

‘The ticking clock thing’:
a systems-psychodynamic exploration of leadership in UK organisations
that engage the public on climate change

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Abstract

Systems-psychodynamic scholars have paid limited attention to organisational dynamics in organisations whose task includes addressing climate change, but the experience of working in such organisations is increasingly significant as the climate crisis intensifies. This phenomenological study convened a group of leaders in organisations that engage the UK public on climate change (climate change communication), for seven meetings over eleven months. The results are analysed and the experience explored using an innovative combination of Co-operative Inquiry, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and a systems-psychodynamic lens. Methodologically the study contributes new links between these three fields and proposals for how Co-operative Inquiry can be appropriately managed.

The study identifies seven themes: exclusion, shame, sexualised excitement and threat, splitting, a sense of fragility, an uncertain relationship with authority, and difficulties with grieving. These themes represent social defences that can be seen as characterising the experience of participants' work. The emotional flavour of these social defences resonates with the climate emotions proposed by the existing body of climate psychology literature.

A tentative proposal is made that working in this field constitutes a traumatic epistemological, social, and emotional experience; and that the fact of the traumatic experience, and the fear of annihilation that its elements carry, is the 'unthought known' in this work. Organisations that engage the public on climate change, it is proposed, may unconsciously activate a version of the 'internal establishment' that exists to defend against the unthought known, with the establishment unleashing perverse dynamics and other defensive mechanisms such as shame, with a particular focus on maintaining the split polarities and thereby preventing genuine connection with others who are different.

New connections are made between climate trauma theory and organisational social defences. Psychoanalytically-informed and ecopsychological trauma scholarship are explored to identify steps that could be taken to support people working in climate change communication and related fields. Further research is proposed, including organisational observation and biographical exploration.

Acknowledgements

I want first to thank the participants in this study. The phrase ‘ticking clock thing’ in the thesis title originated in a statement in one of our meetings, which for me encapsulates the emotional experience of working in climate change communication and engagement: “we’re always working with this like ticking clock thing, ticking clock thing, and we...we try and go faster and faster and faster and get there quicker and quicker and quicker because of the ticking clock thing”. Thank you all for managing to keep the ticking clock enough in the background to take part in the study; thank you for sharing your feelings and responses, even when these were painful or bewildering; thank you for the work that you do.

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My son Robbie Nestor reminds me always of why climate work matters, and why it’s not the only thing.

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Chapter 1: The study, its motivation and rationale

1.1 Vignette

Monday 9 August 2021. “Code red for humanity,” say the headlines (Guterres, 2021): the IPCC’s sixth assessment on climate change is out today. I’ve spent the weekend swimming in a wave of productivity, up at six and working most of the day writing the discussion chapter of my thesis. It felt great. My stepson and his wife came round with the baby yesterday morning. We don’t normally talk about the climate crisis, because we disagree. He didn’t like it when I was arrested in the Extinction Rebellion protests two years ago, and he worries that I make his wife anxious about climate. I don’t like it that he seems to think that if government is not acting there is little to be concerned about. But yesterday when he asked me how the thesis was going, I found myself saying, “The writing’s going well, but it feels like I’m whistling in the wind with everything that’s happening.” He nodded, paused, and replied, “At work we have people coming round every so often to check we’re complying with the Covid rules. I think we need something like that for climate change: a bit of enforcement.”

I’d like that too. But there seems to be nobody with the authority to enforce. We’ve got to do what we can without any grown-ups. Well, at least I can finish the thesis. Back to work.

1.2 Summary

Section 1.3 of this chapter gives a brief outline of the focus of the study and its value.

Section 1.4 builds on the vignette in section 1.1 above to explain the author’s

motivation for the study; section 1.5 provides a brief contextualising description of climate change policy in the UK; and section 1.6 gives a summary of the research strategy of the study and describes its philosophical stance.

1.3 Focus of study

What is it like working in organisations that engage the public on climate change?

What are the dynamics that leaders experience? This study explores the relationship between two phenomena: the difficult feelings associated with the climate and ecological crisis, and the organisational culture and working practices in organisations working to engage the public on this polarised, frightening, urgent subject. It looks in depth at how its participants experience organisational culture and how they think about their experience, and proposes connections with climate feelings. Through working with both systems-psychodynamics and depth climate psychology, the study extends the existing theoretical understandings of both fields.

The study's overarching research question is:

What is the experience of leaders in organisations whose task includes engaging with the public on climate change?

1.4 Motivation: the climate crisis, organisations, leadership and me

This section of the chapter outlines the author's personal and professional motivation for and focus within the study. I am personally drawn to psychoanalytic perspectives on the world in part because as a patient I find it a process that through a relationship takes seemingly dead parts of the self and breathes life into them, enabling me to feel pain, fear, joy and love where before there was numbness and dreariness. Some psychoanalytic perspectives on human-induced global warming propose that in our extraction of the fossil fuels anciently formed, built up and

concentrated over millions of years there is something of the desperate grabbiness of the small child who feels both omnipotent and tiny, in need of returning to the infinite warmth and protection of the womb and enraged by her neediness (Weintrobe, 2020b).

Such grabbiness has been argued by Naomi Klein and others to be an aspect of the colonial mindset, in which the world exists in order to provide the wealthy nations with everything they could possibly want: “taking without caretaking .. treating land and people as resources to deplete rather than as complex entities with rights to a dignified existence based on renewal and regeneration” (Klein, 2015, p 447). The term coined for this mindset is ‘extractivism’.

