# Research into Sharing

## Transactional Analysis Phenomenological Research Project

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# Abstract

*"Some of us are born sharing, some of us achieve sharing*

*and some of us have sharing thrust upon us!"* [i]

An unstructured, in-depth, interview case study of another individual's personal experience of sharing:-
What is sharing to them?  How do they perceive the act of sharing with another person in relation to either
physical things or emotional connections?  Also an Investigation into the impact that upbringing has on that
person's ability to share.

The aim of the research is to identify how the interviewee experiences the actual reality of the concept of
sharing.  We want to answer the question "What is 'sharing' to them in their everyday life? "

When they were growing up how were they taught to share?  What example of sharing did their parents
set?  How easy did they find it and was it natural for them within their family?  We are also interested in
how their ability to share affects their daily life as an adult; how does it help or hinder them in their
relations with others.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the interview showed that our subject was ambivalent about their ability to share with
others.  On the one hand, they didn't see themselves as 'good' at sharing; on the other hand it showed
that, for them, once in a trusting relationship, shared experiences became a central theme of that
relationship.

Our interviewee's background showed a contrast between accepted and trusted sharing between herself
and her siblings and a distance and lack of sharing with her parents and other significant adults.  Our
analysis shows that this contrast is played out in her adult life.

# Introduction and Literature Review

The topic I have chosen 'Sharing' became important to me about a year previously, when during my own therapy I discovered that it was central to my script and I realized that I knew very little about what sharing actually encompassed.  I realised that I had been living with a 'Don't belong' injunction all my life but I also came to the realisation that sharing - as an entity in its own right - was something that was hugely important to me.  It appears that it was more important for me than it was for others with a 'Don't belong' injunction.

I did some reading but could find very little at the time about what sharing actually was.  I did find some small amount of information in parenting books - overtly there to help prospective parents to enable their children to do this 'sharing' thing in a friendly and helpful manner - and I found these techniques quite useful in identifying what it was that I needed and what it was that I hadn't had as a child.

Sharing behaviour in humankind is accepted by all of us as being normal.  All of our lives we are expected to share.  We share the environments that we live in, the experiences we have, our food, our work and our bodies.  It is considered perfectly normal to share our places of work, the attention of our family, many of our activities, friendships, in fact most aspects of our lives.  Sharing is necessary between communities large and small in order to prosper and work together for a common goal.  Sharing happens between nations and sharing happens between individuals.  Wherever we look, whatever we do, an element of sharing is usually there.

So what happens to those individuals who find it difficult to share; how does this impact their lives?

Perhaps humankind needs an ability to share in order to survive.  Many anthropologists have argued that the basic and elementary social unit of humankind is the nuclear family, "it is characteristic of all large ground living species of higher primates, including man, that they live in social groups made up of members of both sexes and all ages.  Groups vary in size from one or two families to some 200 members."[ii]

Sharing enables a community to protect itself from predators, it means that a long period of immaturity is possible for the offspring during which customs typical of the social group can be learned.  It also means that sick members can remain in a safe environment 24 hours of the day and, of course, there are the related practices of facilitating food getting by co-operative hunting and of sharing food.[iii]

When John Bowlby discusses collaboration and conflict in his analysis of the attachment of human beings to each other he says " When any two people are interacting together and each is capable of making plans, a prospect arises of their sharing a common goal and a common plan.  The new style of interaction is best spoken of as a partnership.  By sharing a common goal and participating in a joint plan to achieve it, partners have a rewarding sense of common purpose; and they are likely also to identify with one another." [iv]  Further, he says, "A young child's experience of an encouraging, supportive and co-operative mother and father, gives him a sense of worth, a belief in the helpfulness of others, and a favourable model on which to build future relationships."[v]

In some instances, sharing could be regarded as 'prosocial' behaviour.[vi]  This is defined as caring about the welfare and rights of others, feeling concern and empathy for them, and acting in ways that benefit others.  Historically, the term prosocial behaviour has only been used since the 1970s.  Social scientists began using the term as an antonym for antisocial behaviour.  A body of research evolved to illuminate the psychology of giving, helping, and sharing.  In the 1960s the significance of helping behaviours and their psychological motivations became of interest.  The understanding of prosocial behaviour was recognised as being key to harmonious interpersonal and group relations.[vii]  Research done in this area, testing a model of prosocial development, predicted that prosocial action might decline, not increase, throughout childhood, becoming increasingly selective, individual, gender-related, and linked to emotional dysregulation[viii]

When investigating what research has been done into this area of human experience I found that there has been a lot of work done in relation to children and their upbringing; particularly how to enable them to be able to share with their siblings and with their peers.  In the 1930's research showed that the child's

experience of love at an early age was of central importance to their ability to relate to others for the whole of the rest of their lives.  Between 1937 and 1943 there were many papers on this subject, several of which originated independently and some of which were completed in ignorance of each other.  Often they were found to have unanimity of conclusions.  This unanimity stamped their findings as true.  The research showed that it was the child's <u>inability</u> to manage relationships that was the central feature from which all other disturbances sprang.

 For example, one special group consisted of children placed in foster homes in infancy, who were given the best paediatric care but were deprived of social contacts and play materials.  It was shown that these children were unable to accept love, because of the severe deprivation in the first three years of their lives.

