to which we relate. Though “apart” from the world and others, we are “a part of” the world and others. As contextualised beings in our changing world, we influence and change the world in which we live, but are nevertheless influenced by the somatic, psychological and cultural changes encountered. Our separateness is not absolute, for we are inseparably intertwined with the world to which we relate. We are relatedly-separate, and co-constitute one another. Though we seek to individuate, our separateness is defined in relation to others. Although participant P desperately sought to define her personal space, she nevertheless defended against finding it without retaining the attachment she had to her significant other, and despite their dispute, she considers his needs above her own. Similarly, in the process of letting go, participants M, K and P considered people other rather than themselves and retained the significant attachment. The term “individual” is derived from the Greek word for atom (*ἄτομος*- atomos). The concept contains paradoxical roots as “ it comes from *idivisibilis*, meaning that which cannot be divided; and dual or duality, that which is of two parts” (Tien, 1992, p.28).

In spite of emerging difficulties and tension, in the quest for the oneness desired, the self remains attached to the constant image of (m)other. With his concept of object constancy, Hartmann (1952) acknowledges the significance of the experience of continuity and sense of wholeness as a mental process. With his “object constancy”, the (m)other is gradually incorporated in memory, while the retained attachment provides the capacity to separate. Memories are a significant part in the process of letting go, and the self remains attached to memories in an attempt to find a sense of continuity. Before entering the world of the unknown, all the participants returned to their past to seek the familiar in memory. Participant B physically returns to the towns and roads of his past to rekindle memories of his history that he wishes to store in the album of his mind. The visit reassured him that in the consistently changing world that he was experiencing at the time, there was a sense of constancy in his world. This belief was fundamental to the change which he eventually undergoes.

Winnicott's (1951) "transitional object" is a tangible form of early attempts to retain the feeling of oneness in the relationship with (m)other. As Winnicott describes, the transitional object replaces (m)other, providing the perception of a meaningful link and a sense of stability for the infant. However, in the absence of the transitional object and the perception of a broken link, the infant appears to "fall apart", as if fragmented. Similarly, in the transitional process of letting go, it is revealed that intense efforts arise to retain an attachment to the significant other, while tangible objects substantiate the image in one's lived reality. The façade serves as a transitional phenomenon, and where the self is threatened with loss of the façade, there is the threat of fragmentation and disintegration analogous to that evidenced with the young infant in the absence of the transitional object. In the space of transition, the façade serves as a transitional phenomenon. The façade was so convincing in the participants, relation to their world that they falsely believed that they were fine and coping. The façade serves as their attachment to the social world which they dare not relinquish before their arrival in the new world. It is only in retrospect that they realise the truth and feel deceived. Winnicott (1951) notes that in the process of separation, illusion precedes disillusion. Similarly, in the process of letting go, one moves from deception to reality. Approaching reality is a gradual process. Illusion is the creation of a personal and lived reality that overlaps with reality in relation to the environment. In relinquishing the illusion or the deceptive reality that has been held on to, we submit to the omnipotence of time and change. Not holding on to the deception is to relinquish control and accept the truth that appears in reality. While the awareness of truth erupts, the conflicting duality between the façade and the self dissolves, and the transitional phenomenon that existed disappears. In the desperation for survival, the self retains an attachment to significant meanings that can replace the initial transitional phenomenon. In the absence of the façade and with the threat of disintegration, a new attachment (significant meaning) emerges, providing a sense of stability, where rootedness, centrality and personal continuity are experienced, together with a sense of being intact and whole.

Meaningful thoughts facilitate separation, yet also serve as adequate replacements that provide a sense of wholeness that promotes the resolution of personal conflict. The study reveals that during the process of transition, attachment to a transitional object is retained in its meaningful context, but gradually replaced with meaningful memories, values and beliefs. In the process of letting go, attachments to earlier meanings are replaced with the creation of new meanings,

facilitated by the initial ambiguity. Creation is an integral part of the process of letting go. Tolpin's (1971) conviction that "when the infant begins to use his blanket, to soothe himself, he has *created* something", rings true. Similarly, however, when the participants moved beyond the familiarity of sameness and entered the space beyond and discovered meaning, they too, had *created* something.

In recalling personal history, memories provide a sense of continuity that holds us, and to which we hold on. We attempt to bridge the inescapable discontinuity of letting go. With fear of fragmentation and of loss, positive meanings provide the capacity for stability and a sense of wholeness. In pursuit of the desired stability, while attachments to what is meaningful may be negative, efforts to convert such negativity to positive meaning and value continues. The polarised values of ambiguity facilitate conversions to the positive, and, although change is approached with hesitance, there is a desire to acknowledge the positive and to trust the new. As positive valuations increase, perceptions allow new meaning to unfold. However, in the dynamic, rotational and rhythmic movement of change, negative perceptions can be reverted to. The conflict continues until resolution is attained.

While the sense of integrity and wholeness, reminiscent of the early relationship with (m)other, is pursued, the need for holding continues. Physical and empathic holding is stabilising, creating the potential for future developmental achievements. The desired sense of wholeness facilitates the attachment to what is meaningfully possible, and relieves the anxiety of loss, and fear of entering the unknown. Kohut (1988) identifies empathic holding as providing transitional psychic structure foundational to the "cohesive self" or sense of wholeness. The experience of holding precedes the sense of oneness and ensuing developmental achievements, or what Kohut regards as a cohesive, intact and whole sense of self. With the threat of loss and fragmentation, a whole and cohesive sense of self provides the desired stability. In pursuing the desired state of oneness, positive meaning gradually replaces negative perceptions, and in facilitating balance and stability, mobility is promoted and separateness defined.

6.1.5 Separateness

In the findings of the study, although the participants recognised their uniqueness and the personal nature of their lived experience, they appeared to defend against a sense of separateness. They sought to identify with others and needed to know that they were not alone in the experience. Participant K identified with other parents of adolescents, while participant M identified with others who had also experienced loss. In her new environment, P seeks to identify with her new neighbours and feel that she belongs. Participant B also seeks to relate more closely to his new compatriots. The identification with others is reassuring to them that they are not alone.

Is to separate, to let go? Mahler (1975) and her colleagues view separation as individuation or the “psychological birth of the individual”. For the young infant, the process is described as:

The establishment of a sense of separateness from and in relation to a world of reality, particularly with regard to the experiences of one’s own body and to the principal representative of the world, as the infant experiences it, the primary love object (p.3).

The findings of the present study reveal the phenomenon of letting go as the adult experiences it. During adulthood, the lived body does not bear the significance it did during early childhood, but to let go is to establish a sense of separateness in relation to the world. However, the separateness attained is neither visible nor absolute. The façade conceals all truths. However, in the process of letting go, an attempt is made to retain an attachment to the significant other, as a need for relatedness continues. The visibly changing somatic self that confronts the child (and adolescent) no longer confronts the adult (unless with illness or aging). Like Lacan’s infant during the mirror stage, being assured only by what is visible, the adult is deceived and believes himself to be integrated and whole. But the visible body provides a deceptively integrated sense of self, as the adult accepts the somatic self to be part of the self. The ego is “the seat of illusion” (Lacan in Evans, 1996, p.51). Absence of the visual evidence of growth and development allows for the deceptive belief in an attained oneness in relation to the self, world and others, not affected by change. Nevertheless, change is inevitable and confronts the self in a psychological (experiential) rather than physical (visible) manner. The challenge of change during adulthood is

existentially, rather than visibly, evident. The traditional belief in psychology regarding the stability of the adult years is deceptive. Letting go is more than defining separateness; it is a confrontation with the challenge of change, where separation is the challenge to let go and meet with that change. While separation is growth, growth is change. To meet with the challenge of change in the process of separation is to meet with the challenge of letting go.

In the process of change, a façade conceals the truth of the conflicting struggle, where, in the experienced ambiguity, a sense of continuity is held on to, as memories fill the gap. With submission to one's spatiality and temporality, new meaning is created and the successful resolution of the conflict gives rise to a sense of empowerment. Such creation and sense of empowerment is reminiscent of Winnicott's (1963a) description of the "experience of omnipotence" in his theory of the infant "creating" rather than the finding the object. As the self is defined and redefined, it creates and recreates. Decisions are made in an attempt to gain control of the process, and to defend against isolation and fragmentation. .

In the mobility forward, the gradual integration of the duality of the self in relation to the significant other facilitates the successful outcome of separation-individuation. By retaining an attachment in memory, the self can separate and regulate its own sense of balance and stability. According to Hartman's (1952) "self-regulatory function of the ego", in the need to separate and individuate, the early narcissistic relationship is internalised to maintain the desired equilibrium. Meaningful attachments make it possible for us to let go of the psychic symbiosis and move on to our psychic separation. The present study reflects the reverberations of which Margaret Mahler (1975) speaks regarding separation-individuation. Indeed, the initial separation-individuation phase provides a foundational basis for the subsequent struggles and achievements of letting go. The separation-individuation evidenced in childhood is the core process of the psychological birth of the individual, and letting go is the continued process of defining and redefining the self in an existential, rather than in a visible, manner. Successfully resolving the challenge of the conflicting polarities continues to be a developmental achievement.

Just as the infant bursts into the ontological world and effectively lifts itself from the position of "horizontal" (Jager, 1971) to an erect position of mobility with a sense of omnipotence, so, too, the individual, having found resolution to his struggle of the letting go, adopts a different

perspective, and, with a similar sense of omnipotence, enters a new extended horizon with feelings of enrichment and empowerment. The push-pull experience of the struggle of letting go is reminiscent of the “darting-away” (push) and “shadowing” (pull) described by Mahler as arising during the rapprochement phase of separation-individuation which reflects the dialectic of the need for separateness, but also the desire for oneness of “man’s eternal struggle against both fusion and isolation” (Mahler, 1972a, p.130). The refuelling and separation of the earlier process reflects the ambiguity and ambivalence of letting go. Though there is a continuous desire throughout life for the ideal state of stability and wholeness in the union with (m)other, there is also a quest to individuate the self and move on. Just as the infant separates and establishes a sense of separateness and self in relation to (m)other and the world, so too, the adult defines a renewed sense of self in letting go. Although Mahler does not specifically refer to the process of letting go, her explication of the process of separation-individuation in childhood appears to be reflective of the existential experience of letting go during adulthood. Though the process is repeated on a different level, it does continue through life.

Mahler’s (1972a; 1972b; 1975) subdivision of the separation-individuation process includes the four subphases; viz. differentiation; practising (early and proper); rapprochement; and the unfolding of complex cognitive functions on the way to object constancy. Though no specific chronological sequence can be defined, the findings of the present study regarding the process of letting go with the adult can be described according to Mahler’s framework as follows: (1) an awareness of change and new horizons (differentiation); (2) an initial and final decision to commit to change (early and proper practising phase); (3) a paradoxical struggle in the fear of loss and quest for gain (rapprochement); (4) an increase in cognitive attempts to find resolution (on the way to object constancy). Indeed, each childhood subphase of separation-individuation is evidenced in the process of letting go. The increased awareness in relation to the world and the extended horizons beyond the self and significant other, concurs with Mahler’s description of the “differentiation” subphase. The “practising phase” that follows, and which is divided into an early and a proper practising subphase, corresponds to the initial tentative decision that initiates the intention to meet with change, followed by the significant final commitment to change.

In the process of letting go, the initial tentative decision provides knowledge and insight that are useful to the subsequent decision with its final commitment. As changes affect both the self and

the relation to the world, the decision is an attempt to retain control by personally determining the parameters of the commitment into the unknownness of the future. The present findings concur with Karlsson (1993) that decisions are goal-directed and pertain to “ a future, a time to come” (p.110). Through the making of decisions, the future can be determined and possibilities realised. The present study reveals that the making of decisions provides a hold and a sense of control in the space of the impending unknown. Just as Mahler’s (1975) ‘practising’ subphase prepares the infant for the ‘proper’ separation with separation-individuation, the initial decision prepares the self for the reality of change. Significantly, the information obtained from the initial decision contributes experience that equips the self to deal with the reality of change. Following the initial decision, a greater known enters the unknownness, of the second decision

With the participants, a final commitment to their decision was preceded by a paradoxical struggle in the push-pull mobility of the conflict, where the crisis of change confronted the self. The push-pull process is analogous to the mobility away from, and mobility towards, (m)other during Mahler’s rapprochement subphase. Although deceptive, successfully retaining continuity of the desired wholeness facilitates mobility. Hartmann’s (1952) “object constancy” provides stability to the ego rather than to the self. To let go successfully, is to find a solution to the conflicting of polarity, attained through self-reflection or self-confrontation, in the awareness of truth.