I was born in 1962, and grew up in a restless, peripatetic white family with colonial, Anglo-Indian and northern English Methodist origins. My immediate family felt its share of the guilt and shame of colonisation, and anger at its destructiveness. Our family lived in Iran for some years when I was a child, alongside but not fully part of either the Iranian or the British oil-industry communities: our parents were engaged in British Council education activities. From this experience and other influences, I absorbed the view that colonialism and the ascendancy of the post-colonial Western nations are leading causes of poverty, global conflict and the despoliation of the planet; and conversely developed a sense of delight in the innovation and energy released by the historic use of fossil fuels.

In my twenties and thirties I worked as an equality practitioner, to make a contribution towards redressing some of the human effects of post-colonial racism and anti-immigration. More recently, in the emerging problem of climate change and the work of trying to address it, I found a good fit with that worldview – which I

discuss and to some extent problematise later in this section. My reparative urges now centre on working to reduce carbon emissions, and to support those struggling with climate-related feelings, at a personal and community level.

I am the chair of a low-carbon community group, whose purpose is to provide practical help to local residents to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions. In this context I first facilitated, then trained facilitators and contributed to the materials for a psychoanalytically-informed, community-based small-group learning programme about climate change, known as Carbon Conversations (Randall and Brown, 2015). This work connected me with the growing field of depth psychology with a focus on climate change, described in the next chapter and exemplified by the work of the Climate Psychology Alliance. I was influenced by the discussions in this scholarship of the unmanageable feelings (Randall, 2009) that may underlie the collective silence (Norgaard, 2011) and apparent apathy (Lertzman, 2009) on climate change.

Involvement in the Carbon Conversations programme and in the community group developed my interest in how policymakers and campaigners talk about climate change with the public: what a contested area it is, how polarised and politicised it is, and how much the various players seem to need to insist on their own rightness both in terms of climate policies and in terms of how climate change is communicated. I was part of the polarisation: being influenced by the depth psychology scholarship meant that I tended towards being scornful of what I saw as the 'not in front of the children' communication approaches that aim to protect the public from difficult feelings by emphasising small personal steps to save energy such as not overfilling the kettle.

As the climate crisis has intensified, feeling my own sense of being silent about climate and seeing how little it is talked about at community and informal levels, since 2018 I have been facilitating a space I call 'climate cafés'. Based on the Death Café model (Underwood, 2014), they allow a holding space for feelings about the climate crisis and thence, I hope, develop the capacity to talk about it (Nestor, 2020; Gribkoff, 2021). I have also been offering workshops that help people to talk about climate change with friends and family. Participants' stories in these settings have been profoundly moving for me, and listening to them has opened up a way out of the polarised mindset and towards an empathetic concern for the human beings struggling with an unmanageable, intractable issue while trying to live their lives and interact with the people they love. While I am still interested in public engagement on climate change, I feel less trapped in the 'who's doing it right' dynamic and more genuinely interested in the challenges of engaging with the climate crisis.

The organisational experience of working in the community group is also part of my motivation. It has been both energising and anxious: there is a feeling of 'doing something' and simultaneously a sense of catastrophic failure. The phrase 'ticking clock thing' in the thesis title originated in a statement by one of the study's participants, which resonates with my own organisational experience of the huge urgency of climate change: "we're always working with this like ticking clock thing, ticking clock thing, and we...we try and go faster and faster and faster and get there quicker and quicker and quicker because of the ticking clock thing". This experience has developed my interest in what it feels like to work in organisations that engage the public on climate change. As a freelance organisational consultant I have consulted to low-carbon groups similar to mine, and to a national climate change communication organisation; and have worked with or observed environmental

sustainability professionals; a university engineering department whose research and teaching specialism is sustainable building; and a national sustainability charity. These experiences stimulated my interest in the emotional experiences of the organisations. I have noticed the strength of conflict within some organisations, and how difficult they can be as places to work and lead, with painful emotions around power and unconscious location of different aspects of leadership in different people. In 2019-20 I held a local co-ordinating role within Extinction Rebellion (XR), experiencing the organisational culture and approach to engagement and decision-making within this group, whose organising principles are based on sociocracy (*Extinction rebellion*, 2018). Particularly evident was how difficult it was to hold a reflective space to allow activism to be infused by thought and feeling – despite a clear organisational intention to do so.

These experiences prompted me to wonder whether ‘depth’ climate psychology might have some relevance to climate change organisations as organisations. Would the unmanageable feelings about climate change posited by this scholarship be affecting the organisational experience, and if so in what way? The literature review of climate psychology in Chapter 2 explores these questions.

Much of my professional focus since the early 2000s has been leadership development, initially as an internal consultant within an organisation and then as a freelancer. Having worked extensively with heads of departments in higher education institutions, I am fascinated by the individual leader’s position on the boundaries between different parts of a system (Roberts, 1994b). I enjoy helping leaders to think about their ‘organisation in the mind’ (Armstrong, 2005) and to explore the tensions in leadership.