> "They have no play pattern, cannot enter into group play and abuse other children… They are overactive and destructive; they are completely confused about human relationships… This type of child does not respond to the nursery group and continues overactive, aggressive and a-social[ix]"

These communications came from across the Atlantic: meanwhile quite independent observations by Dr Bowlby in London led to exactly the same conclusions:[x]

> "Prolonged breaks [In the mother-child relationship] during the first three years of life leave a characteristic impression on the child's personality.  Such children appear emotionally withdrawn and isolated.  They fail to develop loving ties with other children or with adults and consequently have no friendships worth the name.  It is true that they are sometimes sociable in a superficial sense but if this is scrutinised we find that there are no feelings, no roots, in these relationships.  This, I think, more than anything else, is the cause of their hard-boiledness"

Dyadic developmental therapy principally involves creating a "playful, accepting, curious, and empathic" environment in which the therapist attunes to the child's "subjective experiences" and reflects this back to the child by means of eye contact, facial expressions, gestures and movements, voice tone, timing and touch.  This "co-regulates" emotional affect and "co-constructs" an alternative autobiographical narrative

with the child. Dyadic developmental psychotherapy also makes use of cognitive-behavioural strategies. The "dyad" referred to must eventually be the parent-child dyad. [xi]

Many papers on attachment and shared emotions have been published as parenting techniques in various books and magazines.  I first came across Dr. Laurie Kramer's work in a book called Nurtureshock written by Po Bronson, the book challenges many of our accepted assumptions about how to bring up children. (See Appendix).

 Dr. Laurie Kramer [xii] is involved in the creation of workshops, courses and study centres focussing on teaching young people valuable life skills.  One of  these is shown as part of a project[xiii] at the 'Family Resiliency Centre' where *More Fun with Sisters and Brothers* is a preventive intervention program that teaches young children a set of social and emotional competencies that will help them play and interact with their sisters and brothers in a fun and friendly manner.  She urges parents to think about the relationship they want their kids to have with each other—now and as adults.[xiv]

Dr. William Sears, an American paediatrician and the author or co-author of more than 30 parenting books[xv]  suggested that at around 2 years of age toddlers make a cognitive breakthrough; they start to understand the concept of possession.  Before your toddler can begin to share things - or to give them away - he must first feel that he owns them outright, and he must be secure in this knowledge - that his possessions are his and his alone. [xvi]

At around 3 years of children spend much of their time immersed in pretend play.  They create imaginary scenes for their own personal enjoyment.  The ability to live in a make-believe world helps children learn about the real world.  They role-play endlessly:  pretending to be animals, mummy and daddy, doctor and patient, truck drivers, teachers, and princesses.  A parent sharing in a child's imaginative play starts the process of the child learning how to share with them and others in their world.  A child's pretend play is a wonderful window into what is going on in his or her mind.

Fantasy play represents one of the highest levels of social involvement for young children. In order for joint fantasy play to work, children must emotionally commit to one another, and pay attention to what the other is doing. They have to articulate what is in their mind's eye - and negotiate some scenario that allows both their visions to come alive. When one child just announced the beginning of a Ninja battle, but the other wants to be a cowboy, they have to figure out how to ride off into the sunset together.

Another important avenue of research in relation to sharing is that of the link between emotion and social sharing. Recently there has been much work with adults on how emotion and empathy link together to enable a human being to work in conjunction with others. For example, this article is representative of this work:- "In line with evidence showing that emotion involves a social sharing process in which the subject communicates about emotional experience, this article examines the impact of being exposed to such communications. First, it was predicted that being exposed to the social sharing of an emotion is emotion inducing. Second, it was reasoned that if this holds true, then the listener should later engage in socially sharing with other persons the emotional narrative heard. Thus, a process of 'secondary social sharing' was predicted. "[xvii]

Antonio Damasio in his work on the physical aspects of the link between the physical brain and the cognitive mind, that which could be called the conscience, has shown how emotion and action fit together to enable a human being to be aware of himself and so to survive and improve his lot. He says " We only create a sense of good and evil as well as norms of conscionable behaviour once we know about our own nature and that of others like us" [xviii] Therefore awareness of himself also allows for man to be aware of others. Damasio has shown that we have physical 'mirror neurons' in our brains that allow us to share, to a greater or lesser degree, in another person's experience – to actually feel his feelings. This means that at a fundamental level, completely out of our humble control, the human being uses the processes of sharing in order to survive.

# Research Aims

In this research, I am setting out to explore one person's experience of what it is like to share. My interviewee is a friend, someone I have known for many years, and who feels relaxed and able to talk about personal issues with me. I am particularly interested in how she perceives sharing in her everyday life and whether she sees this as an enjoyable experience or something to be avoided.  I am interested in hearing about the link between her sharing of experiences as an adult and how she was able to share as a child.  I am interested in following up on some of the techniques suggested about how to teach children how to share and to see whether those techniques were used in her childhood. I am particularly interested in her understanding of the difference between sharing things, sharing experiences and sharing emotions and whether these are comfortable for her or not.

# Methodology

Serafina and I went to the Cotswolds for a short break. She has a dog called Martha, we took her for walks, and during one of these walks I asked her again if she would mind being a part of my research and being interviewed for an hour.  Previously she had readily agreed, and she hadn't changed her mind, so I told her all about the task, being careful not to tell her much about the topic, just about the structure of the interview and its purpose.  We agreed that we would sit down after supper that day to do the job.

That evening we got ourselves prepared and comfortable, I was keen to make sure she didn't regard it as an onerous task, and that she understood how much she was helping me.

Serafina has two elder sisters and there is very little age difference between them – 3 years from eldest to youngest.  Her mother and father parted company when she was around 3 years old, when Serafina, her mother and her sisters all had to move house and change schools etc.  There was a big change in the family life!  Her father had been the more affectionate parent and although she actually remembers very little from that time, she is aware that she missed him a lot.