As is the case with the young child, in an effort to effect a resolution of the polarised conflict (holding on and letting go) and facilitate mobility forward, cognitive attempts increase. The capacity to regulate the conflict is relative to the ability to hold on to the concept of wholeness and stability. With letting go, awareness of the inevitability of change, and the fear of loss and fragmentation, leads to the submission of the self to the continuity and power of time. In the process, however, retaining a link to the world seems crucial, as new meaning replaces the earlier meaning related to. The need to retain an attachment to the significant other can be replaced by representative values and beliefs that replace the significant other. In the unknown space entered, Participant B finds that his Christian values effectively replace the meaning he had attached to tangible securities like his salary and the structures of his daily life. Meaning fills the gap that is evaded, as the creation of new meaning provides a sense of attachment for the future. Though the process of separation-individuation may resonate through life, to let go is not only to

individuate in separateness, but to retain a connectedness as well. Absolute separateness was defended against. Letting go is more than separation; it is the experience of separation. Though more than separation, letting go is dialectical to holding on, and, in the process of individuation, letting go is a process of related-separateness.

Before letting go and moving on, the participants returned to their past. The findings of the present study agree with the view that “regression” is a precondition for “progression”, reminiscent once again of the push-pull effect discussed earlier. The findings concur with the work of Margaret Mahler (1975) in her study on children, and the work of Peter Blos (1967) in his study on adolescence, considered the second individuation process. With both child and adolescent, before individuation of the self, the earlier relationship with the parent is returned to. We need to recognise, however, that somatic changes arise during the first (Mahler) and second (Blos) process of separation-individuation, where the familiarity with one’s body is disrupted. Such a disruption is most manifest during early childhood, but also during adolescence when “rapid changes of adolescence cause a rapid change in body image” (Couvaras, 1972). Where the self is confronted with physiological change, the challenge for psychological growth arises. However, though physiological change is not obviously evident during adulthood, psychological growth does occur. Change during adulthood tends to evolve more deceptively, as psychological change need not be reflected by somatic change. Nevertheless, regression precedes progression or, stated differently, a return to the past precedes entry into the future. In an attempt to resolve the challenge to let go, and leave the familiar in order successfully to meet with the new, a feeling of omnipotence emerges and a new sense of self is defined. Attachments may increase during transitions, as accepting change in the new and unfamiliar in relation to the self, or the environment, is difficult. The attachment evident in the close relationship with peers during adolescence, and in the refuelling with parents during the rapprochement phase of early childhood, continues during adulthood in relation to the significant other. Present evidence indicates that the separation-individuation of early childhood and adolescence recurs in resolving the challenges that confront the self during significant situations of letting go. The process of separation-individuation or letting go does continue through life. Though ageing and other physiological process during adulthood may play a role regarding psychological growth, such physiological changes were not significant to the present study, but provide an opportunity for future studies in this regard. Changes, whether visible or not, arise, confronting and challenging

the self to let go of the familiar, find resolution and move on. Whether physiological and psychological changes occur, the demand is to let go, to find resolution and define a transformed sense of self.

In her theory of development, Mahler (1975) considers the two concepts of separation and individuation as intertwined and complementary, rather than identical modes of growth. In the process of development, separation and individuation may converge or diverge. With change being omnipresent, concurrence is not always possible, for there is the fear of loss and of entering the unknown. While the familiarity of the past and its meaningful aspects are held on to, the reality of change tends to be avoided. In an effort to maintain control of the process of change, commitment to a decision is an attempt to subject the process of change to personal will and control, rather than subjecting the self to the unpredictability and unknownness of time and space. The decision as commitment is a moment of intentional awareness in relation to the world, a moment of being “conscious of” creating a focal point in the gap.

6.1.6 The Split (or gap within the self)

In the process of letting go, by encountering diversity, the individual seeks to retain the sense of sameness and links to the familiar. All the participants were resistant to change, even though the change would have been to their advantage. In avoiding the confrontation with change, a façade emerges, as the “false self” conforms to the demands of the social world, while hiding and protecting the “true self”. Participants M, P, K and J concealed their feelings from the significant others in their lives. The findings of the present study concur with the theories of Robert Laing (1960) and Donald Winnicott (1986) regarding the presence of a false self. As Melanie Klein (1997) has postulated, when the very core of self is threatened with destruction, feelings of inner deadness and “splitting” occur. Regarding splitting, Laing (1960) provides a description of the self as split into two parts, where the “real self” is authentic to one’s being and the “false self” is embodied, but lifeless. With a mask of conformity, the social façade, or public image, is presented to the world. Bernd Jager (1990) views masks as socially imposed forms of separation, and yet, as revealed in the study, the mask or social façade is necessary to the personal process of letting go.

Writers and theorists view the presence of a façade or “false self” from a negative perspective. Heidegger also alerts us to the threat of inauthenticity and alienation. However, until final mobility can take place, the transitional move from the known to the unknown requires the retention of such a façade. This is the “illusion” of which Winnicott speaks, and it appears to be a necessary preliminary step to letting go. While an initial illusion or deception seems necessary, it is where the echo of truth is repeatedly ignored, and where holding on to the false self continues regardless, that a lingering sense of inauthenticity with its pathology can emerge. The denial of truth promotes inauthenticity, where we lose sight of our existentiality and the inevitability of our death. It is the persistent deception of holding on to attachments in the “now” together with an illusory immobility, that leads to entrapment. Authentic living requires that we confront our mortality and acknowledge the open-endedness of our existence.

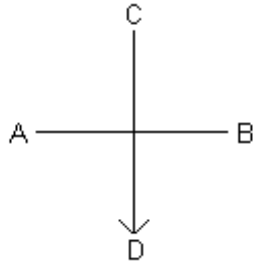
In the face of diversity, splitting arises, while the image of conformity accommodates and conceals the overlapping of the to-and-fro movement in the twisting and twirling mobility for change. The current findings agree with Lacan and Heidegger that social conformity promotes a deceptive image, devoid of authenticity. However, where the self is confronted with the challenge of change, deception is inevitable. As truth is avoided, attachments to the social world and its familiarity increase, facilitating deception and providing a transitional attachment. Meeting with the challenge of change is not immediate, but a gradual process that takes time. While the façade emerges and deceives others, it is also deceptive of the self. Awareness of the split (Lacan’s *clivage du moi*, - Evans, 1996) emerges when loss and fragmentation threaten the self, initially evidenced in the conflicting bipolar duality of doubt in the decision-making process. Just as the infant is deceived by his image of wholeness during the Mirror Phase (Lacan), so the adult, in the process of letting go, can be deceived to believe that he has found stability in his social conformity and superficiality. However, this sense of mastery and control in relation to the world is false. The image (façade) created in retaining the attachment to the social world, alienates the self from its truth. While the social image is tightly held on to, there is a misunderstanding of self or a *méconnaissance* of being. The self is trapped and captivated by the deceptive belief that the self and the image are one. What is seen is believed. We note that participant K’s crying behaviour during a movie convinced her that she had recovered and was dealing with “other” emotional aspects in her life. Similarly, participant J’s commitment to marriage and parenthood convinced him that he had recovered and was coping. In addition,

while identification with an “other” is supportive to the self, in its connectedness, the attachment does not facilitate acknowledgment of the authentic self, but further alienates the self from the truth. For example, participant K appeared to find reassurance in identifying with other parents who were also experiencing difficulty in their relationships with their adolescent children. Though this was supportive for K, providing her with a sense of stability, it impeded her from facing the truth of the pain she experienced and concealed. Similarly, both participant M’s identification with others who have also experienced the pain of loss, and her perception of their recovery, promotes the deceptive belief that she is also coping.

As evidenced in the findings of the present study, alienation accompanies inauthenticity and the lack of connectedness to one’s truth and humanity. Lacan (in Evans, 1996) considers alienation to be an inevitable aspect of our humanity, as the split of alienation is the division between nature and culture, the inevitable gap that prevents us from knowing ourselves completely. Jager (1990) believes that the “masks and marks” imposed by society symbolically reveal our humanity, as they refer to separations, and yet, “ their cultural uses can be understood as forms of their acceptance” (p.170). With letting go, this declaration does appear applicable to the letting go façade, for it is in the interpersonal and social demands of society that the façade emerges, and is retained as a necessary link to the social and interpersonal world. As revealed in the present study, the façade is a necessary aspect of self. Present evidence also reveals that the sense of inauthenticity and deception is only understood in retrospect. During the process, the splitting is experienced as a mechanical sense of self, devoid of authentic living. Truth is contained and concealed, protected by the façade and false self, while attachments to the social world are retained and held on to. Reflective of the experienced inauthenticity is participant J’s description of the experience: “I was living and I was going through the motions, but I was dead, very dead”. (J.82) Participant M conveys it differently but conveys the same message. She says: “At some stage I realised that I was going on like a robot. I would smile, work, but it was false. I did what was expected of me. It was raw inside” (M35).

Attachment to the façade retains a connectedness to the whole. Just as holding incorporates the initial dual relationship of the connectedness with (m)other, which provides a sense of rootedness, centrality and oneness through time, so attachment (holding on), retains an interpersonal connectedness to others through space. To illustrate, we can assume (1) an axis of

relatedness (AB) that moves in the dimension of space (vision-deception), where time is not taken into account, and (2) an axis of historicity (CD) that continues through time (language-truth) with the impact of change.



In relating contextually to the world and others, both the significance of attachments (AB) and the meaning of one's history (CD) have to be considered. Similarly, regarding language, Saussure (1959) points to the need for “a distinction between the system of values per se and the values as they relate to time” (p.80). Meaning and values can change with time.

To experience a sense of continuity (of holding) through time, attempts are made to retain attachments through space. The self seeks to find balance and stability through finding meaning in relation to the world and others. The past in the present provides mobility into the future. In the words of J.H. Van den Berg (1972), “the past speaks to us in the present” (p. 79). Between the diverse polarisation of holding and attachment is the divide between the social façade and personal truth that emerges as a split. The split is the division constitutive of being, the inevitable split of the self, also known as the “gap”.

The gap is the space or opening between oneness and separateness, the cleavage of change. Though the gap is avoided in relation to the world, it emerges as the split of the self, the gap between the image and the truth. Awareness of the gap or split within the self is experienced in the threat of annihilation and instability. The gap is also the space between the polarities of positive and negative perceptions, the space between oneness and separateness, sameness and difference that is evaded in our illusory quest for the absolute. Though we seek what is absolute, we pursue the truth. In the quest for truth, in science and academia we refer to “filling the gap” of the unknown, with the substance of the known. We seek to fill the unknownness of the gap with meaning and knowledge. Awareness of the gap threatens with loss and isolation, where an

entry into the unknown gives rise to existential anxiety. In the words of Lacan (1988b, p. 210), “the gap is produced whereby death makes itself felt”. Death is absence in presence.

6.1.7 Absence and Presence

Death is absence in presence, non-being in being, the gap in being. Fear of loss, and fear of entering the unknown in space and time, reflects our fear of death and annihilation. And yet, in the process of letting go, we are exposed to the threat of loss and of the unknown. In the crisis of the conflict, letting go threatens the loss of the self. The challenge is to find a solution and move on. Finding a solution, however, requires returning to the past and resolving what has been; that is, finding resolution. The conflict confronting the self entails either submitting to time and the inevitability of change, or clinging to the familiar, thereby losing the continuity and knownness of the self. To submit is to return to the earlier phase of retrieving one’s “basic trust” (Erikson, 1969) in the process. Perhaps, from an Eriksonian perspective, we may now speak of the challenge as one of Time vs Self. Here, the initial (basic trust) phase of development is returned to.

To let go is to submit to the process of change and to relinquish control. The dialectic of holding on and letting go reveals itself in the dialectic of presence (life) and absence (death), evident, too, in the to-and-fro movements of mobility; the back and forth movement of oneness and separateness; wholeness and fragmentation; “to be or not to be”. Lacan notes that words are a presence in absence, symbolically replacing what is absent. There is a presence in oneness and wholeness, but an absence in separateness. Paradoxically, as the process of separation and individuation begins, the desire for wholeness emerges. The creation of space gives rise to the desire for the ideal state of oneness and stability. Being and non-being, presence and absence, co-exist in the existential ambiguity of our lives.

The existential co-existence of being and non-being arises in the presence-absence experience and is reflected in the fort-da (gone-here) encounter of the cotton-reel game that Freud (1971) recorded of his grandchild. Confronted with the concept of absence and presence, disappearance and return, the young child attempts to resolve the concept of life and death, through the push-pull of the to-and-fro rhythm of the cotton-reel that alternately moves away and towards the self.