Personally I find exercising leadership difficult and painful, because it surfaces some early feelings of greed and shame around my wish for power and control, and evokes a sense of my participation in the grabby or extractivist mindset referred to earlier. From my late twenties I have always held formal leadership roles in organisations, either as an employee or as a trustee or volunteer. The formal role helps to provide a structure, and being inside the structure both reduces and intensifies ambivalence and anxiety for me. Being a leader in XR involved some of these difficult feelings, in particular bringing me in touch with the inevitability of failure (Gosling, 2017): it also opened me up, for the first time, to the joy and delight that can be part of the leader's experience. Exploring leadership in group relations settings (Miller, 1990) has brought me in touch with the way leadership can act as a property of a group, given to, taken by, and withheld from individuals depending on the unconscious dynamics in the group. This personal and professional experience of leadership motivates my interest in what it might be like for climate change leaders working with failure and despairing feelings; where they find joy; the nature of their ambivalence and anxiety, and how these feelings connect with their place in a human system.

In summary, the personal motivation for this study comes from the concatenation of personal and systems-psychodynamic interests in colonialism and climate change; talking about (communicating) climate change; organisations; and leadership.

1.5 The context: climate change and public policy in the UK

The work of climate campaigners and communicators in the UK exists in the following public policy context. In 2005 a cross-party group of members of parliament successfully steered the Climate Change Bill (*Climate Change Act*, 2008) into

legislation, based on an original bill drafted by the environmental campaign group Friends of the Earth (2017) and adopted with an overwhelming majority (Hansard, 2008). The Act represents “the first global legally binding climate change mitigation target set by a country” (Grantham Institute, 2020). It established the independent Climate Change Committee, which sets and monitors the UK’s carbon budgets, and reports annually on progress. However, total carbon emissions (including emissions of imported goods) have continued to rise (Bowen, 2014) and according to the Climate Change Committee, government policies have not in any way matched the ambition of their targets or the scale of what is needed (Climate Change Committee, 2018; 2021).

The present study took place in 2018 and 2019, at a time when UK politics was heavily preoccupied with the UK’s forthcoming departure from the European Union but also when Extinction Rebellion was bursting on to the national scene, with major and influential protests in November 2018, April 2019, and October 2019.

1.6 Research and philosophical stance

This section describes the philosophical positions that inform the design and conduct of the study: subtle-realist and phenomenological ontology and epistemology, a psychoanalytically-informed research philosophy, and a social-constructionist perspective on emergence and social change.

Thinking about our changing climate inevitably brings one up against questions of the nature of the world and how we know what we know. Climate scientists generally work within a postpositivist ontology and epistemology (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

When considering appropriate action in response to global warming, the constructivist philosophical positions (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) more common in the

social sciences come more to the fore: social problems are defined and their solutions discussed in very different ways depending on the social identity and politics of those doing the discussing. Personally, I make a claim in favour of the scientific method used to assess, predict and measure the impact of carbon-dioxide emissions on the climate. In making the claim I adopt a realist stance: I argue that the claim cannot be based on personal empirical experience, both because models and predictions play a large part in investigating the climate system, and also because it is impossible for any individual – let alone one with limited scientific education like myself – to draw conclusions from such empirical experience. Conclusions must be based on the ontologies and epistemologies of the scientists working on climate, and this is done through their existence as social groups. The creation of scientific norms such as acceptable standards of evidence and transparency is a social act, carried out through negotiation, action and reaction by individuals in their social roles as scientists. It is then accepted – or not – by social groups elsewhere in society in their social roles as citizens, policymakers, fossil fuel industry executives, renewables industry executives, environmental campaigners and so on. And in a continuing social and political cycle the extent of the acceptance influences the development of the norms.

Within the realist stance I take the 'subtle realist' perspective described by Hammersley (1992). This means that as a participant in the social setting in which these norms are negotiated, I take the view that the natural phenomena investigated by the scientists exist independently of their investigations; but that the investigations themselves and the other social phenomena described here are socially constructed. As a researcher trying to understand aspects of the social setting, in a parallel manner I believe that the social phenomena have their own existence independently

of my observation of them as a researcher; but that my knowledge of them is constructed by me as the researcher, in my particular social setting and with my particular social influences.

The research question, with its focus on experience, is a phenomenological one, based on my interest in what happens in these organisations and what it feels like to work in them; and as I will show in Chapters 2 and 3, the research strategy set out to create a space where the phenomena could be directly experienced. The approach is based on the psychoanalytic position that phenomena experienced in one part of a system can suggest patterns in the whole.

In addition to ontological and epistemological position described above, this study requires a position in relation to emergence, tensions, and change. The study is about organisations working in social change, engaging the UK public in a socially polarised issue that none the less has scientific consensus, to achieve social change in order to address a problem that the natural sciences can measure. The study is therefore located between the epistemologies associated with the social and natural sciences, and requires a focus on the boundaries between different epistemologies, the tensions between them, and perhaps the emergent spaces between them. In his book *Partisans in an Uncertain World*, Paul Hoggett (1992) draws on Winnicott's ideas about play – happening in a space neither internal nor external but with properties of both – and Marx's ideas about the worker engaging with the material, to see what it is capable of and explore its limitations: negotiating reality in order to change it. Sometimes this playful engagement requires tenacity in holding a position against powerful forces seeking to prevent change, at other times it requires flexibility to allow change. This is a social-constructionist perspective that I both

personally hold and believe to be helpful for this study, whose design attempts to provide a space in which the relevant phenomena can be experienced in the moment, playfully engaged with, and thought about. The details of the design are given in Chapter 3.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has described the personal, professional, and philosophical context and origins of the research study, and introduced aspects of the context and the study's intentions, setting the scene for Chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Purpose and summary

This chapter builds on Chapter 1's explanation of the personal and practitioner reasons for the study, to show academically why the study is needed and how it relates to other scholarship in the field.