I wanted to explore whether her childhood experience has coloured her adult abilities to share, I expected that they would have done, but I wanted to hear this in her interview without any contamination from me.

I had prepared a few questions but I hoped that the flow of the interview would be easy.  Serafina and I have been friends for several years and have shared confidences before, so I was reasonably sure that she wouldn't feel embarrassed or awkward or scared.  I checked this out beforehand with her and she seemed very relaxed about it all.

So we settled down in the sofas, and she settled her dog, Martha, and we started.

The first thing I did was to show her the Research Project Proposal Form that I had filled in previously and handed in to the institute for approval.  She read it carefully, and we had a bit of a joke about the phrase 'written, informed consent' because we didn't really need it given the situation but I had said I would get it on my form.  We joked about Martha, the dog, being a witness!

So we started the interview and I instigated proceedings by explaining the various preparations to minimize harm to Serafina:-

1) To not put words in her mouth

2) That it is confidential and will not be seen or read by anybody other than me and my course tutors without getting prior consent form her.

3) To warn her that the content of the interview might impact on her emotionally and that she had the right at any time to not say something or even to stop the interview if she felt the need.

4) Also, should I wish to take the research further, that I would always check this out with her and ensure she was happy to give consent.

5) I also made sure that there were people that she could call on to help her and give her support if there was anything that should come up for her after the interview or in the days or months to come.

I then talked a little (at about 5:00 Minutes) about how we were going to structure the interview, how it would work. I made an effort to be reassuring and to explain that I wasn't looking for a therapeutic session, instead I wanted her to just tell me her thoughts.  I wanted to be able to say at the end – "This is one person's experience of what it means to be a sharing person. "

We then proceeded with the body of the interview, I had a few prepared questions to ask to get the ball rolling and I started with one to do with sharing in the world as it is at present.  A very general question to start the interview off and to give us an idea of what directions we could go down. I wanted to give Serafina a chance to settle down and become more comfortable.

As the interview continued, I was able to ask more searching questions and Serafina was very open and able to give me a very honest answers.

Looking back on the time we spent together, I am aware that I was 'present' in the conversation quite a lot, more than I had expected.  However, Serafina needed me to guide her.  She would happily answer my questions and volunteer information, but she is not the sort of person to 'rabbit on' and so I found it necessary to prompt her quite a bit.  I was glad I had some ideas in mind about what I could ask her; otherwise, it may well have become rather 'sticky'!  I hope I didn't colour the results of the interview, I was careful ask questions in as balanced a way as I could at the time.

As part of my training, I had to present to my peers and I used Sharing as my topic.  During this interview, I refer to some of the experiential exercises that I set-up at that time for my colleagues. I have included some details about that exercise, and the reactions to it, as an appendix at the back of the document.

# Analysis

It seems that when we share we are using the techniques that we learnt as children, to liaise with and to communicate with others. The suggestion has been made that we cannot learn to share physical things until we have learnt to 'possess' things. Further, it has been observed that a child cannot learn to possess things until he or she is around 2 years old. So sharing skills cannot even begin to develop until after then.

***Attachment to parents***:

In Serafina's case it seems that her relationship with her sisters was, and is, good and was never in question. However, it seems she may have some difficulty sharing and that this may have been due to a poor relationship with her parents. Her father left the family home when she was very young (around 3 years old) and she has distanced herself from her Mother ever since.

***Significant Other:***

The ability to connect with another in an empathetic way seems to be based largely on the relationship that the child had with the mother (or significant other) from a very early age. In other words if there was no relationship then there can be no connection and hence there will be little ability to share experiences…

Serafina's relationship with her mother does not seem to encompass much in the way of affection. Within this research interview, there is evidence that there was a severe break in the relationship between Serafina and her parents. Her father left home when she was very small, and she made a clear decision at that time not to touch her Mother any more. She completely withdrew her affections from that point forward; in fact, she did not touch anybody. It seems that her mother was not affectionate by nature anyway, so maybe this was the easiest way Serafina could show her distress at the loss of her father – the awareness of the loss of affection may have been already there. Further to this there is a suggestion that she did it in order to 'punish' her mother and that this did, indeed, have an effect.

| |
|---|
| I don't feel I had a relationship with my mother |
| It's awful really when you think about it 'cos I mean… Oh God I hate her to touch me, I really do |
| I let her now… only 'cos I did it once and I thought "well I've done it once now and I've gotta keep what I do" |
| Shiit |
| Oh my God, Oh my God - it's like |
| No it was all of them, it was Sally, Lizzie and – it was everybody – I wouldn't let anybody touch me actually… |
| No anybody… I wouldn't let anybody touch me for for yea until I was like a teenager then I sort of Uh but I still wouldn't let my family touch me after that… and then …<br><br> I let other people… before I ever let … and then (puzzled, quietly) I must have been quite old when Sally hugged me for some reason, I think she just gave up and decided 'fuck it' and… I got more relaxed with Sally and Lizzie as I got older into my 20's and 30's and I ended up sort of being able to sort of give them a hug and then give them a kiss and everything else but (whispered) I still wouldn't touch Mum |

Later she says. "I don't feel I had a relationship with my mother." She told me how she was aware that her mother missed Serafina touching her, which she had refused to do ever since her father and mother split up… I wondered whether Serafina refusing to touch her mother was a punishment by Serafina of her mother because the young child perceived that her mother was rejecting her.