Similarly the peek-a-boo or hide-and-seek game of children entails the disappearance and return, the movement away from, yet reunion with, (m)other. The child retains an illusionary attachment to (m)other through attachment to the transitional object and transitional phenomena. According to Winnicott (1951), during transition, the “internalised” object reassures the child regarding the continued existence or presence of (m)other in her absence. With letting go, meaningful memory provides a significant attachment that facilitates the feeling of oneness and a desired sense of continuity. In terms of Bowlby (1979), absence is death to the young infant. Experiencing the absence of a significant attachment is to experience the gap where death makes itself felt. The transitional space encountered in the process of letting go is a break in predictable continuity. Significant memories fill the gap, provide continuity, and remain a source of attachment conducive to a sense of stability. Appearance of the gap is traumatic, as the self moves from anguish to incredible anxiety, as the annihilation of the self becomes a threatening reality. Where truth ruptures through the façade of deception, the self is threatened with loss and fragmentation. The threat of death to the self compels the self to accept newness and submit to change. Willingness to submit to change at that point acknowledges the presence of the personal will and potential for control. The significance of memories fills the gap and retains the desired sense of oneness, wholeness, continuity and stability.

Letting go is paradoxical. It is the dialectic of life and death, being and non-being, oneness and separateness, wholeness and fragmentation. To let go is to prepare for the absence of what is meaningful. Memories in the moment are held on to as replacements are pursued in an attempt to fill the gap of transition by creating new meaning and moving on. While space and absence create the opportunity to separate and be alone, aloneness is only possible in the awareness of the presence of what is meaningful, something to which we remain attached. In the autonomy of our aloneness and sense of oneness, we need to know that someone is “there” for us (Winnicott, 1958). The participants needed to know that they were not alone. Even in its absence we need to continue holding on to what is meaningful. André Green (1986, p.293) writes:

Absence does not mean loss but potential presence. For absence paradoxically may signify either an imaginary presence, or else an unimaginable non-existence. It is absence in this first sense which leads to the capacity to be alone (in the presence of the

object) and to the activity of representation and of creating the imaginary: the transitional object, constructed with the space of illusion... .

In the context of illusion, we are seduced and fascinated by the image of our façade, and specifically hold on to the dual relationship with (m)other in our quest for wholeness and stability. We find a mirroring in the other, a repeat of our original omnipotent illusory experience, which we hold on to as a reminder of the fundamental narcissistic relationship with (m)other. In our illusion, we relive our early narcissistic experience and are deceived, as we believe ourselves to be whole. The entrapment of duality that arises in the conflicting polarity of self (thesis) and other (antithesis) requires resolution (synthesis). We need to listen to the echo, the call from the past regarding truth, so that we can acknowledge the third dimension. Rather than cling to the deceptive polarity of what we see mirrored in the world to which we relate, we need to listen. What we listen to needs to be incorporated with what we visually accept to be “true”.

6.1.8 Narcissus and Echo

The power of visual impact is illustrated in Ovid’s Narcissus. The myth tells us of the beautiful youth, Narcissus, who is fixed in adoration of his own image. Echo, the young nymph, who falls in love with Narcissus, can only repeat the ends of his sentences. Echo’s attempts to win the attention of Narcissus are in vain, and while Narcissus ignores her, she wastes away with love. Hidden in the woods, Echo’s voice remains and continues to live. Narcissus, riveted by his image and unable to gain the object of his passion, pines away and dies (Grant, 1994).

In Ovid’s myth, we note Narcissus’s search for maternal love in the desire for oneness found in the reflection of his image in the water. The reflection is analogous to maternal mirroring, essential to self-esteem, personal identity and interpersonal relationships, but deceptive in its conviction of wholeness and totality. Narcissus’s absorption with his own image eventually leads to self-destruction. Narcissus is unable to let go and move beyond the parameters that he has defined for himself. He is unable to move beyond the deception as he ignores the voice of Echo, the voice of truth. Narcissus lures himself into the conflict between duality and entrapment. The entrapment of the self, by the self, is the attachment of the self to the image. Ignoring the call of Echo leads to Narcissus’s self-destruction. To listen to the auditory call of echo is to listen to the truth that can

resolve the entrapment of the conflicting (visual) duality and escape the annihilation of self. Echo is the third dimension of truth conveyed through the word of speech and language. As Jeffrey Berman (1990) expresses it: “The *moi*, or alienated self, escapes its own self-fragmentation only by entering the symbolic world of language” (p.28).

The entrapment of the polarised, conflicting duality is evident in the current findings, reflected, too in the entrapment of which Lacan speaks. From a Lacanian perspective, the entrapment can be described as metaphorical illustration. Focussing on the image and ignoring the voice of Echo, Narcissus, in his desire for wholeness and completeness, is caught in the impasse of the dual relationship. Narcissus is captivated by his own image, deluded by a sense of intactness and stability. This deluded sense of mastery initially attained during Lacan’s mirror phase, with its false promise of wholeness, recurs with the delusion of the façade that is falsely sustaining in the process of letting go. Jeffrey Berman (1990) interprets the entrapment of Narcissus and Echo as contextual to Mahler’s theory in the failure of these two mythical figures to resolve the separation-individuation phase and attain separate identities. I believe, however, that enforcing the separateness of image (Narcissus) and sound (Echo) is to reinforce the entrapment and deception of polarised conflict. The truth lies in their interrelatedness rather than in their separateness. This point of view will, however, be discussed further later under “Speech Language and Meaning”.

Based on surface appearances rather than reality, the perception of wholeness is deceptive, an illusion whereby the other is reflected as being the same as the “self”. The deception that commences with mirroring is further facilitated by identification, where others are recognised as being similar to, or like, the self. Such identification further alienates the self from its personal truth and authenticity. Identification with others is supportive and stabilising to the false self (ego), for it is a reassurance of not being alone or isolated in the experience. However, identification provides resistance to personal growth and change, as the false self (ego) clings to the image of what it believes itself to be. It is the ego that identifies with others and, according to Lacan (1988), “the ego is structured exactly like a symptom...it is only a privileged symptom, the human symptom *par excellence*, the mental illness of man” (p. 16). The ego or false sense of self is responsible for man’s alienation, providing a superficial capacity to move on. The deception of what is believed to be the self is held on to. Research participants in the present study indicated that as they continued conforming to socially expected behaviour, they (falsely) believed

themselves to be coping, yet eventually, in retrospect, became aware of a lack of authenticity. While Lacan warns us of the dangers of the image, Levinas (1979) also appeals to us not to pursue the visual ideal and not to seek totality, as “totalitarian thinking accepts vision rather than language as its model” (p.15). To totalise is to entrap. Truth lies in speech and language rather than in what we see.

Truth, in its meaning, may recede and be hidden but like Echo, it calls, as the voice of the self, to be accepted in the present and find access into the future. The call in the present from the past is the echo of what has preceded, and it cannot be ignored for it is truth. We are not free from our life history, for it contains us and provides us with our sense of continuity and of being. The reality of what is visually perceived can be deceptive. Truth is revealed through the word, in speech and language.

6.1.9 Speech, Language and Meaning

In the desire to bridge the gap of separateness, speech and language help us to retain a sense of unity and oneness with the other, reminiscent of the narcissistic oneness with (m)other. It is through speech and language via verbal communication that the impasse of the narcissistic relationship and deluded oneness is resolved. The word fills the paradoxical space between. The word is given to, yet created by, the child. To let go is to partake in the process of creation. Ironically, while speech and language unite the dual relationship in dialogue, they also separate and differentiate this duality. According to Nachmann (1991), language develops with the emergence of a verbal sense of self. In an attempt to bridge the gap and sense of isolation, personal experience is communicated through the use of speech and language. Speech and language are a way out for the young child, caught in the entrapment of the dual relationship, but, nevertheless, speech and language provide a way of retaining the attachment. Wolman (1997) and Lacan (1988) accept that language helps dissolve the entrapment of the dual relationship. Language liberates and differentiates, yet also unites the young child in the process of separation-individuation. From a Lacanian perspective, the time of gradual loss of oneness is the time of the infant's subjection to the “symbolic order of language”, an indication of future subjectivity. Though liberating, language is omnipotent and we are subject to its power. The power of words and language is evidenced in the psychotherapeutic process.

The power of words can break through the deceptive power of the image. For example, though the image prevails, it is in the relationship with the significant other, it is where words are exchanged, that the truth reveals itself. Such revelation became evident with participants M and J, each of whom, in their relationship with their significant others experienced aggressive outbursts and realised that something was wrong. While they held on to the familiar meaning they knew, they continued to deceive themselves. The reality of their world was challenged, as truth threatened to reveal itself in the close relationship. Similarly, in the process of psychotherapy, it is the value of words that liberate the self from its self-imposed entrapment. Rather than be deceived and entrapped in our Narcissistic duality by what we see, we should heed the call of the echo of words and meaning that we tend to conceal. The echo of the inner voice of truth liberates the self that holds tightly on to the image or social ego. As noted earlier, true meaning evolves in the interrelatedness of language (Echo) and image (Narcissus). Maintaining the separateness of language (Echo) and the image (Narcissus) is to reinforce the deception and entrapment. Most interpretations of Ovid's myth maintain the separateness of Echo and Narcissus and thus retain the deception. The present findings agree with René Major (1980) that true meaning lies in the interrelatedness of Narcissus and Echo, rather than in their separateness. It is revealed that though personal truth is initially contained and concealed, evaded and ignored, with every effort to keep it separate, the separation is false. Echo is the voice of truth. Echo is the voice of the past that calls. In order that we may have access to the future, the call of Echo must be heeded in the present. Like a seed, with time, truth ripens, matures and ruptures as it splits open and bursts through the façade, confronting the self with the demand to meet with change, adopt a different perspective and find new meaning.

Barclay (1993) makes a profound contribution to Lacan's mirror phase by recognising the impact and value of sound on human development. He proposes the inclusion of a "mirror in sound" to the study of human development regarding acoustical phenomena. The echo is a mirror in sound, and the significant impact of sound during development cannot be ignored. In relation to the world and in the process of development, the infant incorporates somatic, visual and acoustical phenomena. However, in the psychology of human development, although sound is integral to our development, its impact appears to have been overlooked. From the outset, our relation to mother's heartbeat or the voices heard in utero, (m)other's lullaby or sounds in preparation of a

feed, and other acoustic phenomena, must, more than likely, retain some sense of meaning. Sounds, including the infant's own productions during development, must bear psychological significance, in terms of a meaningful relation to the world. As the self experiences and hears the sounds of the world, the meaning of sound privately constitutes subjectivity. Language is the mediator between self and world. According to Barclay, "In the normal child the speech sounds of the surround and their relation to the phonetic sounds the child produces are crucial in that meaning is carried by these sounds and is a consequence of their existence" (p.35). With the creation of meaning, babbling ceases, as the infant gradually absorbs and is absorbed into the world of which he is part. Language bridges the divide. In the present study, the verbal descriptions provided by the participants were an attempt to share the experience in a sense of oneness with the researcher. In relation to the world, meaning is primary, as it provides a sense of continuity and a means of attachment. The significance of meaning through language remains profound.

In the process of transition, while objects may be held on to, and perceptions internalised in order for the achievement of a sense of wholeness, acoustical phenomena may also facilitate the transitional process of letting go. In the absence of the significant other, representative meanings (beliefs and values) can provide a replacement. This was evidenced with participant B who had to take the initial step of leaving his country of origin on his own before his wife and child could join him. In the unknown space he encountered, participant B found strength in his values and beliefs as a Christian. He speaks of "walking in the footsteps of Christ", and finds meaning in his religious beliefs. Meanings are held on to and retained for future use. Similarly, meanings continue through generations. Each generation is shaped by contextual influences predominantly controlled by language and cultural practices, where meaning is conveyed and passed on from generation to generation. Meanings held the participants, and through memory, helped retain their sense of continuity. With the creation of new meaning, the capacity to let go was made possible.

Like memories, language fills the gap that we experience in relation to the world. Language unites and bridges the void of separation. As described by Jager (1989):

Language as the domain of metaphor, carries us (*metapéroo*) beyond the abyss created by that separation and rejoins us to the world, to ourselves, to each other. Language is our

re-entering into communion following our acceptance of an exile from the absolute (p.222).

Language provides a sense of oneness and union in relation to the world. In the transitional process of letting go, significant meanings are held on to as represented by objects, values and beliefs. Attachment to meaning provides a sense of continuity, for in the process of mobility, the meaning of what is significant is held on to. Meaning perpetuates stability and facilitates transition. In the process of being and becoming and in the process of individuating, we require a sense of attachment and need to know that we are not alone.

As we enter the unknownness of space and time, meaning helps maintain a sense of continuity and attachment to the world to which we relate. In relating to our world, language is the transitional phenomenon. Through the use of language, we attain recognition and seek union. Through both image and sound, language is the fundamental dual opposition between absence and presence. As Lacan would explicate, it is by using a word that we create something where there is nothing, and make presence of absence. In the process of transition, words as symbols replace what is absent. Language and memories fill the gap of absence, thereby creating meaning, which, in its continuity and presence, holds us and is held onto by us in turn.