The chapter shows that the important insights of depth climate psychology and organisationally-focused systems-psychodynamics could be enriched by being explored together with a focus on the little-studied subject of the organisational aspects of climate change work. Section 2.2 covers climate science and scientists, and the role of the communication of climate change in the policy landscape. Section 2.3 outlines the field of 'depth climate psychology' as the source of helpful insights into the experience of working with climate change. Section 2.4 explains how the systems-psychodynamic approach to organisational studies has developed and the limited use to date of the approach to explore organisations working on climate change. Section 2.5 summarises the conceptions, examples and contexts of leadership that are most relevant to climate change. Section 2.6 synthesises the results of the literature review and shows where this study sits in the scholarly landscape.

Material from the academic fields of organisations and leadership was identified using traditional keyword-based literature search methods, with the references from the initial results being used to follow the threads. Appendix 1 describes the approach adopted for this aspect of the review. The chapter also includes descriptions of the part played by different aspects of social psychology in the field of

climate change communication. For this aspect of the chapter, which is intended to describe how academic studies have influenced the professional field, the review began with popular writing and summaries of research widely used in the field, and traced their influences back through links to cited studies.

2.2 Climate science, climate scientists and climate communication

Organisations communicating with the public on climate change are basing their work on climate science. This review therefore begins with a brief summary of the state of our changing climate, followed by an overview of the role of climate science in UK public discourse on climate change.

2.2.1 Fossil-fuel emissions and global warming

It is now “unequivocal” that carbon-dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels are causing temperature rises that are behind the sea-level rises, extreme droughts, wildfires, unbreathable air, and thousand-year storms that we are seeing across the globe; and are threatening tipping points that will further destabilise weather patterns to the point that large parts of the planet may become unliveable for humans and other animals (Evans et al., 2021; Guterres, 2021; IPCC, 2021b). The largest companies extracting fossil fuels have known about the link between fossil fuel emissions and global warming for over forty years (Black, 1977). Action to mitigate global warming has been slow and inadequate: since the first UN report on climate change in 1990 (IPCC, 2021c), more carbon dioxide has been released into the atmosphere than in the 240 years preceding it (Stainforth, 2020).

2.2.2 The role of climate science and scientists in the UK

Climate science encompasses a range of research disciplines with multiple epistemologies. Climate scientists investigating the causes and likely future of anthropogenic climate change use a range of different scientific tools, including statistics, simulations, direct observation and measurement, reasoning, fingerprint studies, and expert judgement (Parker, 2018). Other physical and social scientists working on climate – including economists, sociologists, and psychologists – identify physical, technological, economic, and social options for mitigation of climate change and adaptation to its impacts. The social science tools include public communication, education, and engagement on the implications of climate change – important for creating support for the changes that are required. The UK is a significant player in climate research internationally. Between 1990 and 2019, the UK research councils and other funders supported physical sciences research projects of over £151bn and social science projects of about £1.4bn (Fankhauser et al., 2019; Overland and Sovacool, 2020).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) exists to synthesise the results of climate scientists' work and to provide governments at all levels with scientific information that they can use to develop climate policies (IPCC, 2021a). Every few years it creates authoritative statements that cover the detection of changes in the climate, the attribution of these to human activities, the projection of future changes in the climate, and options for policy decisions. The consensus of this peer-reviewed science is that human activities have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels through carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC, 2013; 2014;

2018; 2021b), and that current pledges and plans put the world on track for 2.7 degrees of warming by 2100 (UNFCCC, 2021).

Responsibility is not shared equally among humans: the evidence is that most fossil-fuel emissions are concentrated in a small number of countries and corporations (Heede, 2014; Frumhoff et al., 2015; Kenner and Heede, 2021).

2.2.3 Climate contrarianism and the communication of climate change

Some climate communication scholars (e.g. Parker, 2018; Overland and Sovacool, 2020) argue that it is the fossil-fuel-funded 'climate contrarian' (Moser and Dilling, 2007) challenges to the growing consensus around the human causes of the observed temperature rises, and the extremely polarised discourse on climate change (Fleming et al., 2014; Dunlap et al., 2016), that lie behind the growth of attribution climate science, with its arguably defensive focus on 'proving' that the science is right. Proof is not straightforward within the postpositivist ontology and epistemology (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) that inform the physical climate sciences: the evidence exists, it is complex, our methods for acquiring it are imperfect but becoming increasingly powerful, and there is enough evidence for us to be certain that action is needed. Bringing this evidence into the public domain, scientists are then faced with demands for clarity and with suspicion of their methods. According to one study, the battles with colleagues about how the science should be presented to the public, and the reception from the press when they try to explain the implications of the science, contribute more to the emotional challenges of some climate scientists' work than does their fear of the effects of climate change (Randall and Hoggett, 2019, p 250). This suggests that climate scientists engaging in the

communication of their work experience serious ontological and epistemological tensions as well as anxiety. The experience seems to be shared to a greater or lesser extent by others involved in climate change communication and education (Busch et al., 2019), and it matters because people communicating climate science need to be able to span the boundaries (Moser, 2010; Trainor, 2012); in particular as scientists become more alarmed and feel called on to advocate more strongly for action on climate change, they have to be able to hold the position of concerned citizen and not lay undue claim to be the neutral scientist (George, 2012).