| Interviewer | Serafina |
|---|---|
| (…recently she had changed her behaviour – to touch her mother…) 58:09 | And I did it once and I thought "Oh Fuck I wish I hadn't done it, 'cos I don't er I don't want to do it again" hahuh and I've had to do it ever since – it's like (groaning) every time I do it I think |
| Does your mother enjoy the experience | (satisfied) Yes |
| Does she? (puzzled) so.. did she …miss you not touching her or letting her touch you? | Apparently (flat tone) |
| Er apparently? | Apparently (satisfied tone) |
| Does she tell others that she missed it? | (considering, cagey) No |
| How do you know that she did then? | Because she used to try to (satisfied tone) |
| Ahh I see – and you'd reject her? | ughu |
| Is it possible that what you were doing was kind of rejecting her | (Loud and angry) yeah but you see Mum would never… I don't know, what is, apparently when Dad left… |

Later on she talked about not letting her sisters touch her either, and we discussed what type of sharing that would be - she said "its' an emotional sharing… I just cut myself off. I think maybe also… in my little

brain that's what happens, then, you know… if you loved somebody like I obviously loved my Dad and he goes away… then I'm not going to love anybody else…"

*Siblings:*
Serafina does not <u>see herself</u> as someone who is able to share with ease, although in reality she can, and does, share a lot of her life.  Several times within the interview, she dismissed her ability to share and then, a few sentences later, she went into some depth on how, in actuality, she did share, but without necessarily calling it that.  For instance, when we were talking about how she shared when she was at home with her two sisters, when I first asked about it by saying "when you were younger and you think about your experience of sharing in your family, what comes to mind there?  She said "Nothing!"  Yet two sentences further on she said  "I mean we did… we obviously shared a life together!"  She then went on to describe a rich and varied life shared very closely with her sisters.

*Rebellious child:*
Right from the beginning of the interview, it became clear that Serafina needed to feel a very close alliance with another person before she would be comfortable with sharing either her emotions or her experiences with that person.  During our conversation about any support that she might have after the interview, she mentioned Andy, who has been a close friend of hers for many years, and said that he would listen and he would be comforting.  Later she talked about him again and called him a real, real, real friend and it was clear that she felt so comfortable with him that she could let her rebellious child come out to play!

| Interviewer | Serafina |
|---|---|
| … so how about if it was real friends? | Yeah |
| How would that feel? | Well then – you would just have a larf |
| Right… so it's more relaxed? | Yeah |
| Soooo… that says to me that sharing | (Loudly, interrupting) but if it was real real real friends and I really didn't want to do it then I wouldn't and I'd feel perfectly alright not doing it.. |
| Yeah | So you do it if you want to – err  you do it over me head… |
| So… why is that - what's the difference? | If I was just sitting there and they were real real real friends they would just go "oh it's just you, it's just Serafina" |
| They would be accepting of you | Yeah and they would laff at me and that would be alright |
| Yeah…  in a nice way? | Yeah |

| Ookay | If it was (laughing) if it was Andy then we'd both probably just sit there and then giggle 'cos everybody did it over our heads |
|---|---|
| Yeah | Yeah, definitely   Yeah |
| So they might join in with you and share your experience | Who? |
| Your friends | Not if it was Andy If I was sitting there with Andy |
| Yeah er, sorry – Andy - I didn't hear you say that yeah… | Yeah I would he, we would probably neither, we would probably neither of us do it |
| right | and,  and just think that was with you know you'd just think |
| you'd have… | and sit there and be grumpily amused with ourselves |

*Equality:*

Later she talked about sharing her house with her lodgers:-

| Interviewer | Serafina |
|---|---|
| Do you feel that sharing is something you like to do? | Is like I have Carmen and Chris living in my house but I don't share it with them, I don, I don't , I mean I could, I do spend a whole week and not sort of it doesn't bother me if I don't see them |
| Yeah | Or – you know – we live completely separately |
| So you mean in that situation you  - are the owner and they are in your space and you are the person controlling the situation, so it's not an equal share? | No |
| But you feel comfortable with that? | Yeah |

The theme of the need for equality in order for the behaviour to be seen as sharing permeates the interview, perhaps in Jane's mind being in either a 'one up' or 'one down' situation means that she doesn't feel she has an equal "share" and so therefore this does not constitute "sharing".

We continued to talk about the flat sharing experience she had when living and working in London in her early 20s.  Interestingly she didn't see living in her landlords flats as 'sharing' his flat, when I asked her, "in the past you've lived in other people's houses haven't you?"  She replied with a definite "no" and when I pointed out that somebody else owned it she said.  "Yeah the landlord, well everybody did in London, that's how you lived".  I imagine that because she was paying for the flat that she saw it as belonging to her and therefore not shared.

As we continued on this theme it transpired that she had been in a flat share with several other people. She enjoyed this experience and it became clear that part of the reason for this was that the others had made a point of seeking her out and making friends with her. She said it was nice to be invited. I asked if that gave her a greater feeling of belongingness and she said "yeah, I'd become friends with them already you see because they made friends with me as soon as I moved in, they came downstairs and said 'hello, who are you? And – I'm John and this is Peter'. Further on in this conversation she said that what they were doing was specifically saying "no we actually want to share this thing with you…" In other words, because they'd gone out of their way to make friends with her she felt accepted and able to share the space without any qualms.

When we talked about sharing things, objects, she said that she would enjoy sharing responsibility. She said "…it's nice to actually not just be responsible for something just by yourself". This feeling of two people doing something together with equality is important for her. The importance of equality within the sharing experience comes over many times during the interview. Later on in the interview when she was discussing the sharing that she used to do as a child with her sister, Sally. She talked with much feeling about how she was always in a 'one down' position, that her sister expected her to play along and not take the lead role.