6.1.10 The Liberating Triad

In our illusion of wholeness, attachments to items, relationships, language, memories and dreams fill the gap, while the continued pursuit of the duality of the early narcissistic relationship is an entrapment. Lacan (1988) speaks of the impasse of the dual relationship, with the illusion of reciprocity that emerges in relation to the image perceived. However, by submitting to the triadic realm of non-duality and non-reciprocity, a third dimension enters the duality. Where there can be liberation from entrapment, the illusion of the dual relation can be resolved as truth breaks through. In the present study the dual relationship is the self in the conflict of holding on or letting go and the entrapment that ensues. An opposing polarity can only find release through entry into the triadic structure. Freud's Oedipus complex enters the present scene, where "the Oedipus complex is the paradigmatic triangular structure, since the Father is introduced into the dual relation between mother and child as a third term" (Evans, 1996, p.49). Just as the inclusion

of the father liberates the child (Freud), so the inclusion of language liberates the entrapment (Lacan). It is in their dialogue with the significant other that participants M and J became aware of an emerging aggressive self that was not consistent with the self they knew, and their identity was threatened as they feared disintegration. The awareness of the truth exposes the deception and confronts us with our humanity.

The present study reveals that, with time, resolution of the impasse is made possible in the revelation and acknowledgement of truth. Truth is the echo of the past that calls. In order to let go and move on, each of the participants had to acknowledge the truth of their past and face it with new meaning. Truth ripens with time and ruptures through the façade of the false sense of wholeness, confronting the inauthentic self with the truth of authenticity and the reality of change. Just as language liberates the child from the entrapped duality of the symbiotic relationship with the (m)other, so language, in the awareness of truth, liberates the self entrapped in conflict. Participants J and M realised that they could not continue unless they reviewed their past. Continued attempts to find resolution were futile, until eventually, with time, the truth threatened to burst through. In the fear of annihilation, the self submits to change. The threat of annihilation is real. This was evident with all of the participants, who, although initially resistant to change, eventually submit to it. Even participant K who was in the early phase of her letting-go process, looked to the future and became aware of the retirement years and the inevitable distance that would enter her life. Despite her resistance to the increasing distance she was experiencing in relation to her son, she realised that she would have to submit to the omnipotence of time. Participants M and B give a metaphoric expression of their submission to their spatiality and temporality. For M it is “like a bungee-jump”, while for B “It’s like jumping from a plane before the parachute opens”. What had been avoided to protect the self was now confronting and challenging the self directly. Where the self is threatened with loss and fragmentation, change is submitted to, and as a different view is taken on, new meaning is created. The existing sense of (a false) self is sacrificed, and a different perspective adopted, together with new meaning. Beyond the attachment to the façade, a significant sense of continuity is held on to. By letting go and submitting to the inevitability of change through time, a creative process emerges, giving rise to a new sense of self. The self is transformed.

To accept the truth and commit to a decision is to discover new meaning and submit to change. The commitment to change is a submission to the omnipotence of time and creation. As evidence reveals, the participants in the present study considered their decisions to be a turning point in the process of letting go. However, proceeding with a decision and making a commitment (to the future) required resolution of the past. With reference to Van den Berg, Kruger (1988) explicates as follows: “We are not free from our life histories: the conditions for a decision are given by the past, whilst the act itself originates from the future, from the expectance or wish or fear or desire” (p. 66). We carry our history and the story of our lives. In order to facilitate mobility into the future, the significance of the past has to be synthesised with the self in the present. While established meanings from the past hold us, we create and find new meaning in the present, to which we attach ourselves and attempt to move on. As we focus on the future, the past lies with us and influences our commitment to the present. An unresolved past leads to a diffuse perception of the present. In the words of J.H. Van den Berg (1972, p.86): “The past provides the conditions for what is going to happen in life, but the acts of life are rooted in the future”. Submission to change is an end of the old, and beginning of the new. But, letting go is not final. As revealed with those participants (M, B, P and J) who had to submit and relinquish their hold their encounter with death not absolute. It was their sense of continuity that needed to survive and does. It is the sense of continuity of self that seeks to be retained and protected. We cannot speak of closure as finality, for in the future, once again, we may return to the past and rekindle the meaning of our experience and continue with our story. In creating new meaning, we partake in the process of creation.

As the present study reveals, submission is to acknowledge the truth and accept the dominance of time. The power of time is reflected in our language and culture that continues through time, dominates us, and to which we are subordinate. For Lacan “language speaks the subject”, for as humans, we are subject to the mastery of language over us. We define ourselves in the context of the profound influence of language and culture. Though forever changing, in our exchange with the world, language and culture bear the continuity that holds us and to which we hold on. Language and culture is there before us, and there after we have left life as we know it. The power of time and its reflection through language and culture continues.

6.1.11 No light in the gap (black hole).

At the peak of the struggle of letting go, a powerful force is experienced, over which there is no control (hold). The conflicting force is analogous to the early movements during “rapprochement in which the child, precisely because of his clearly perceived state of separateness from mother is prompted to redirect his main attention back to mother...” (Mahler et al., 1975, p.4). Maurice Bouvet’s (1958) “optimal distance” between the self and the object world, may be described as the oscillating position of the self, attained in the balance between the desire for oneness and the quest for selfhood. The protocols of the present study provide descriptions of a conflicting polarity, a repetitive and intense struggle that emerges before the challenge is met and there is a final resolution of letting go. The intensity of the struggle is experienced both as an entrapment in darkness and as a liberation from darkness. Regarding polarity, Sir Isaac Newton’s law of inertia tells us of the powerful force of gravity that pulls at a distance and is understood as the force whereby the moon, in its orbit, moves away from (push), yet towards (pull) the earth. At a distance, planets move away from, yet towards, the sun. The pull, in the desire for union with the significant other, is almost gravitational, and counterbalanced by the quest for a sense of self away from the significant other. Newton found the law of gravity to be universal (Sagan, 1981).

Let us consider the universality of Newton’s law of gravity as it is analogous to man. As humans, we move away from (push), and towards (pull) each other, attaining an optimal distance or balance between. The powerful force of circularity experienced in the push-pull process in the struggle of letting go tends to evoke the cosmic process of which we are a part. Though all beings cling to earth, there is a gravitational pull towards the light of the sun. The present study reveals the metaphorical significance of light as evidenced in the desire to move away from darkness. Light is perceived in the quest for knowledge and freedom. Though the self may be buried in, or attached to, the negativity of darkness, the desire to pursue the light continues. Despite the familiarity that an attachment to darkness provides, the light is perceived as positive. As light begins to enter the darkness, there is a sense of balance and stability. In the presence of light, new meaning emerges as something different is related to. Levinas (1979) explicates the presence of light as follows: “We are in the light inasmuch as we encounter the thing in nothingness. The light makes the thing appear by driving out the shadows: it empties space”

(p.189). In the presence of the light and in the meaningful perception of what appears, the gap of darkness seems to disappear. But, in the process of letting go, due to the confrontation with change and implications of difference, the journey is slow, with hesitant steps forward. Participant M knows that she must face “the light” but is afraid to do so and, although she seeks to sit down and think about it, she also avoids doing so. The paradox and ambiguity of the process of letting go continued indefinitely until the decision to accept the process and commit to change. Although the approach is ambivalent, the desire to attain the positive aspects increases and in the presence of the light, there is the conviction of being on the correct route. A positive focus on the future is helpful. In submitting to change, trust facilitates the process. As evidenced with participants M and B, successful completion of letting go gives rise to a new sense of self, with feelings of empowerment and enrichment. Having successfully met with the challenge through the winding change, and having retained a sense of continuity, is empowering to the self. Participant M plans to carry what she has gained with her throughout her life. Completion of the process is euphoric. Creation starts with a Big Bang.

6.1.12 Creation

New life is enabled by the elusive death of what has preceded, and there is a submission of the self to the power of time and change. With the threat of loss and fragmentation and the need to preserve the self, there is a willingness to let go and submit to the inevitability of change, thereby partaking in the process of life and creation. In the process there is an awareness that to constantly cling and hold on threatens with death and destruction. To submit and let go is to be part of the creative process. In the process of growth and change, entrapment and frustration are escalating forces in the power of creation. With the submission to time (and space), new meaning is created, and the successful resolution of the conflict gives rise to a sense of empowerment. Such creation and sense of empowerment is reminiscent of Winnicott’s (1963a) description of the “experience of omnipotence” in his theory of the infant “creating” rather than the finding, the object. As the self is defined and redefined, it creates and recreates. Decisions are made in an attempt to accept change, but also to gain control.

As revealed in the awareness of truth, the decision to let go is the conscious turning point of the process and the intensity of the desperate holding is relieved by the breakthrough of a new

perspective. Through reflection, new meaning arises, where, in the words of Merleau-Ponty (1962), we find “a truly creative act of a changed structure of consciousness”. In living of our lives and in the continuity of our being, we hold on, become attached and let go, as we evolve in the process development of our growth and partake in creation. In the passage through time, as we continue to grow in the developmental process, we submit to the power of change. As we partake in process of creation, growth and development continue. Life is not a predetermined script that we live out or enter, but a continuous, evolutionary path of creation that we live through, and which lives through us in our being and becoming as we continue to hold on and to let go.

George Ellis (2001) relates creation to the meaning of kenosis. Understanding creation requires an understanding of the meaning of kenosis. From a kenotic and theological perspective, John Polkinghorne (2001) tells us that: “God shares the unfolding course of creation with creatures, who have their divinely allowed, but not divinely dictated, roles to play in its fruitful becoming” (p.94). Life is not lived through predetermined structures. Kenosis is a letting go, a submission that accompanies a willingness to yield in a creative and positive manner that is in harmony with the nature of God. Kenosis is a readiness to let go of the self in its self-centredness (egoism) with a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of others. Kenosis is creative in meaning, and, though connotations may be similar, kenosis is not altruism. With kenosis, caring and giving emerge in relation to the nature of God. The experience of kenosis is evidenced in participant M’s desire to “pour love into life” (M 53), and in participant B’s willingness to serve others (B 25) and relieve their pain. A different aspect of kenosis is, perhaps, reflected in the willingness of all the participants during the crisis point of their struggle, to consider the needs of others, rather than thinking of themselves. In letting go, one relinquishes holding on, which, though risky, can be rewarding. In the words of Robert Bellah:

If one gives up clinging to what is irretrievably gone, then the nothing which is left is not barren but enormously fruitful. Everything that one has lost comes flooding back out of the darkness, and one’s relation to it is new – free and unclinging. But the richness of the nothing contains far more, it is all possible it is the spring of freedom (Ellis, 2001,p.113).

In the spirit of kenosis, “ubuntu”, a Xhosa-Zulu word used in South Africa, appears to reflect the meaning of letting go. The word is expressed as humanness, where being human lies in recognising the dignity and humanity of others. Ubuntu is a letting go of self-centredness. Throughout South Africa, a number of group leaders and managers across the earlier racial divide have made use of the concept in an effort to resolve the racial oppression of the past and enter the future together (*The Economist*, 1995).

Caring for the other, or considering the needs of the other above the self, is a constituent of letting go. In the process of letting go, participants M, B, P and K keenly desired to retain the attachment to the significant other, while participant J recognised that a failure to acknowledge such an attachment facilitated the emergence of new problems. In the process of letting go, the study reveals a general desire to retain the attachment to the significant other. All participants in the study paused to reflect whether their decision to let go was selfish, and each defended against it being so. There was a concern for what their decision to let go would mean to the significant other. To Heidegger (Sallis, 1993), all aspects of love are grounded in care (*Sorge*), while care also designates the existential-ontological structure of Being (*Dasein*). What Heidegger refers to as care, Paul Tillich (1952) recognises as concern. Care or concern for the significant other was evidenced in the findings of the current study and became primary in the process of letting go. Through care and concern we retain a connectedness to others. Care connects the self to others, and is the core of the relationships that constitute man in his humanity.

Upon receiving the initial care from the (m)other and significant others, we come to care for others; we become concerned about others and retain our connectedness as humans. Though we define our separateness, care is the invisible fibre that weaves us together in our relatedness. Cultural practices define the meaning and nature of this care, and the degree of interpersonal space between its members. From one generation to the other, customs and practices of a culture continue creatively, repeated cyclically through time. Practices of the past which are lived in the present, and conveyed to future generations are considered as constants, and also continue to change. In culture, life is lived and shared in a sense of oneness and mutuality with others. Having been through the transition of change and having arrived in their new world, participants P and B desired to belong to that world and return to a sense of oneness with their environment. By personalising the new so that it became familiar, they created and found new meaning in their

world together, but with a sense of continuity of self. As they seek, they desire to be acknowledged and accepted by others.