2.2.4 Other aspects of climate communication and engagement

In the last fifteen years the communication of climate change has become a very crowded space (Thaler et al., 2012). Scientists and government officials have been joined by environmental campaigners, journalists, bloggers, lawyers, ‘national treasures’ like the UK’s David Attenborough, and celebrities – not to mention ordinary citizens and social media algorithms talking the different messages up and down. In terms of the epistemology of climate science the players in this ‘online ecosystem’ (Thaler et al., 2012) may be more or less closely aligned with the postpositive position described in section 2.2.3. By contrast, on the politics and epistemology of the social aspects of climate change they may have very different positions on, for example, whether the tone of communication should be positive and focus on small steps (Futerra, 2005; O’Neill and Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Energy Saving Trust, 2021) and small edits (‘nudges’) to ‘choice architecture’ (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009; Behavioural Insights Team, 2021); or whether it should make the impact of the climate crisis inescapably clear (Lynas, 2007; Farrell et al., 2019; Wallace-Wells, 2019;

Bendell, 2020; Lynas, 2020); and whether it should call for a roll-out of technocratic solutions (Climate Nexus, 2021; GreenBiz, 2021) or a fundamental transformation to the systems of capitalism and white supremacy (Monbiot, 2006; 2013; Klein, 2015; Racial Justice Network, 2019; Heglar, 2020).

Communicators may differ on the extent to which, in order to rise to the climate challenge, we need to change Western/Global North/white privilege models of consciousness, how to live, and what it means to be human (Gosling and Case, 2013; Kimmerer, 2013; Petzold et al., 2020). There are disagreements on the respective roles of individual psychology, bias, and cognitive limitations on the one hand, and the influence of the polarised social context on the other (Menon and Blount, 2003; Arie and Higgins, 2007; Shome and Marx, 2009; Kahan et al., 2011; Kahneman, 2011; Kahan, 2012; Kahan et al., 2012; Marshall, 2014).

2.2.5 Mainstream consensus on climate communications

The consensus among many UK communicators (influenced by Climate Outreach and the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations) is based on social and behavioural psychology and sociology (Doherty and Clayton, 2011; Swim et al., 2011; Clayton et al., 2015), and claims that both individual psychology and social norms matter in enabling people to internalise what is needed for climate change mitigation: gender and political and social identity influence beliefs and actions but these relationships are not immutable. Marshall and colleagues called on communicators to engage with the centre right of the political spectrum rather than staying in an environmentalist 'bubble' (Marshall (2015), Corner (2016)): the activities of Katharine Hayhoe (Hayhoe, 2021a; b) and Anna Jane Joyner (Joyner, 2021) are powerful examples of this important development. There is criticism (Moser and Dilling, 2007; Marshall,

2010) of a perceived failure among environmentalists to understand that information alone does not change people's minds or actions. From earlier perspectives that were concerned not to frighten or overwhelm people and instead to 'nudge' them into change or appeal to money-saving incentives, it is now seen as important to acknowledge the scale of the issue, but there remains an encouragement to be positive to build people's confidence and 'self-efficacy'. Activating pro-environmental values and identity so that people actively choose to lower their carbon footprint rather than being 'nudged' (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009) into it is also recommended (Crompton, 2010; McLoughlin et al., 2019). Alongside this, consistency and promoting the changes that really make a difference are encouraged (McLoughlin et al., 2019). This consensus draws from research on how pro-environmental values can be activated (Holmes et al., 2011), social tipping points (Otto et al., 2020), how identity and social practices may be understood and influenced (Shove and Spurling, 2013; Henwood, 2015), and the influence of personal low-carbon choices on others (Westlake, 2018). There is a move towards the position that individual responsibility and social change are inextricably linked (McLoughlin et al., 2019; Climate Outreach, 2021).

Paralleling a similar shift in the broader science communication field, there has been a move away from experts 'telling' towards the current emphasis on 'public engagement' and deliberative processes in which people make their own sense of the impact of climate change and the policy options for mitigation (Shaffer, 2012; Capstick et al., 2020; Willis, 2020).

2.3 Psychoanalytically and psycho-socially informed climate psychology and the role of emotions

In 2011 the Climate Psychology Alliance (CPA) was established (Andrews and Hoggett, 2019) with an initial focus on critiquing the framing in mainstream psychology of individual behaviour change as the problem and solution to climate change. The critique of behavioural approaches was based on their perceived treatment of emotions as barriers to behaviour change, and for their focus on carbon reductions at individual level (Hoggett and Randall, 2018). ‘Depth climate psychology’, as I will refer to the field, has used psychoanalytic and psycho-social theories, especially those of psychological defence, to explore what may lie underneath apparent public apathy or lack of interest in climate change. CPA gave a disciplinary and political home to writers from various psychoanalytic traditions, eco-therapy practitioners, and psycho-social researchers, as well as to those working within practices such as Active Hope (Macy and Johnstone, 2012) and Inner Transition (Transition Network, 2021).