*Risk:*
True sharing for Serafina means sharing the risk, she is very happy if somebody else wants to involve themselves with her in her experience but she's unused to this. Her expectation is that she will have to fit in with others. She describes how she would feel if somebody joined in with her activity of walking her dog, she says "I want them to know how much fun it is", but she feels that perhaps they are "observing her" rather than actually joining in. Having someone join in to her activity she says is "actually quite exciting".

*Pleasing Others:*
It seems that for Serafina there is a difference between her sharing something of hers with somebody and her being able to share somebody else's experience. She has an expectation that when sharing somebody

else's experience.  She will be expected to "make the effort.", that she will be expected to accept that the other person's needs.  She says.  "me going into somebody else's world and sharing something they do is different", she goes on to say that if somebody asked her to help organise a birthday party then "that's about me being helpful"

### *I'm not OK, You're Ok:*

In her young life, there were themes of rejection by her mother and sometimes her 'lofty' eldest sister, as well of course as the unexpressed rejection by a father who was no longer there.  Unsurprisingly this seems to have left its mark on Serafina.  There seems to have been a contrast between the lack of connection between Serafina and her mother (and the other significant people in her life), and the ability to share with her sister Sally in their children's games.  However, in order to engage in those games she had to allow herself to be controlled by others.  She said "no, that wasn't about sharing it was about Sally deciding what I did!"  She also said "I was told what character I was playing in the game."  and she would do it in order to "keep the peace".  When I asked her how sharing was different to doing it her sister's way she said "Well I presume that sharing is… that there's a degree of equality about it…"

The rejection theme is illustrated again when she's talking about whether she would join in a Mexican wave at a football match or not, when she says "no if it's friends, no I suppose no, if it's friends then that's, that's a, no I probably would if it's all friends, proper friends"?  She goes on to say that in some circumstances, depending upon how she felt her friends would think of her " if I didn't do it, I might just do it… with some people I deliberately would not do it".  In other words for her to feel comfortable in joining in the group activity she needs to feel that it wouldn't matter if she didn't do it first.

### *Confusion:*

I felt very sad for Serafina when she expressed how anxious and confused she had been when she had left me behind while walking the dog.  I understand that she was feeling really uncomfortable and perhaps felt that she had rejected me and perhaps also that I had rejected her, but also maybe she felt that she should 'conform' in some way in order to 'make it better'.  She said she didn't know what to do and that she

started making conversation and "turned into her mother". She had no clear path as to what she could do to improve matters and this left her feeling helpless. Her conversation led her to observe that she doesn't know how to sustain a long term relationship like her sisters, because she felt she would have nothing to say to her partner after all that time. Perhaps she has a Script message that says that she will get confused and be unable to sustain a relationship where there is no clear hierarchy. She said "It's the impenetrability of it, I don't understand it." When I suggested that others might have more ability to have effective long term relationships because they had both parents she said "Well I suppose so but then I look at the number of people who've been brought up by single parents and whatever and they don't have that problem." This is obviously an area of much sadness for her and the confusion and puzzlement was plain to see. She said "But maybe that's because the parent has actually formed that sort of bond, that sort of relationship, a relationship with THEM"

### *Script*

As I reflect on Serafina's interview the twin themes of attachment and loss seem to be present as a rhythm throughout the text. Even when she is talking about times when she is able to share, her need for attachment and her fear of loss are constantly there. 23 minutes into the interview, I introduced the idea of sharing a task with colleagues; during the ensuing conversation it became clear that she would find this very difficult without subjugating her needs and views to others. She was uncomfortable with the idea of being in charge because she felt that "either I would be saying I know how to build this house better than anyone else, or somebody in this group knows how to build it better than anybody else and that's okay, so I'll let them tell me how to build a house cos I <u>believe</u> they know how to do it. And therefore I will respect them for that."

She continues on to say that there may well be a problem with this shared task if she <u>did</u> know how to do it better than others, because she would be unable to tell them that. She had an fantasy that somebody would spoil the task and that would cause her frustration and anger. Further to this she thought that if she did say something she would be misunderstood. She said. "I'd try, I would <u>try</u> to be tactful, and I would

think I was being <u>incredibly</u> tactful, but people would always interpret it as me being bolshy" she continues by saying very quietly.  "And probably then have a row with me, or try to have a row with me and I'd try not to have a row with them," I deduce from this that she avoids sharing unless she's with very close friends because she doesn't feel safe in a situation where she is either joining in with others and seeing the task go wrong or in charge and doubting her ability to lead the others.  In other words she has a need for attachment but an expectation of the loss and this prevents her from joining in wholeheartedly.  This pattern of behaviour seems to mirror the experience that she had of sharing with her sister, Sally, and of the fact that she wasn't allowed to be in control at any point in that sharing experience.

Then she says  "Either you've got to be the sort of person that is gung-ho and has the courage to just get on with it, and I don't think I would necessarily be that person because I'm so worried about people getting cross and I make them cross anyway…"

Serafina has seen the transcript of the interview and we have had some interesting discussions about it. She is interested to see my research analysis and I hope that she will agree with some of the deductions that I have made.  I am looking forward to having further conversations with her and I hope that some of the work that we have done together will shed light on some of her difficulties.

# Discussion

I realised that for me, in my personal development, I needed to understand the concept of sharing  in a much deeper way, that I had reached an impasse.  That without further understanding of how 'sharing' happens, what it means and how to 'do' it I could go no further.  I wondered how many other people were unknowingly affected in the same way.  Perhaps, like me, they were limping along using coping mechanisms that enabled them to survive in the world, but were hampered.  I felt the need to help myself and maybe to help others to understand as well.