Winnicott (1986) considers the shared distance between the self and the (m)other as the area of creativity, the transitional area where “cultural experience starts as play, and leads on to the whole of man’s inheritance, including the arts, the myths of history, the slow march of philosophical thought and the mysteries of mathematics, and of group management and of religion” (p.36). To live creatively is to use what is available in the potential space, the space-time area of oneness between (m)other and child (or adult) where there is no separation; a place where we can realise our related-separateness. Our lives include personal and interpersonal worlds, the world of cultural experience – a world of shared reality. Cultural experience initially created in the intermediate or potential space between the self and (m)other continues in the space beyond the defined parameters of self. The meaning attributed to space and distance varies in significance from culture to culture.

The studies of Guisinger & Blatt (1994) and Kagitçibasi (1996) reveal that Western industrialised cultures tend to place emphasis on individualism that is self-contained, whereas non-Western cultures recognise a more sociocentric ideal. The present study reveals that in the transitional process of letting go, the self places the needs of the significant other above the needs of the self. There is value attached to the relatedness with the significant other. While attachments and relationships are held on to, absolute separation is defended against. The attachment is retained through caring. Caring bridges the gap of the interpersonal divide.

6.1.13 The gap in Being and being in the gap.

The process of letting go includes the experience of spatiality, connoting the fear of loss and entry into the unknown. Awareness of the initial reality of change is evaded, and with the emerging split, a façade evolves in an attempt to protect and conceal personal truth. With the continued denial of the increasing space in relation to the world, deception protects the self. Gradually, however, though the gap is avoided in relation to the world, the gap emerges in the experience of difference regarding the conflicting polarity of the decision. With time, the self

realises that the gap initially avoided in relation to the world continues to threaten, and arises in the experience of conflict in relation to the self.

The push-pull force that exists in the microcosmic whirlpool of our psyches, exists, too, in the macrocosmos of the universe with its falling planets. Whether a planet on its course, a pirouetting ice skater, or a self in its journey through life, we all participate in the moving fabric of time and in the spiral mobility in space. In the words of Carl Sagan: “We are, in the most profound sense, children of the Cosmos” (1981,p.242). A proverb of ancient China declares this differently with the belief that “sex is the human counterpart of the cosmic process”. In his prolific work on Love and Will, Rollo May (1972) makes reference to the polar rhythm of sexual intercourse and its powerful enactment of relatedness, approach, entrance, union, partial separateness and then re-union again. May writes: “In the rhythm of participation in a union in a dual being and the eventual separation into individual autonomy are contained the two necessary poles of human existence itself, shown in fullness during sexual intercourse” (p.113). In sexual intercourse we find the rhythmic movement of union and separateness; of oneness and distance; of separating and becoming one; the moment of creation.

In being “apart”, we move away from, and yet towards, wholeness. We move from being *a part* of, to being *apart* from, wholeness. In the cosmic process, we are a part of the whole, yet the whole is part of us; we are part of the universe, yet the universe is a part of us. We are beings in the gap, with a gap in our being. In being, we are not absolute but open-ended. We contain, yet are contained and partake in the infinite that is part of us. Paradox lies in the word “apart”, which changes in meaning with separation of the prefix “a”. The resulting terms are dialectical as “apart” in its wholeness, denotes separateness, while “a part”, in its separateness, means wholeness. We are part of the wholeness and not separate to our world or universe. In separating, we individuate, yet incorporate part of the whole. The gap initially avoided in relation to the world is eventually experienced in relation to the self. This became evident with all the participants who sought to avoid confronting the increasing space of change. For example, participant K resisted the space created by her adolescent son, participant P resisted the move, and J resisted the reality of the break in the relationship with his ex-fiancée. Although they avoid the gap created, they are eventually confronted by the gap and have to submit to change. Though we strive and continue to fill the gap, the gap will always be present – the space between science

and religion, life and existence, the brain and the mind. The gap is a part of us, and not apart from us. We are in the gap and the gap is within us. Meaningless space is omnipresent as we continue to fill the gap with meaning.

6.1.14 Individuation

Individuation is the psychological developmental process of *acknowledging* separateness (Jung, 1953; Mahler, 1975). Individuation is the sense of being separate, and yet is only achieved in the awareness of the presence of a significant other. Individuation is not a totality. The study reveals that while the self moves away from the significant other, the attachment is retained in memory, and in moving away, there is a desire to rekindle the interpersonal relationship.

Knowledge of the self arises with the ego, but the self is more than what is known in awareness, and the relation between the ego and self cannot be scientifically defined. The observer is the observed. Though being is centred in the self, the self is more than the ego, more than the image that it believes itself to be. Both Lacan (in Evans, 1996) and Jung (1953) recognise our containment and enmeshment in an image that is not who we truly are, for we are more than we think we are. Truth is not absolute, but relational (Kierkegaard). Kierkegaard reveals the subjective world, yet retains an ability to accurately observe. According to the philosopher, as cited in May (1958, p.25):

When the question of the truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship; if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth, even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true.

Our capacity to let go and objectively view the truth of who we are is limited. Jung recognises our human limitation in elucidating the sense or relation between the ego and the self. Though acknowledging the split in the awareness of self, Lacan attempts to explicate the reality of this relationship, and the misperceptions that occur during the mirror phase of development. As humans, we are limited in fully knowing who we are for we can never know ourselves completely. We remain divided by the split. Knowledge of the self can never be absolute, for our

“Being is partly ‘in darkness’ and hidden from view” (Halling & Nill, 1995, p.9). In holding on and letting go, our identity is never absolute, but continuously in a process of change. Letting go is a continuous process that gradually extends over time. We are continuously in the process of letting go. We are beings in becoming. As contextuality challenges the self, the initial resolution of conflict regarding separation and separateness recedes sufficiently to be reactivated later in life. In our journey through life, separation-individuation is a process that continues to occur and re-occur. In the words of Aldo Carotenuto (1985), “Individuation is a path, not a goal. The process goes on indefinitely...” (p.79). Individuation is never complete, never absolute, never final.

Successfully meeting with the challenge of change and letting go pertains to defining the self in the process. Where the challenge of resolving the arising conflict is successfully met, feelings of enrichment, fulfilment and empowerment emerge. With the extended horizons, there is an awareness of a widening of the earlier world once known. New meaning unfolds, with a sense of having gained from the experience, often with the belief of having encountered life and its meaning. The new meaning attained permeates through the various aspects of self in relation to the world. Such empowerment is reminiscent of the Narcissistic peak that Mahler (1975) describes as arising with the onset of the practising period. It is the time of the toddler’s success in his ability to walk on his own and in his newly attained vertical position. With the increasing sense of its competence and sense of autonomy, the young child seems to be “intoxicated with his own faculties and with the greatness of his own world” (p.71). Both the toddler (Mahler, 1975) and participants (M, B, J, and P of the present study), literally and figuratively discover a new perspective and vision of the world which excites them. Resolution of the process takes time and in achieving this, a renewed sense of self arises as the self is transformed in the process.

The separation-individuation process of early childhood that Mahler (1975) and her colleagues describe, is the core of “early intrapsychic achievement of a sense of separateness” that continues through life. However, though there is a need to individuate, there is a desire not to be separate, as a sense of related-separateness emerges. Presently, the focus on separation and autonomy is the dominant paradigm for developmental psychology. A number of writers and theorists (Bowlby, 1997; Fairbairn, 1994; Josselson, 1992; Kohut, 1971; Sullivan, 1953; and Winnicott, 1992) recognise the significance of relatedness, and yet this aspect of human development has

not been adequately addressed. With individuation, letting go is paradoxical, for while it entails the process of separateness, it also includes the meaning of relatedness. Letting go has a relational base. The apparently antithetical views of Daniel Stern (1985) and Mahler (1975) regarding early infancy and childhood development need not remain polarised, and can be considered as part of the same continuum of a related-separateness. Stern speaks of the human need for relatedness rather than of the desire for separation. Similarly, the present study reveals that autonomy is not absolute. The capacity to separate requires an awareness of the presence of another, along with the knowledge that one is not alone. In the process of letting go, the participants revealed the need to retain the attachment with the significant other. Before individuating, there needed to be an awareness that someone was there for them. This concurs with Winnicott's (1958) description, where "the basis of the capacity to be alone is the experience of being alone in the presence of someone" (p.36). The capacity for "separateness" is made possible where the link or attachment with the significant other is retained. According to Settlege (1990): "Through internalisation and identification, the regulatory and adaptive functions and the governing values of the developmental partner become part of one's own structure" (p. 31). Affirmed in the present study is that the incorporated sense of the other, and a retained sense of an attachment to the significant other, make separation possible. Autonomy does not appear to exclude relatedness, as separation assumes the presence of relatedness. Besides, as we separate and let go, we move towards another. Separateness is dialectical to relatedness. Though Mahler has been criticised for her view of autonomy as absolute, her theory does acknowledge the (m)other's presence in the process of separation-individuation. Furthermore, though Mahler recognises the significance of separation in the context of the fear of fusion, she also makes pertinent reference in her theory to the fear of isolation and the young child's desire to retain a connectedness in the process of separation. Indeed, to individuate appears to be to retain the "optimal distance" (Bouvet, 1958) or balance between the movement away from (push), yet movement towards (pull), the significant other. As we seek to retain connectedness, the *absolute* dependence of infancy becomes a *relative* dependency in later life. We are a part of, yet apart from, others. To individuate is to realise the self and "resolve" the ambiguity and paradox of letting go.

Jung (1953) describes individuation as "becoming a single homogenous being", a "coming to selfhood" and a "self-realisation" (p.171). Though idiosyncrasies particular to the self are

differentiated, individuation is also a complete fulfilment of the collective qualities of being human, where universal qualities are uniquely combined. Though each individual pursues individuation and difference, seeking to be acknowledged as a unique and separate human being, he also desires sameness and oneness, to remain part of the whole. Paradoxically, individuality is contextually defined in relation to its environment. In the words of Jung (1953), individuality is “the full flowering not only of the single individual, but of the group, in which each adds his portion to the whole” (p.238). We are part of the whole. We are not separate from the world, and cannot view the world as objective or separate to us. When relating to the world, we are part of the equation, for man can never be separated from that which he perceives; he can never be separate to that which he observes. The cancer of Western thought of which Ludwig Binswanger (1963) speaks, is the subject-object duality that leads to entrapment and deception. Though tentatively useful, we have to let go of the deceptive reality to which we attached ourselves. We need to hold on and we need to let go: we require consistency and change through a sense of continuity that appears to be retained through memory.

6.1.15 Truth and Reality

The study reveals a distinction between truth and reality. What the participants accepted as reality was not necessarily the truth. In an attempt to maintain stability, the known reality continues to be held on to. With time, however, truth reveals itself, and the awareness of truth provides the opportunity for resolution and further growth. For example, as participant M returned to work and her familiar routine, she believed that she was fine. Only later, in the relationship with the significant other, did she become aware of the truth and recognise the need for change. Similarly, participant J was convinced that the absence of the relationship from the real world meant that it no longer existed, but later, in retrospect, he became aware of the deception and realised the truth. He expressed the following thought: “...a day in your life comes that you realise that you have been deceiving yourself...not been true to yourself... . You had seen the practical things for what you had hoped they were and then one day you realise that they are not...”. (J49). For continued stability, perceptions are tinted according to the belief system. The perceived reality can be deceptive.

In the world, we deceptively accept that “seeing is believing”, a typical expression used regarding the objectification of our world. The belief is that the less involved we are in a given situation, the more clearly we are able to observe the truth. However, we are not able to be separate from the world in which we live, and to which relate. Giorgi (1970) proposes an *accurate*, rather than an objective description of phenomena, a point particularly true for psychology as a human science. The ability to see the truth depends on a willingness to listen and to be receptive to the message (John 3:3). In the depth of her darkness and despair, it is only when Participant M decides to change and be open and receptive, that she becomes aware of the truth and finds fresh meaning attached to her “baby”.