2.3.1 Defences against strong feelings

This tradition proposes that, contrary to the widespread belief that most people are not concerned about climate change, in fact strong feelings are present but mostly defended against. Defence is recognised as a coping tool: Stanley Cohen (2001, p ix) describes “a sense of knowing that something is deeply wrong, but also knowing that I could not live in a state of permanent awareness of this knowledge”. The main emotions discussed in this tradition are grief (Randall, 2009; Willox, 2012; Lertzman, 2015; Head, 2016; Hoggett and Randall, 2018), guilt (Randall, 2013), linked to the moral injury presented by climate change (Weintrobe, 2020a); envy and shame (Orange, 2016), and anxiety and despair

(Weintrobe, 2013a). Other writers point to the multiplicity and messiness ('biodiversity') of the emotional impact (Hickman, 2020; Stanley et al., 2021), and discuss other emotions including rage and terror. Defences against these emotions include 'socially constructed silence' (Norgaard, 2011; Hoggett and Randall, 2016; 2017); apathy, masking deep grief and despair (Lertzman, 2015); dependence on phantasy saviours such as technology and individual leaders (Randall, 2009; Randall and Brown, 2015); and various kinds of insistence: on optimism and positivity (le Goff, 2017), on the certainty of collapse or apocalypse (Hoggett, 2011), and on the role of emerging technologies in fixing the problem and enabling emissions to continue (Long, 2015).

2.3.2 Struggles with dependence

At the root of the defensive response, it is argued, is the knowledge that we are dependent on each other and on the planetary systems of which we are part (Rust, 2007; Randall, 2013). As with dependence on our human mother, this knowledge is difficult. The reality of human dependence evokes early feelings of helplessness and activates early defences such as splitting and projection, pre-Oedipal narcissistic rage and omnipotence, and Oedipal and depressive guilt (Randall, 2013): we experience both love and hate for our mother Earth, but we are not supported to acknowledge this ambivalence. Instead, we are socialised into believing in the myth of our independence, and in the right of the wealthiest humans to exploit the planet and poorer, typically black and brown humans (Rust, 2007, p 4). We disconnect from intimacy (Rust, 2007) and creatureliness (Hoggett, 2020).

2.3.3 Grief and mourning

The distress evoked by climate change has been termed 'solastalgia' (Albrecht et al., 2007; Albrecht, 2019): a version of nostalgia or homesickness but centred on how we feel in (rather than for) our own home when the home is damaged or despoiled.

Grieving and mourning are seen as an important aspect of responding to this complex grief and of healing the disconnect from ourselves and from the natural world (Randall, 2009; Lertzman, 2015). Drawing on aspects of 'ecopsychology' (Roszak, 1992), which proposes that the core of the mind is the ecological unconscious, Ashlee Willox discusses the importance of grieving work in helping people handle climate change, and proposes that the collective lesson we face is to be able to recognise animal and plant deaths as being 'grievable', lives and deaths that are valued in themselves, therefore worthy of being mourned (Willox, 2012).

2.3.4 The social and political

Depth climate psychology includes work (notably by Paul Hoggett (Hoggett, 2011; 2019; 2020) and Sally Weintrobe (Weintrobe, 2013b; 2020a; 2021)) emphasising the importance of the social and political. Kari Norgaard's (2011) study of 'socially constructed silence' on climate change in a Norwegian community provides a convincing illustration of how defence mechanisms work at the social level in a context of acute contradiction between, on the one hand, social and national identities that include environmental concern, and on the other the reality of a society entirely dependent on fossil fuels. Matthew Adams (2016a) uses Terror Management Theory (discussed in the next section) to

construct a psycho-social version of the defences described by earlier scholars. Weintrobe (2021) argues that the structures of late capitalism promote the uncaring parts of ourselves at the expense of the caring parts. Socialised gender identity can be mobilised around this dichotomy: for example care and concern for climate can be socially constructed as feminine (Anshelm and Hultman, 2014; Nelson, 2020), while at the opposite extreme, ‘petro-masculinity’, “which appreciates the historic role of fossil fuel systems in buttressing white patriarchal rule” (Daggett, 2018), associates masculinity with a nihilistic, racist, omnipotent passion for the artefacts and practices of modern fossil-fuelled culture (Hollway, 2020). Advertising encourages us to believe that we are excepted from the demands of reality (Weintrobe, 2020a; 2021), that we must have what we like because, as Randall (2005, p 172) puts it, “desire or demand has been translated into need”. These are the perverse dynamics proposed by Long (2015): omnipotence and certainty, violent attacks on the object of dependence, and abusive behaviour. At a collective level, it is argued, western society seems to be operating in accordance with unconscious infantile beliefs that, fused with our mother, we need take no responsibility for feeding and clearing up after ourselves (Keene, 2013).

2.3.5 Terror Management Theory and trauma

A field adjacent to the CPA tradition builds on Terror Management Theory (TMT) (Becker, 1973; Greenberg and Arndt, 2012), which proposes that the knowledge of our own death creates anxiety and various kinds of defensive response, including difficulties with identity and a raised concern for social status. Dickinson (2009) and Adams (2016b) apply this framework to the climate crisis and argue that, facing not just our own death but the possible extinction of our

species, and the deaths and extinctions of other creatures, we are collectively experiencing a more extreme form of anxiety – and that this collective overwhelm helps to explain the increase in polarisation dynamics and collective freeze in the face of what is needed.