Full of zeal and good intentions I looked around for somebody to interview who would 'know' about how to share and be able to pass this vital information on.  But, of course, my friends were similar to me, and had similar 'scripts'.  Unconsciously we all help each other out by compensating for our limited abilities in this area.  To a certain extent, we are all 'loners'.

What has eventually transpired is that I have researched the sharing experiences of someone who apparently finds it hard to do.  However, as you will see, her ability to share is most definitely there in subtle ways, even though ostensibly she doesn't do it much!

One of the aspects that became clear to me as part of the literature review was how important child development is to an ability to share.  As it is growing up the child needs to be secure in their attachment to their parents and, following on from that, secure in their knowledge that their things belong to them.  It seems that this developmental stage does not really happen until the child is about 2 years old.  My understanding of the theories on this is that such development occurs relatively 'naturally' though can be nurtured by good attachment/parental modelling.

 The child may well be heard saying things like "daddy's keys", "my teddy" or "mummy's books" when he or she gets to a stage where they are able to identify ownership.  Once this has happened, the next stage is to be able to let another person 'use' an object that the child sees as his own.  Finally, there is the ability to

share in fantasy play, which needs many more skills of visualisation and of being able to hold concepts in mind and act upon them. These skills are developmentally very much more advanced and so, typically, this stage does not become available before the child is around 5 years old.

Given this state of affairs, I wanted to find out what Serafina's experience of sharing was in the world at large, as an adult. It transpired that she was very definitely able to share as an adult, but that she would typically take a subservient role and expect that others would be more able than her to do a good job. However, once a job was started, particularly if it wasn't going so well, Serafina would find herself getting agitated and want to influence others in order to make the job go better. She would be sure that if she tried to intervene she would be seen as interfering and not be taken seriously. I now know that this pattern of behaviour matched back to her childhood experience of sharing with her sister who would insist that she took a subservient role and not allow any challenges.

As an adult Serafina did not feel comfortable sharing with others unless there was a sense of equity and balance in both sharing and the relationship. If that wasn't there, even though in reality she would be sharing, it wouldn't <u>feel</u> like sharing to her. As a child her experience of sharing was polarised - that she either had to adapt completely to her sister's needs or she had to be in complete control and, where her mother was concerned, she absolutely refused to share affection. I suggest that that this means that as an adult she finds it very difficult to tread the middle ground.

 From a very early age, she had been aware of the need to share and of what it meant. When the ability to share with someone important to her, who cared for her, was taken away from her at the age of three when her father left the family, it is possible that that had a marked impact on the young child. I wonder if her interpretation of the skills necessary for sharing in daily life were affected by this and included into her "script". I also wonder whether her refusal to touch her mother from that point forward was that the young Serafina's way of making a protest against the loss that she had suffered, that probably she blamed her mother for the loss.

Within the psychological world, we talk a lot about belonging and belongingness, surely sharing is a part of that belonging, but, again, it also has a different quality about it.

It occurs to me that shared experience and the ability to share is all part and parcel of living in a society. Human beings have always lived in clans, tribes, families, communities and organisations. Being able to share is an absolute necessity for survival as a human being. Sharing is one of the most important skills that a mother can teach to a child, in order to enable them to function effectively within their culture.

I have asked many people what their understanding of the concept of sharing is, and there have been constant themes in their replies. When we start to think about it, to identify what sharing really is, rather than making assumptions based on tacit acceptance in day-to-day life, we realise that sharing is similar to other concepts but different. For instance, it is not just collaboration, it has a different connotation, and a person's response to the word 'sharing' is possibly different to that of the word co-operation. In fact, in sharing, there are elements of many things: of fairness, equality, togetherness, co-operation, tolerance, humility, compassion, curiosity and creativity, amongst others. What has become clear is that there is an emotional response to the concept, as well as a practical response. In other words, it's not just about the doing; it's also about the feeling.

Conducting this research in this way, as an interview, enabled me to follow up on some un-thought known aspects of what sharing is and then, in a more concrete way, to take my unformed ideas and to allow somebody else to worry away them and to give me the benefit of their unique viewpoint. This has a huge benefit: - the research has not been channelled down a particular path before it was done. The process has been allowed to develop of its own accord and the analysis of the process has happened at its own time and speed. It could not, by definition, be done beforehand.

The disadvantage of using this method for the research is that it is very specific to the people who have been interviewed and so therefore being able to take the results from the specific to the general and use

them in the wider world would be problematical.  However where qualitative research can't be generalised it can be applied more generally or it can inform.  Therefore, if I were to interview another person I would expect that there may be some overlap.

*Further work:*
This research is an incredibly small-scale piece of research.  However, it seems to bear out the expectation that a person's background and upbringing does have an impact on their ability to share later on in life as an adult.  For me personally this is a very important finding.  It means that I can understand better the difficulty that I have with belonging in any part of a society and the fear of rejection that I feel whenever I get into a sharing situation.  Previous research has shown that an individual needs to be attached to their 'significant others' in order to be able to develop secure relationships.  In order to be able to share, an individual needs secure relationships.  I think that sharing as a concept is different to attachment and security, it is a different skill but no less important.

I have every intention of continuing with this research and broadening its scope and extending its horizon.  For me personally, I'm hoping this will give further answers, and in my work as a therapist, I'm expecting that it will enable me to be more effective.  This is the first piece of research I have ever done and I have learned a huge amount from doing it.