Letting go of preconceived ideas and being receptive to the message makes it possible for truth to reveal itself. Listening to the voice of truth that the self contains and conceals gradually unveils the truth. To listen to the Echo is to hear to the sound of the past in the present. The present study reveals that all participants had to return to the past and accept their history as it pertained to the present before they could move on. Finding resolution in the process of letting go depends on the revelation of truth, and not on a superficial attachment to the perceived reality. This was the case with participant J who realises, during his re-attempt to find a solution that, despite his moving on by becoming a husband and parent, he had not found the solution. In his words, he had merely ‘walked’ through the confusion of the struggle, rather than ‘worked’ through the confusion (J53). He had not met the challenge. Resolution requires an active participation and intentionality of personal will. Resolution of the past provides clarity in the present and accessibility to the future. In moving towards the future, we return to the past, and, through re-resolution and the ontological spin, mobility is facilitated. We let go of the conflicting polarity by submitting to the third dimension (time, language, culture) and acknowledging the past, together with its truth. The mobility of life is not merely remaining attached to the image that we believe ourselves to be, but integrating our past with the present and moving into the future. To let go effectively, we have to resolve the deceptive reality of the lived duality in space, and acknowledge the voice of truth in time. An entrapped duality may also arise in the relation of the present to the future, where the significance of the past is ignored. Freedom requires a triadic structure. Truth is freedom (Heidegger, 1962). In becoming aware of the truth, a decision is made that commits the self to an attempt to determine its destiny.

Like Narcissus in the myth, we cannot remain entrapped in the reflected duality of the deceptive image we perceive. We cannot afford to remain alienated and oblivious to the call of Echo, for to do so threatens to destroy the self. The past that holds the truth is revealed in the present. Echo has a tendency for repetition. Returning to the past can be repetitive until the light is perceived and resolution attained. As revealed in the deceptive entrapment of duality, it is the voice of truth that repeats itself and eventually bursts through and ruptures the façade of make-believe, challenging the experienced reality. It is the echo, the voice of the past, the voice of truth, that makes the breakthrough possible. Remaining in the present, while returning to the past with a focus on the future, is rotational, and provides a sense of continuity in the mobility forward. Willingness to sacrifice the existing sense of self and submit to the process of change by adopting a different perspective resolves the crisis and challenge of letting go, creating the spin that leads to change. Our growth and development is not linear.

6.2 Implications of Letting go

In its transition through time and in the context of change, letting go is applicable to diverse aspects of life. To let go is to submit to the dominance of time and space. Letting go is a transitional process that occurs through time and which is not always visibly evident. In its gradual shifts towards change, the process can be deceptive. Spatiality and temporality are not visible.

The mobility of letting go must be viewed from the perspective of Heidegger's (1962) temporality, where letting go is not linear, but constitutive of being, where the 'now' continues in transition through time. As diverse aspects of letting go come to the fore, the experience is more than its temporality implies, and derives its meaning from the contextual situation in which it occurs. During the pilot study, difficulty in containing the phenomenon became evident, for letting go has associative ramifications. One letting-go experience can be linked to another. The meaning of letting go is diverse, but is essentially one of relinquishing control and submitting to the power and omnipotence of time. With letting go, diverse and numerous life situations arise, contextual to the experience. The experience is a transitional process through time and is reflective of the contextual situation in which it occurs. Different contexts give rise to different situations of letting go. With time, as the truth reveals itself, control is relinquished. Broadly,

however, from a psychological perspective, we may consider the following as possible situated examples of letting go: transpersonal (e.g. spirituality); development (e.g. aging); death (loss); identity (e.g. disability); relationships (e.g. divorce); dying (terminal illness); psychotherapy (termination). Furthermore, the microcosmic experience of letting go in its lived context can also arise in the macrocosmic perspective of a group in the evolution of change. With the emergence of political change, the process of letting go becomes evident in the history of a country that was able to relinquish apartheid, find resolution and partake in the process of creation with the birth of a new South Africa.

6.2.1 South Africa

In South Africa, overcoming the past divide of the apartheid era and moving into the transition from authoritarian rule to the rule of democracy was a process of letting go. The conflicting polarities of control (holding on) and freedom (letting go) during the apartheid years had given rise to tension and underlying turmoil. Increasing efforts to intensify the control through authoritarian rule had led to rebellious outbursts (e.g. the Soweto uprising of 1976) that further polarised the conflict and confronted the country with the need for change. Following the release of Nelson Mandela and negotiations for a new constitution, polarities continued as the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP) engaged in a doubtful dual role, where both jointly made the effort to move from one impasse to another, with a common positive focus on the future. The introduction of a third dimension to the polarised crisis was in the form of the negotiations that facilitated the process of transition. With the revelation of truth, the Government of National Unity set up the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in a powerful attempt to resolve the past. The third dimension of negotiation (language) facilitated the transition. At the TRC, there were efforts to return to the past and reconcile the polarised conflicts by finding resolutions with which to move forward. From the knowledge and insight gained through the discussions, decisions were made to gain access to a defined future and to facilitate mobility. On 10 May 1994, referring to the original conflicting polarity (gap) and its resolution through time, the newly elected president Nelson Mandela proclaimed: “The time for healing the wounds has come. The moment to bridge the closeness that divides us has come – the time to build is upon us” (Saunders, 1995, p.518). The time to partake in the process of creation had arrived. This was the birth of a new South Africa.

The relationship to our world provides contextual meaning to the experience of letting go. Within its context, the concept of letting go continues to be paradoxical in meaning. Letting go is a relinquishment of the need for control which has contradictory implications. This, Erik Erikson (1969) succinctly points out when he states that: “To let go...can turn into an inimical letting loose of destructive forces, or it can be a relaxed ‘to let pass’ and ‘to let be’ ” (p.243). While the dialectic of holding on and letting go is fundamental, letting go is neither holding on nor retaining control, but a submission to the process of life’s mobility, as we enter the unknownness of space and time and partake in the creative process. Letting go, as resolution, becomes evident in various domains of life, two of which are bereavement and forgiveness.

6.2.2 Bereavement

Attempts of the bereaved to ‘let go’ of the loved one and find resolution are evident in the process of grief and bereavement, where repetitive weeping and stories of past memories are told and retold. Separation, to Mahler (1975), means the process of individuation, while for Bowlby (1979) the concept of separation means loss. The dialectics of the term to “let go” are evident in the paradox of its meaning. Developmentally, while letting go can mean the gaining of individuation (in the presence of the (m)other), letting go can also mean loss (in the absence of the (m)other). The meaning of letting go is reflected in the contextual environment in which it occurs.

Regarding bereavement, Miller and Omarzu (1998) reveal that the manner in which loss is dealt with can provide the opportunity for gain. Though loss can lead to gain, the experience of loss can also be devastating, as loss can alter one’s sense of self and identity (Harvey, 1998).

However, rather than generalise the process of bereavement, it has to be accepted as embedded in cultural practices or the context in which it arises. Practices fully acceptable in one cultural milieu may be deemed pathological or maladjusted in another. The presence or absence of space varies in different cultures. Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen and Stroebe (1996) refer to the work of Sanders (1989) who believes that “letting go” of the attachment to the loved one is necessary for the successful resolution of grief, where the recovery from bereavement is viewed as a letting go of the link to the loved one. From a different perspective, Shinto and Buddhist religions believe

that a holding on should continue, and that contact with the deceased should be maintained. Though letting go is not absolute, its meaning is reflective of the contextual environment in which it emerges. Different contextual beliefs provide different meaning to the experience. Whether in bereavement or in other aspects of resolution, rather than generalise what letting go means universally, we need to listen to the reality and values echoed in the subculture of its practice and reflected by the one who describes the experience. The subculture provides a sustaining and holding environment with meanings attached to the interrelated concepts of holding on and letting go.

In their work with bereaved adults and children, Klass, Silverman and Nickman (1996) reveal the need to maintain a connection to the deceased and to continue the relationship. The researchers found that a relationship with the deceased would continue through memories, feeling and actions. Part of the resolution of bereaved parents was an intense interaction with the deceased child. Even with the separation of death, there is a quest for oneness and union. The paradoxical process of letting go in the desire for oneness, along with the continual demand for separation, continues. This is reflected in a poem one mother wrote:

Will you forgive me if I go on?
If you can't make this earthly journey through with me,
Will you then come along in my heart and wish me well (p..xvii).

6.2.3 Forgiveness

As revealed, letting go is finding resolution through the process of change. In finding resolution, time and space enter the duality of the existing conflict. Letting go of anger and hate and accepting its transformation to love and forgiveness is to find resolution. In her study of survivors of extreme trauma, Baures (1996) found that with the letting go of bitterness and hate and the negative meanings attached to the original traumatic experience, self-compassion replaced self-blame, and, as meanings were transformed, survivors were given strength and hope. Letting go of the need to judge the self and others equals forgiveness. As revealed in the present study, to let go is to transform negative perceptions into positive valuations and to recover. Polarised dualities are dialectical and part of the same continuum. They should be recognised as

such. The present study reveals that, when participant M let go of anger and bitterness in her relationship with God, she was able to see the light, find new meaning and move on. In a separate moment, when participant M let go of the negative (painful) meaningful attachment she felt obliged to carry, she found positive meaning and was able to move on. Though M had found new meaning, she retained her attachment to her unborn baby. While attachment to negativity is self-destructive, letting go and accepting the positive brings relief. To let go is to resolve the past, meet with the present and find mobility. Letting go is fundamental to the process of psychotherapy.

6.2.4 Psychotherapy

The process of letting go and forward mobility evidenced in the findings of the present study is analogous to the process of resolution evident in the process of psychotherapy concerning the transformation of self. Psychotherapy facilitates the process of letting go, and serves as liberator to the entrapped patient. Crisis resolution is part of the therapeutic relationship that takes place in the context of duality between patient and therapist. In the therapeutic dialogue, the patient is initially confronted with self-deceptions, entrapment and the debilitating paralysis of self-focus and self-absorption. Donald Moss (1989) acknowledges the entrapment and sense of stuckness that is brought to, and re-experienced in experientially oriented psychotherapy. He writes: “Experientially oriented psychotherapy ...moves to facilitate the patient’s search for a path toward the next developmental level and seeks to open the individual awareness, for the fullness of time” (p.202). Though the fullness of time belongs to the individual, in the deceptive duality of existence the impasse of entrapment is encountered. To let go is to return to the past, retrieve personal history, dissolve the entrapment, find a new solution (re-solution), successfully meet with the present, face the future and move on. The rotation of moving backwards and forwards, to-and-fro is the resolution and the mobility of letting go.

In the relationship with the therapist, the patient initially retrieves a sense of oneness and wholeness but, as with letting go, the dual relationship is an illusion of completeness. With the bipolar conflict of the self, the patient oscillates between the two poles of self and other (therapist) in the therapeutic relationship. The oscillating (push-pull) dialogue makes it possible for the patient to let go and move on by acknowledging his-story and revealing his truth.

Through discourse, the therapist creates the opportunity for patients to return to their past and listen to the message or echo of the hidden voice of his truth. Echo is the past made present, as the concealed truth is echoed in the present, revealed and reintegrated to provide the capacity for mobility forward. In the process of psychotherapy, the therapist keeps with the deceptive duality where “the echo of his discourse is symmetrical to the specularity of the image” (Lacan, 1988a, p.284). The dyad (and deception) continues until the patient is able to replace the original meaning held on to (in the duality) with the new meaning created (by being receptive to the truth). Evidenced in the findings is that personal truth is revealed in time and is the third dimension that liberates the entrapment of duality and plays a significant part in finding resolution and letting go. Resolution is not derived in the duality of the two poles of the relationship, for both patient and therapist are subject to the power of time and creation, reflected in their use of language and the cultural context to which they belong. Lacan recognises the dominance of language in psychotherapy and the subjection of both patient and therapist to that power. In psychotherapy, resolution emerges in the synthesis of self (thesis), in relation to the other (antithesis), in the context of truth. With our submission to the concept of the continuity of time and creation, language enters the therapeutic relationship and, as third dimension, liberates the entrapped duality of the therapeutic relationship. The concept of temporality evidenced in the findings of the present study concurs with J.H. Van den Berg’s (1972) description that “the present is an invitation from out of the future to gain mastery of bygone times” (pp.91/92). Through the echo of our truth, the past speaks to us in the present. This process is pertinently evidenced in the process of psychotherapy. Clarity in the present facilitates forward mobility, but is only possible with the resolution of the impasse of the past. As revealed, a well-ordered past provides accessibility to the future.

In the process of change, though a positive focus on the future facilitates mobility, attachment to the memories and meanings of the past facilitates the retention of a sense of continuity in the present, with which to move forward. The capacity to return to the past and act retrospectively yet also project into the future, reflects the fluidity of temporality. We are constantly in the process of change and need to be open to it: “Increasing the capacity to change and be more open to life must be the central therapeutic aim” (Lanyado, 1999, p.365). Heidegger’s temporality and the concept of spiral development is inextricable from the present study. Human development through time is neither absolute nor complete, but open-ended.