As can be seen from the preceding account, earlier climate psychology sought to explain apparent apathy and failure to act. Since 2018, when the fieldwork for this study began, there has been a visible growth in eco-anxiety, a spate of declarations of climate emergencies and similar government statements, and other indications – such as XR, Greta Thunberg, and the youth climate strikes – of a mass awakening from denial. But according to many commentators there has also been a continuing failure to act. Climate psychology over the same period has developed an interest in trauma scholarship (e.g. Woodbury, 2019; Hamilton, 2020; Bednarek, 2021), which had also begun to be considered in academic work on the practice of environmental sustainability (Doppelt, 2017). Scholars have continued to explore the relevance of TMT to climate dynamics, including increased social polarisation and forced migration (Stolorow, 2020; Bermudez, 2021; Stolorow, 2021). I began to consider these frameworks while reflecting on the experience of the fieldwork for this study, and wondering about possible preconditions to the data. They are therefore considered primarily in Chapter 5, where they illuminate the discussion of the study's findings.

2.4 Organisational dynamics

What is known about the experience of working in the range of organisations that include climate change communication in their work? I begin with an overview of the epistemological framework for exploring organisations that is used in this study.

2.4.1 Tavistock tradition for thinking about organisations

The Tavistock or systems-psychodynamic tradition works with psychoanalytic and Kleinian object-relations understandings of the role of the unconscious in influencing human behaviour, combined with aspects of work systems theory (Miller and Rice, 1967) and Wilfred Bion's theories of unconscious mentality in groups (Bion, 1961), to explore how organisational behaviour is influenced by what Menzies Lyth (1960) termed 'social defences' against unmanageable feelings, often anxiety.

Wilfred Bion's *Experiences in Groups* (1961) proposed three ways in which, group behaviour evoking primitive responses in its members, a group will express the unconscious basic assumptions it makes from moment to moment about why it has come together as a group. These are the basic assumptions of Fight-Flight (baF), in which a group behaves as if it has come together to fight or run away from an enemy; Pairing (baP), when a group behaves as if it has come together for the purpose of reproduction, through two of its members; and Dependency (baD), in which a group behaves as if it exists in order to have its members' needs met and be protected by one individual.

Miller and Rice (1967) introduced socio-technical aspects to the object-relations and group insights of Klein and Bion. Drawing on the biological metaphors of open systems theory, they proposed that organisations could be seen as open systems, taking in and transforming resources in the service of their primary task.

In an influential article on nursing practices, Isabel Menzies Lyth (1960) hypothesised that organisations' structures, roles, tasks and ways of working will always contain an element of social defences against the characteristic anxieties generated by the task. The concept has been used to explore experiences in residential homes for disabled people (Miller and Gwynne, 1972); the human services (Obholzer and Roberts, 1994, 2019), teaching and headteachers (French, 1997; Tucker, 2015), and local government and the corporate sector (Huffington et al., 2004). Systems-psychodynamics concepts have also helped to illuminate different situations in the workplace: for example, corporate mergers (de Gooijer, 2009); new contextual challenges and the role of leaders (Armstrong (2005), Armstrong and Rustin (2015b)); risk and the changing nature of authority in the workplace (Hirschhorn, 1997); extreme environments, in which the concept of 'protective frames' may replace social defences and anxiety may be re-interpreted as excitement (Hirschhorn and Horowitz, 2015); and trauma and stress (Bell and Bugge, 2011; Bugge, 2015).

Within the tradition, several concepts have developed over time in response to the methodological challenges of exploring and investigating the unconscious aspects of organisational life. These include 'organisation in the mind' (Hutton et al., 1997; Armstrong, 2005; Tucker, 2012): the relationship between the individual's internal psychic organisation and their experience of the organisation in which they work. 'Organisation in the mind' draws from the Kleinian concept of projective identification, as developed by Bion in his work on groups (Klein, 1946; Bion, 1961; Spillius, 2015, chapter 3) – a process by which unwanted or unbearable aspects of the self are projected into another person, who then feels, acts out, or otherwise accepts the projection. Its working assumption is that

members of a social system carry within them and act out a representation of the system, including its unconscious basic assumptions and phantasies. The working assumption enables the consultant or researcher to explore dynamics from the wider system by working with a small group, in whom the system may be represented fractally; tentative insights from the small group are tested for their relevance to the wider system through some form of triangulation such as a 'working note' or discussion with a representative group.

Paul Hoggett's concept of 'the internal establishment' (Hoggett, 1998) provides a further framework for psychoanalytic insights into the unconscious in groups and organisations. Hoggett draws on Klein's adaptation of Freud's 'death instinct' ("the notion that, from birth, the death drive exists as a force that threatens to destroy us from within" – Hoggett (1998, p 10)); on Bion's conjecture that "in some way the mind is structured like a primitive society" (Hoggett, 1998, p 13); and on work by Meltzer (1968), Rosenfeld (1971), and Steiner (1993). He proposes that, in groups as in individuals, the existential, catastrophic terror of annihilation that arises in response to the operation of the death drive is given a form of spurious, defensive comfort by the creation of an internal establishment, which claims to protect us from the terror it has itself created so long as we comply with its denial of reality. "The establishment," Hoggett proposes, "relates to any area in the life of a group that cannot be thought about..." (p 16) – its 'unthought known' (Bollas, 1987). The establishment deploys shame and envy to prevent the unthought known being thought about.