As I go on to broaden the scope of this topic, I am conscious that I will handle it differently in some ways.  One of the things that I would do is be better prepared before the interview, I expected the conversation to flow more easily and that my interviewee would find it easy to "chat on."  Because this didn't happen I found myself having to be more present in the interview than I felt comfortable with, asking questions, and setting up ideas to do with sharing as the focus of the conversation.

Another of the things that I would change would be to get the interview transcribed professionally.  I did it myself intentionally because I believed that that would give me a better insight into the content of the interview, and therefore enable me to produce better and analysis.  In fact, with hindsight, I now know that physically typing the transcript didn't really give me any advantage, but what it did do was give me severe

repetitive strain injury in my shoulder which prevented me from working on the research properly again for about a month.

I have been working on this research now for four months and what I have found is that during that time I have often pondered on the interview, the results and what the outcome means for both Serafina and me. It has sparked more enquiry and I have been interested and actively looking at research documents and trying to find more information about sharing in the wider world.

I am conscious that having a deadline at the beginning of the process put me into a sense of "hurry up" and panic, which removed all of the pleasure from the job.  Given that I originally started my training in TA because I wanted to do research I found this very demoralising.  However, once I realised what was happening, I brought the problem to therapy and realised that I was dealing with an impasse and some historic script behaviour.  I was able to calm my anxious Child and things became much easier.  Slowly over time my enjoyment of the exercise returned.  What I have learned from this is that I <u>can</u> do this job and I <u>can</u> enjoy it but I need to make sure that I do it at my own pace and not at a pace imposed by an external body.  I am aware that this could cause problems in the professional or commercial research environments, but I'm hoping that having this realisation now will enable me to deal with it, and that hopefully it will get easier over time.

I intend to carry on with this research, and I am expecting that I will continue with this method.  However, I am expecting to be able to cross-reference the analysis between many interviews and thereby get a result that is representative of more than just one person's point of view.

# Appendices

# Definition of Sharing

The *noun* 'sharing' has 4 meanings:[xix]

Meaning #1: having in common

Meaning #2: using or enjoying something jointly with others

Meaning #3: sharing thoughts and feelings
  Synonym: communion

Meaning #4: a distribution in shares
  Synonym: share-out

The *adjective* 'sharing' has 2 meanings:

Meaning #1: sharing equally with another or others

Meaning #2: unselfishly willing to share with others

# Etymology of 'Share'

1325–75; Middle English (noun) "portion," cutting, shearing, division;[xx]

Old English scearu:  fork of the body, groin;

Short for ploughshare

Related to Old Norse *skeri,*  Old High German *scaro*[xxi]

Related to sceran "to cut,"

From Proto Germanic *skaro- (cf. Old High German scara "troop, share of forced labour," German Schar "troop, band," prop. "a part of an army," Old Norse skör "rim"),

From PIE base *sker- "to cut" (see shear[xxii]).

The meaning "part of the capital of a joint stock company" is first attested c.1600.

Share  = "iron blade of a plow"  scear, scær  "plowshare", "that which cuts,"

To share-crop is first recorded 1867.

1586, to apportion to someone as his share

"To divide one's own and give part to others" is recorded from 1592. [xxiii]

## TA Advanced Training 2010 –End of Year 3 Presentation – Sharing

The first exercise in my presentation was designed as a quick introduction to the concept of sharing and to what it might mean for those individuals. I asked people to stand up and wave at each other, in a normal, individual way. It was immediately obvious that they all felt a little self-conscious, but they went along with it with an expectation that they would understand shortly. I followed on by asking them to perform a 'Mexican wave', like those done by the crowd at football matches and at other 'stadium' based sports events. In other words, I asked all of them to work together in a co-ordinated way to produce a particular result. I asked how it felt and got a variety of responses, some of them were fine with it, particularly those who had done it before, others were uncomfortable and continued to feel very self-conscious.

Later in the presentation I produced little 'Lego' kits, one for each person, with a plan included in each kit showing how to build a <u>very</u> small house. I was astonished by the alacrity with which my kits were received. Some people rushed to make sure they got one! All the delegates happily created little houses and were most disappointed when I told them to stop and to put the bricks into two boxes in the middle of the room. In fact, two of them actually went so far as to hide their little houses behind them on the sofa!

The next part of the exercise was to divide them into two teams of 5 and ask each team to build a single bigger house using all of the combined bricks from their original sets. The reactions to this were immediate and fascinating. By this time nearly all of the delegates were out of their chairs, sitting on the floor and actively motivated to do the tasks. Some of them were showing classic 'Child' behaviour patterns. Once the task started different behaviours came to the fore. Three of them happily sat on the floor and 'played' with the bricks and with each other; they were very content to work together, and carried on doing so for the rest of the time. One person sat on the floor and proceeded to scoop as many of the bricks as possible into a pile in front of her, claiming them as her own and not letting others near them. She was adamant that only people in her team could use these bricks and even then she didn't really want to share! Another person stood back behind the others, and when asked how she was she said that she would happily wait

until the others had finished and then join in later; that she didn't want to interfere with the task at hand. One person confided in me that he wasn't happy with doing the task at all because 'there was nobody organising it and so there was no control'. Two others were arguing about where the bricks should go on their base, and finally one person just looked lost!

In fact there were a whole gamut of reactions and attitudes shown, all within less than five minutes of the task beginning. For me the whole thing was amazing and I got a huge buzz out of having created this circumstance, out of the reactions that the delegates were sharing, and from the enjoyment that most of them were getting out of the exercise. My own reaction told me a great deal about myself and I realised that I get a great deal of pleasure out of being able to set up scenarios for other's enjoyment, could that be, perhaps, a 'Please Others' driver?!