6.2.5 Transpersonal

To acknowledge openness from an existential-phenomenological perspective is to accept that humanity includes behaviour, cognition, emotions, as well as transcendent experiences. As we move beyond the traditionally defined borders of humanity, we essentially acknowledge that letting go is a submission to the unknownness of space and time and we enter the transpersonal and/or spiritual dimension. To let go and enter the unknown is to enter the mystery of life, of that which is hidden and inexplicable. Mystical experiences are related to the struggle of letting go. Robert Frager (1989) writes: “ One of the great struggles of the mystics is to let go, to be open, empty and receptive in order to plumb the depths of self. Fully experiencing your suffering and pain is an important way of letting go” (p.303). In letting go and entering transpersonal space, religious symbols and related beliefs provide significant meaning.

Transpersonal (fourth force) psychology recognises the ultimate human capacity and potential that is not accommodated by the behaviouristic theory (first force), psychoanalytic theory (second force) or humanistic psychology (third force). Ronald Valle (1989) speaks of a “transhumanistic psychology” (p.260) that has embraced the values of humanistic psychology and has moved beyond the regular boundaries by transcending the limits of the ego-self. In moving beyond the traditionally defined structures of ego-self identity, our understanding of humanity expands. The self is greater than the definition of its ego. As the present study reveals, we are more than we perceive ourselves to be, for what we are aware of can be deceptive. Our perceptions are based on what our senses make possible, and yet we “sense” that we are more than we recognise: “Our true nature cannot be known completely by mind, for the experience of the self is beyond the range and reach of conceptual, dualistic thought” (Wittine, 1989, p.270). While minds perceive, consciousness has gnosis. Consciousness is more than its awareness, more than the mind perceives and more than its intentionality reveals. Consciousness intends and finds its polarity. We are limited in understanding our capacity as humans and our place in the universe. Consciousness has the capacity to let go of the here and now, and transcend the personal moving to a reality beyond the self. To concur with Tageson (1982),

We seek more than knowledge on this transpersonal level. We seek contact as well. We long for a sense of connectedness with all that is, an Absolute to which we can commit ourselves, something or Someone larger than our own ephemeral existence to give meaning to our lives, a meaningful place to be within the entire world of Being itself” (p.46).

Maslow (1968) appeals for a “ Fourth Psychology, transpersonal, transhuman, centred in the cosmos rather than in human needs and interests, going beyond humanness, identity, self-actualisation and the like” (p. iii/iv). Our identity and basic sense of self appears to be greater than the awareness of who we are. Acknowledging a broader perspective of self is to accept the transcendence of self. While intentionality can move beyond the self, human experiences can transform the self. The transformation of intentional awareness can emerge and arise in situations that go beyond awareness of self, which Robert Frager (1989) recognises as including out-of-body experiences, ESP phenomena and peak experiences. Frager refers to the work of Ken Wilber, a major consciousness theorist, who postulates that movement towards the state of cosmic unity is the movement of all evolution and personal development. Wilber’s view of development, however, provides a linear model of growth, a point with which the present study does not concur. All future efforts to research and understand the extent and capacity of our human potential should be approached from a broad and open perspective.

6.2.6 Beyond totality and completeness

To let go is to acknowledge the process of transition, through time and space, with the inevitability of change. Holding on to the familiar is the quest for totality and wholeness that emerges in an effort to deny change and seek the permanence of sameness and constancy. This, ironically, is stagnation and death. Life is mobility and transition. Life is change.

Culture is the “third life” (Winnicott), or that which occupies the space between, the space beyond the self and other. Culture occupies the paradoxical space of our related-separateness for what lies beyond, lies within and between. The self contains, yet is contained in, the paradoxical space of cultural practices which members passionately hold on to and cling to, particularly with the threat of change. In the quest for totality and wholeness, cultural containment replaces the

(m)other's holding, and the shared reality provides a compensatory sense of oneness for its members. Through its closed containment, each ethnic, racial and religious group clings to its practices and beliefs. The polarised opposition of diversities can be a source of intense animosity that threatens stability, similar to the polarised conflict that emerges in the crisis of conflict, with the process of letting go. As evidenced, however, for its resolution to take place, a third dimension must evolve.

Emmanuel Levinas (1979) describes the letting go of existing beliefs as "entering the infinite", where, rather than cling to the familiar or seek to confirm the knownness of preconceived ideas, we need to let go, to be open and receptive to the truth that lies beyond. Maslow's (1968) description of self-actualised individuals also appears to depict the open-endedness of letting go, when he writes:

They do not neglect the unknown, or deny it, or run away from it or try and make believe it is really known, nor do they organize, dichotomize, or rubricize it prematurely. They do not cling to the familiar, nor is their quest for truth a catastrophic need for certainty, safety, definiteness and order... (pp.138/139)

Escaping the totalising scheme of things, however, is difficult, for our theories, language, cultural beliefs and texts, all direct us to the centralising force of universality, where everything is contained in a system of totality. With an intentionality of completeness, we are destined to repeat and return to the familiar. Emmanuel Levinas (1979) implores us to move beyond the safety of the familiar and to transcend our human desire for the rapport of belonging and possessions. We need to move beyond the sense of oneness we seek and the power which it provides for us. While our desire for wholeness is significant, in our journey through time we need to let go and transcend our desire for completion; we need to let go of the confines of totality, by directing our intentionality towards moving beyond the limitations of our desire. Though we desire to feel whole, we must accept our mortality and open-endedness, and, in our vision, allow for what is infinite to break through. Indeed, if we are to attain new insights, we must not cling to the familiar and wish to confirm our beliefs, but be willing to let go. Our intentionality must be to move beyond the familiarity of our confines. In pursuit of truth we seek to bring order to chaos, and connect the known with the unknown, where knowledge and

understanding can unfold. Though we need to hold on to what we know, and need to be held by what has preceded it, we must also be able let go; let go of our need to control and be willing to submit to, and become part of, the creative process. In moving forward, we retain a sense of continuity, for, in the process we, contain (hold), yet are contained (held). We are apart from, and yet, a part of, the world. We hold and yet let go. Our existence is an ontological ambiguity (Merleau-Ponty). We are neither pure nature nor pure psyche. We are both one and the other. As we move into the infinite, the infinite moves through us. In the words of Merleau-Ponty (1962): “The world is not what I think, but what I live through, I am open to the world...” (preface:xvi/xvii). With the continuity of a connectedness through time and the attachment through space, we are able to let go. However, before entering the future, we return to the past and submit to the force and power of the process. We cannot remain trapped and alienated, for the revelation of truth provides the ontological turn and subsequent leap forward. To let go is not to hold on by seeking reciprocity, but to submit to the unknown emptiness of time and space by entering the process of creation.

In our attempt to master theory, we tend to seek a cohesive whole that interlinks, only to find that such cohesion is deceptive and misleading. Both Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Lacan attribute power to incompleteness – to the infinite and to language respectively. Power is continuity, and the endlessness of time and creation is reflected through our language and culture. The power of completeness is a deluded wholeness, for power is paradoxically defined in its incompleteness. Though we pursue completeness, we hold on to our sense of continuity.

The quest for completeness is also not the intention of Maslow’s (1968) self-actualising self. To actualise the self is to continue to meet with the challenges and crises that contextually arise by letting go and moving beyond the self, rather than remaining absorbed with the self. In his description of self-actualised individuals, Maslow appears to illustrate the meaning of letting go and transcending the self. He states: “These same (self- actualising) people, the strongest egos ever described and the most definitely individual, were also precisely the ones who could be most ego-less, self-transcending and problem-centred ” (p.140). Self-actualisation is not to attain completion, but to let go and transcend the personal ego.

The findings of the present study reveal that seeking “closure” or absolute resolution is an illusion, for resolution is never final but only sufficiently adequate to provide the capacity to meet with fresh challenges. What may be considered resolved or “closed” should rather be perceived as an open link in a chain of related events that remain a frame of reference, possibly to be resumed at a later stage. Experiences bear antecedents which live on and are recalled as memories that fill the gap, thereby providing a sense of continuity. Weaving personal history with present experience contributes to the evolving sense of self and is significant to identity. To let go is to return to the past, for a well-ordered past provides clarity in the present and accessibility to the future.

Letting go is a quest for truth and knowledge. As collective man, we seek to understand and know who we are. We seek to realise ourselves in the context of our existence that contains more than we are aware of. Whether in our explorations of the cosmos, or the psyche of ourselves, we seek to let go and move beyond that with which we are familiar and of which we are aware. Though there is a hesitance in entering the unknown, the quest for further exploration calls. Carl Sagan’s (1981) metaphorical description regarding man’s entry into the unknownness of space (and time) and its connection with space travel, rings true. The words appear applicable to man’s existential entry into the void and unknownness of space and time. He writes: “The ocean calls. Some part of our being knows this is from where we came. We long to return” (p.5). We let go and move on. Like Abraham who embarked on his endless journey, we embark on ours, and, like Odysseus, we return to an earlier place, not in the sense of seeking sameness, but in finding constancy and continuity as we refuel and enter into the creative process, exploring the unknownness of what lies ahead. In the journey ahead we need constancy and change. To cite participant B: “ We need to hold on and we need to let go”. The quest for truth continues, while connecting the known with the unknown is never final. Our intentionality makes it possible for us to move into the beyond and break with the confines of totality and the parameters of what has been defined. As we let go, we continue to define and re-define who we are, continuously in the creative process of being and becoming.

6.3 Letting go and Human Development

The focal interest of mainstream developmental psychology has generally been to study and understand the various stages of development as the transitional progress made from the helplessness of infancy to the autonomy of adulthood. The stages broadly recognised as infancy, childhood, adolescence (Freud, 1905) and adulthood (Erikson, 1969) have, more recently, been extended to include the later years with aspects of aging, death and dying (Santrock, 1986; Ross, 1996; Akhtar & Kramer, 1997). Psychoanalytic thinking has come to recognise development as not only initiated by biological factors, but as also including psychological ones. Development is an evolutionary process through life, although the process of individuating and defining the self is not always visibly present. As revealed in the present study, what is visible can be deceptive, for structural change is not always evident.

Although the stage and phase theory provides a helpful invariant framework, it does not address individual differences regarding psychological growth. While stages of development have been identified, the mobility of growth and change, between and within the stages, differs with each individual. In the mobility of the process, the self is challenged to meet with change and move on. The self, in its related-separateness, is continuously defined and redefined. While we continue to unfold in our growth and development, letting go is transitional and temporal, but not chronologically defined. The process of letting go is circular, moving back before moving forward as we deal with change and move on.

Both Erikson (1969; 1971) and Levinson (1978) accept development as evolving through stage-related phases, where the conflict of each phase is a challenge and resolving the crisis of the challenge is a developmental achievement. However, though the findings of this study concur with both these theorists, the present study reveals that crises pertaining to significant situations need not only be phase-related, but may emerge within and between phases as a process of letting go makes this possible. The challenge of development is to find resolution to the arising crisis or conflict. To develop is to meet with the challenge of change and to resolve its crisis, as challenges in the present are met through open-ended links to the past. The crises of letting go are neither phase-related, nor predictable, while finding resolution is a developmental achievement that facilitates growth and mobility and a transformation of self.

Calvin, Settlage, Lozoff, Lozoff, Siberschatz and Simburg, (1988) appear to supplement the stage and phase model of development with the theory of developmental process. What the authors describe as the child's self-regulatory capability appears to be the quest for stability. Regarding the adult, the present study reveals the quest for stability as the pursuit of positive values and meaning. According to Settlage et.al (1988; 1990), the sequence of developmental processes lead to a self-regulatory capacity and may be described in the following sequence: (1) developmental challenge; (2) developmental tension; (3) developmental conflict; (4) resolution of the developmental conflict and (5) change in the self-representation. Regarding the process of letting go and development, the findings of the present study concur with the description of Settlage et al., although the present study accepts the process of letting go as a lived experience that moves through a temporal, rather than a linear perspective. The structural sequence described by Settlage and his colleagues provides a psycho-logical, rather than chrono-logical, value that can be applied to the process of letting go. The "sequence" of letting go may be described as follows: (1) awareness of the challenge of change; (2) holding on to the familiar and evading the new; (3) the struggle of the conflict and sense of loss of control with entrapment; (4) acceptance of a changed sense of self; (5) decisions (initial and subsequent significant decision) in an attempt to gain control; (6) revelation of truth and the submission to change (7) conflict resolution and the change of self-transformation. Letting go is the confrontation with the challenge of change in development.

Settlage (1990) accepts development as a lifelong process, where development is based upon (m)other-child interaction and viewed as occurring potentially in any interpersonal relationship. The adaptive and regulatory functions governing values, internalisation and identifications of the developmental partner become part of the structure of the self. Settlage defines development as "a process of growth, differentiation, and integration that progresses from lower and simpler to higher and more complex forms of organization and function" (p. 351). While the present study agrees with the conceptualisation of development as process, rather than being phase-related, a different definition of development is proposed. Development can be viewed as a continuous process of letting go that is repeated in the challenge to meet with change through time. Though letting go includes the implications of separation-individuation, it emerges in the context of

related-separateness. While individuation can alienate us from ourselves and others, we rekindle what we have lost in our relationship to others.

Carl Jung (1972) accepts individuation regarding adult development as pertaining to the realisation of self in a laborious and continuous exploration into the unknown (shadow). Individuation is a process grounded in one's personal history and cultural inheritance. Expressed in terms of the present thesis, individuating and defining the self is a process of letting go, a transcendence of the personal ego and a solitary path of self-discovery. While Margaret Mahler's concept of individuation is pertinent to development and the phenomenon of letting go, she considers the concept of individuation as the developmental process of the separation from (m)other or "the psychological birth of the individual". For Mahler, to become a unique human being is first to differentiate the self from the (m)other, a process initiated during early childhood, but one that continues through life. Mahler's acceptance of developmental continuity is conveyed in her open-ended attitude, reflected in the phrase "on the way to object constancy", which she accepts as never final or complete. Knowles (1986) too, understands human development as continuous, reflected in his explication of Erikson's developmental stages which includes "human possibility". Such open-ended continuity regarding individuation is evident in the findings of the present study, where the separation of individuation is neither complete nor absolute, but continues in the context of a related-separateness. Participant J, who was determined to separate and be autonomous, illustrates this, as he eventually realised that he could not be completely separate to others. As J approached his point of resolution, he became aware of his inevitable relatedness to significant others. In the process of letting go, the findings reveal a related-separateness. Autonomy is not absolute.

The present study reveals that absolute autonomy is an illusion, while a related-separateness facilitates growth. By remaining attached to the illusion of self with its false sense of autonomy, the self is entrapped and immobilised. The awareness of truth provides resolution for the mobility of letting go. Though identification promotes the deception and alienation of the self, it also facilitates the process of separation and is a necessary aspect of letting go. Throughout the process of separation-individuation, the young child retains a link with the (m)other. Accompanying the child's increasing awareness of separateness, verbal communication becomes a significant aspect of the relationship with (m)other. As the distance between the (m)other and

child expands and the connectedness with (m)other is retained, the spoken word becomes increasingly necessary and valuable. Through the process of separation, speech and language retain a significant connectedness. The value of language becomes evident in the transition of meaning with the gradual process of self-reflection and awareness of truth. In the process of letting go, language facilitates the transition of finding new meaning, while retaining the dialectic of a related-separateness.

While affirming Mahler's theory, the present study accepts the viewpoint of existential phenomenological psychology and takes into account the open-endedness of our lives as existential beings, where in the face of truth, we co-author our lives. While letting go is a process of separation and individuation, with a sense of continuity, it is also a submission to the power of creation and commitment to the unknownness of space and time. Mahler's (1975) acknowledgment of this is perhaps reflected in the fourth phase of separation-individuation, when she writes that this subphase "is not a subphase in the same sense as the other three, since it is open-ended at the older end" (p.112).

In the process of letting go, while we move away from the significant other, we seek to retain connectedness. Do we move towards or away from the significant other? Is our aim to separate and individuate, or to connect and relate? Object relation theorists (e.g. Fairburn; Winnicott) have provided legitimacy to the study of how people relate, experience and perceive the significance of the other in moving beyond and letting go of the self, rather than remaining narcissistically attached to the self. And yet, the traditional view of healthy development is considered to be the attainment of autonomy and the development of the self. Josselson (1988) believes that our innate relatedness is an essential aspect of development. She writes: "Perhaps development is not a path from dependence to autonomy, but a movement to increasingly differentiated forms of relating to others. Perhaps autonomy is a form of relatedness" (p.100). There is the suggestion that individuation intends relatedness. Relatedness is dialectical to autonomy and a sense of self. Letting go is a dialectical related-separateness.

Levinson's (1978) study of adult development identifies "attachment-separateness" as one of the four polarities to be resolved in the task of midlife individuation, where the self is challenged to integrate the need for attachment with the need for separateness. In their studies on midlife and

adolescence respectively, Sherman (1987) and Josselson (1992; 1988) recognise the individual's need to retain a connectedness. The findings of the present study concur with the view of Bowlby, who believes that retaining connectedness is not pathological. To Bowlby (1979): "attachment behaviour is regarded as a normal and healthy part of man's instinctive makeup..." He goes on to say that: "it is held to be most misleading to term it "regressive" or childish when seen in an older child or adult" (p.87). The present study concurs with Bowlby's point of view that separation anxiety is not pathological, but an acceptable reaction to the absence of an attachment figure. The study accepts the concept of an emotional relatedness in the presence of individuation; that is an individual who is self-reliant rather than absolutely autonomous, and emotionally related rather than absolutely dependent. There are no absolutes, merely a sense of balance between the two polarities. Absolutes tend to be illusory and deceptive. In the process of letting go, entering the unknownness of space and time naturally gives rise to feelings of anxiety. The existential awareness of the aloneness of the experience elicits a need to remain interpersonally connected. As revealed, feelings of anxiety and the need for relatedness are integral to letting go during adulthood and normal human development.

Models of development need to take into account that relatedness is an integral part of development and should not be considered pathological. Newly-evolving developmental models should accommodate this accordingly, as relatedness does not appear to hold the prominence it deserves in developmental theory. Like the crisis of the conflict that emerges in the process of letting go, the polarities of relatedness and separateness need not remain polarised, but should be recognised as dialectical and continuous. Taking into account the constituent of a related separateness evidenced in the findings of the present study, the theories of Mahler (1975) and Stern (1985) appear complementary rather than contradictory. Though appearing antithetical, both the need to attach and the need to separate are equally important and both should be recognised in the process of development. While Mahler's understanding of self is that it evolves in the infant's moving away from the relatedness with (m)other, Stern understands the concept of self to mean a movement towards relating. Both theories are dialectically significant to the process of letting go. To Mahler (1975) and her colleagues, development is the attainment of selfhood and autonomy, with a moving away, whereas to Daniel Stern (1985), development is a movement towards relating and connecting. Thunissen (1998) recognises the compatibility of

both these theories. Rather like the moebius strip, though dialectically separate, they are part of the same continuum.

With letting go, the dialectic is one of a related-separateness. In defining the self, we separate and move away from the other, but in the desire for relatedness, we move towards an other. As we separate and individuate in relation to the other, we seek to rekindle the joy of oneness and wholeness as we move towards the other. In the transitional process of separating, letting go and individuating the self, we retain a sense of relatedness.

The present study concurs with Ruth Josselson, who accepts human development as a continuous attempt to attain a balance between the need to separate and the need for closeness. In Josselson's (1988) own words:

A theory of self, or of identity, must be a theory of such a balance, must account for the ways in which the self remains poised between self-expression and relatedness, between the need for self-assertion and social involvement. A theory of self must be interwoven with a theory of relationship (p.104).

With Freud (1905), development was initially regarded as a childhood phenomenon and considered as ending with the attainment of adolescence and adult sexual capacity. The premise of the present study accepts development as a lifelong process, initiated by changes that occur in relation to the self, the world, and others. While childhood and adolescence are initiated by normative biological and somatic change, growth and development in adulthood emerge in the context of change that may not be visible. Heidegger's (1962) concept of the temporality of a given past, a recognised present and existential future is acknowledged as pertinent to the transitional process of life and letting go. We live our development, and meeting the challenge of letting go in its fluidity is significant to the process. While normative phases of development are acknowledged as significant, development is not viewed as being confined to phases, but recognised as a process that unfolds through time. Psychological growth and development are not visibly evident and, though sequential do not necessarily evolve within basic normative structures that result in change. Development *is* change, and change *is* the process. In the words

of Kruger (1988, p.65): “Man is not in time, we should rather say that time is man; it characterises his existence”.

Existing developmental models do not appear adequately to address idiosyncratic differences regarding change and letting go. As psychologists, we need to understand the true nature of change and human development, for what is not accommodated in the models of development may deceptively appear to be pathological. While normative developmental structures are valuable in providing a working framework for human development, they cannot be considered absolute, for it is the individual’s capacity to deal with change and attain stability that remains primarily significant. Bar-Tur and Levi-Shiff (2000) believe that “ the developmental goal is to survive loss, come to terms with change and integrate oneself into a new social context and identity” (p.2.). In other words, the goal of development is to continue to exist and attain stability, despite the conflicts and challenges encountered. This, too, was affirmed in the present study. The primary focus of development appears to be to attain continuity and stability, even requiring repetition and a paradoxical struggle in order to achieve this. Resolving the challenge of letting go is a developmental achievement.

The traditional view of development as a normative chronological graded structure restricts a true understanding of human development. Though normative patterns may apply, individual differences do arise. Colarusso (1990; 1997) moves away from the stage-related theory to arbitrary chronological demarcations, where adulthood is divided into early, middle and late periods. Demarcations during adulthood cannot be clearly defined. Baltes’s (1987) developmental perspective recognises the plasticity, diversification and complexity of development. In a non-traditional manner, Baltes considers the study of development to include longitudinal and cross-sectional features. He takes into account the continuous impact of change on intrapsychic processes. Furthermore, Noam (1988) also proposes a model that encompasses a broader view of development regarding the ego, identity and self, a model that can accept “biographical and transformational activities of the self”. A developmental model must recognise the reality of personal history and change. The axes of historicity and relatedness described above could apply. Personal historicity and its continuity through time, together with the relatedness of self in relation to the world, need to be considered for a developmental model.

Understanding the process of letting go in human development requires recognition of the contextual meaning in which it unfolds. The diversity of human nature has to be acknowledged, as present normative models of development do not appear adequately to address the discrepancies that can, and do, arise. Diversity is an essential aspect of our humanity and existence. Diversity has to be accommodated rather than excluded. On human diversity, Bronfenbrenner (1996) cites one of his earlier works and expresses the following:

Seen in different contexts, human nature, which I once thought of as a singular noun, turns out to be plural and pluralistic; for different environments produce discernable differences, not only across but within societies, in talent, temperament, human relations, and particularly in the ways in which each culture and subculture brings up the next generation (p.85).

Human nature is diverse. Psychological development, or psychic change, is not comprised of ordered predictable structures that find closure, but timeless structures that in a circular manner continue through time. Psychological growth and development is not linear and continuous but regresses before it progresses. As the past is returned we find an ontological spin and a subsequent leap forward. Psychological growth and development is never absolute, for, with the irremediable split of the self, a state of final completion, wholeness and maturity cannot be attained. As we echo our existence, the past is understood retroactively through the present, and the present retroactively through the past. Purely normative models of change do not recognise idiosyncratic differences and are a naïve approach to understanding the human psyche. The process of development cannot be held in stasis, for we are continually in the process of holding on and letting go, being and becoming. Psychological change requires a fluidity of movement that may not necessarily concur with other (e.g. somatic, psychological or social) changes. To borrow the concept from Lacan, our being is like “a chain” that spirals forward in its mobility; a chain comprised of timeless links, powerfully incomplete. Development is change rather than a product of change. Essentially, human development is the process of meeting with the challenge of change through time.

Letting go has diverse implications, while its meaning is contextual to the environment in which it occurs. Letting go is not a predictable but a transitional process of mobility where the past is

returned to (and repeated), to meet with the challenge of change. In letting go, we move into the unknownness of space and time. Our attempts to hold on to the familiar and attach ourselves to what we know are deceptive, yet the deception facilitates stability and transition. Though a sense of separateness emerges, there is a need to remain connected. Letting go is more than separation; it is the experience of separation. It is the experience of self in the process of change. With the ambiguity of the conflicting polarities and threat of the gap, a struggle ensues. Through meaning, a sense of continuity is held on to. However, with the awareness of a different sense of self and the threat of fragmentation, the omnipotence of time and space is submitted to. There is an awareness of the inevitability of change and, in an attempt to gain control of the process, decisions are made as the self partakes in the process of creation and discovers new meaning, continually in the process of being and becoming.

Letting go is a transition forward, where the vacillation and oscillation between positive and negative forces is the rhythmic process of life; the mobility between light and dark, presence and absence, relatedness and separateness, until a sense of stability emerges in the optimal distance between. The dialectic of holding on and letting go is the dialectic of life and death.

The Windmills of Your Mind

Round
Like a circle in a spiral
Like a Wheel within a wheel
Never ending or beginning
On an ever-spinning reel
Like a snowball down a mountain
Or a carnival balloon
Like a carousel that's turning
Running rings around the moon
Like a tunnel that you follow
To a tunnel of its own
Down a hollow to a cavern
Where the sun has never shone
Like a door that keeps revolving
In a half forgotten dream
Or the ripples from a pebble
Someone tosses in a stream
Like a clock whose hands are sweeping
Past the minutes of its face
And the world is like an apple
Whirling silently in space
Like the circles that you find
In the windmills of your mind

(Alan & Marilyn Bergman)