# Research on Sharing with Regards to Children

It turns out that Shakespeare was right, and Freud was wrong.  For almost a century, Freud's argument - that from birth, siblings were locked in an eternal struggle for their parents' affection - held huge influence over scholars and parents alike.  But Freud's theory turns out to be incomplete.  Sibling rivalry may be less an Oedipal tale of parental love, and more King Lear

A team of leading British and American scholars asked 108 sibling pairs in Colorado exactly what they fought about.  Parental affection was ranked dead last.  Just 9% of the kids said it was to blame for the arguments or competition.

The most common reason that the kids were fighting - almost 80% of the older children, and 75% of the younger ones, said sharing physical possessions  - or claiming them as a their own - caused the most fights.[xxiv]

One of the best predictors of how well two siblings get along is determined before the birth of the younger child.  The explanation is quite reasonable.  It has nothing to do with the parents.  Instead the predictive factor is the quality of the older child's relationship with his best friend.  The kids who could play in a reciprocal, mutual style with their best friend were the ones who had good rapport with a younger sibling, years later.  Older siblings train with their friends and then apply what they know to their little brothers and sisters. After monitoring these relationships with best friends Kramer saw that one factor that stood out as especially telling: shared fantasy play.

"Fantasy play represents one of the highest levels of social involvement for young children".  In order for joint fantasy play to work, children must emotionally commit to one another, and pay attention to what the other is doing. They have to articulate what's in their mind's eye - and negotiate some scenario that allows both their visions to come alive.  When one kid just announced the beginning of a Ninja battle, but the other wants to be a cowboy, they have to figure out how to still ride off into the sunset together.

If however the child hasn't developed these good habits with friends, and the younger sibling comes along, now there's very little incentive to learn the skills of shared play (choosing an activity they both can enjoy, inviting the other and/or asking to be included, recognizing when someone is busy or wants to play alone).  The incentives are not there because the sibling will be there tomorrow no matter what, with no time off for good behaviour.  There is simply no motivation to change.[xxv]

[16] 'Nurtureshock' by Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman 2009 Page 127

[17] Dr. Laurie Kramer, Associate Dean at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her work about attempting to get brothers and sisters to be nicer to each other quoted here in 'Nurtureshock' by Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman 2009 Page 129

Web Exclusive: The New Science of Siblings
Journalist Po Branson looks at why play time can matter more than the fighting.



Growing up, my brothers and I fought all the time. We bickered, competed, and pummeled each other. However, we also played together endlessly, from morning to dusk, indoors and out. We played every sport in the backyard, built forts in trees, jumped off ramps on our bikes, swam in the lake, and built elaborate haunted houses in our basement.

According to Dr. Laurie Kramer, one of the world's leading experts on sibling behavior, the fact we played together so often matters more than the fact we fought so often, which is why my brothers and I have such close friendships as adults today.

For over twenty years, Kramer has tracked sibling pairs from infancy through adulthood. She's isolated the secret indicators in childhood which predict siblings' futures. It turns out that the ratio of playing together to fighting together is key; there have to be more good times than bad times. Siblings who don't fight but don't play together either end up not having warm relationships as adults.

Sibling quarrels are a fact of family life. On average, young siblings argue or fight 3.5 times an hour, which adds up to ten minutes of every hour. In observational studies, siblings make 700 percent more negative and controlling statements to each other than they do to friends.

Why? Because if you treat a friend badly, they will eventually stop being your friend. Siblings, meanwhile, will be there tomorrow, no matter what. In the words of one scholar, "Siblings are genetically sentenced to live together, with no time off for good behaviour." There is no incentive to treat each other better.

(As parents we…) Make playing together a privilege. When our kids are constantly fighting, fussing, or competing, we remove the privilege of playing together. We call it having a day of boredom, and it's amazing how relatively quickly it generates new appreciation for one's siblings.

http://familyresiliency.illinois.edu/research/more_fun_sisters_brothers.html

## *So can we belong without sharing?*

A friend of mine recently spent some time in Nigeria in a situation where, as an outsider, he was separated and protected from the normal society.  He observed that the society seemed to be "broken", that nobody helped each other, there was no sense of community.  It seemed that what was happening was that every person in the society was looking after himself, to the best of his ability, regardless of the effect that might have on others; there was very little cohesion in the society surrounding him.  This attitude seemed to permeate all of the society that he saw, from the lowliest person on the street right the way up to the Chief Executive Officer of the company he was working in.  There was no paternalism and very little 'management' and so there was little motivation to do any work, and consequently very little got done.

On the streets criminality was commonplace and often conducted in full view, there was no real 'police' type of security and no fear of the law.  Regularly on his way to work his car would be stopped by illegally erected roadblocks manned by mercenaries often dressed in fake police uniforms .  Money would be demanded with menace usually backed up by the waving of guns.  These mercenaries were looking after themselves and making money by whatever means was available to them.  There was no fear of the law, in fact it seems that they got kudos from being outside of the law.  Traffic accidents happened but nobody came and helped the victims – in fact one died in front of him.  Dead people were left lying on the streets - people just walked or drove by.

At that time, the crowd that gathered did what they liked and mob rule took over.  The police stood by and watched.  The only place that he observed a sense of community and sharing was within the religious communities.  The only well maintained buildings were the religious buildings.  The contrast between these two parts of their lives was very marked.  It seems that a sense of shared expectation and of common purpose is necessary for good governance of a town or city.

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