2.4.2 Applications of the systems-psychodynamic model to climate change organisations

A systematic literature search (Appendix 1) was carried out to investigate the volume of scholarship about organisations working on climate change from the perspective of social defences against anxiety. Such organisations are small in number and often relatively new (Wittneben et al., 2012; Mitra, 2013): to broaden the search I therefore included studies of environmental organisations and of people in organisations working on environmental sustainability (Brundtland, 1987) – both broadly defined – and the extent to which social defence theory is part of these studies. The results, described below, indicate a gap in the research.

Wright et al. (2012) conducted an interview study of 36 environmental sustainability professionals in corporate settings. The authors' focus is on the construction of coherent identity narratives as a way of managing the political and change leadership aspects of respondents' work and the felt contradictions in their experience. The use of identity narratives in the context of climate change is significant: as the authors point out, "Climate change threatens not just our economic and social way of life, but our very sense of who we are as individuals" (p 1453), and as change agents working within the paradigm that shareholder value and profit are what count, the study's respondents are located at the heart of this contradiction. Within a 'heroic' narrative frame the respondents were able to switch between different identities depending on their audience and their own emotional needs, creating a sense of coherence through the use of "an edited past, a preferred present and a desired future" (p 1471). The study provides valuable indications of the challenges of organisational

experience that are relevant to the present study. Their findings are supported by other studies such as Penny Walker's practitioner perspective on the emotional challenges faced by her clients, sustainability professionals (Walker, 2008a; b), and Nadine Andrews' insightful PhD and journal article inquiring into the experience of six sustainability managers and leaders in the UK and Canada. Andrews identifies the psychosocial factors affecting her respondents' work (threats and tensions, coping methods, contextual influences on the efficacy of the coping methods, and the ways in which all of these relate to each other in a feedback loop). Like Wright et. al., she finds the use of heroic narratives and she also identifies a focus on positivity as a coping strategy (Andrews, 2017a; b). Andrews is interested in unconscious aspects of organisational life, but like the other writers cited in this section she does not work explicitly within the Tavistock tradition or make use of social defence theory.

Silvia Prins's (2002) article on a multi-party project dealing with erosion problems in Belgium, while not looking specifically at an organisation addressing climate change, does use social defence theory in a related context. She identifies struggles with leadership and authority, seeing an absence of role clarity as a defence against the anxieties created by the task. Mnguni's (2008; 2010) exploration of a partnership for environmental sustainability in Australia is the only research study I have been able to identify that brings social defence theory to bear specifically on organisations addressing climate change. She identifies social defences at a number of levels: firstly, splitting between 'close-to-nature' and 'estrangement from nature' (p 122); the claiming of all reparative intent for one's own organisation and projection into other organisations all responsibility for 'socioecological degradation' (p 123); and the idealisation of working on the

land compared with working in the town. These splits seem particularly relevant to organisations involved in public engagement on climate change, which need to be able to integrate the splits if they are to be effective communicators.

Mnguni also identifies organisational social defences in the creation of and collusion with meaningless tasks and targets.

David Wasdell (2011) explores the dynamics of the UN Conference of Parties (COP) climate talks in Copenhagen in 2009 using a systems-psychodynamic lens. He acknowledges that the article is not based on a systematic research base, but proposes that it signals some important dynamics: he conceptualises the talks as a temporary organisation, profoundly inhibited from collaborating and making progress by the unconscious need to protect the fossil-fuel industry.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Paul Hoggett and Rosemary Randall conducted a comparative study of the working cultures of climate scientists (primarily those engaged in public communication of climate change) and climate activists (Hoggett and Randall, 2016; Hoggett and Randall, 2018; Randall and Hoggett, 2019). Their study used the lens of social defence theory, and found that respondents' "most difficult experiences arose not from their deepening understanding of climate change but when using this knowledge to engage with a resistant public" (Randall and Hoggett, 2019, p 248). But the study, while important for shedding light on social defences in climate work, does not have an organisational focus.

Given the insights offered by psychoanalytically-informed scholarship on human responses to climate change, the limited amount of such scholarship in

organisational studies of organisations addressing climate change suggests an area worth exploring.

2.5 Leadership

2.5.1 Why leadership?

This study uses the experience of leaders in climate-communications organisations to shed some light on the wider experience of working in those organisations. This is possible because people in leadership roles - whether formal or informal – channel, embody and articulate the experience of working in organisations (Western, 2019). By one definition (Miller and Rice, 1967) leadership constitutes the boundary function of a system. In this capacity leaders are the subject of projections and expectations from others within and outside their organisation (Obholzer, 1996; Lawrence, 1998; Obholzer, 2019), and the dynamics they experience offer a way into understanding the organisation more broadly (Hutton et al., 1994; Hoggett, 2006).

The following sections explore leadership concepts and examples in climate change communication and in related areas.

2.5.2 Conceptions and definitions of leadership

A key distinction between environmental or climate change leadership and leadership in other settings is the relationship with the planet. In the introduction to her two-volume edited book on environmental leadership, Deborah Gallagher (2012, p 5) draws attention to the distinction between the ‘new environmental paradigm’, whose worldview involves a respect for the intrinsic value of nature, and the ‘dominant social paradigm’ under which mastery of nature is essential

for human progress. In this context she defines environmental leadership as “a process by which Earth’s inhabitants apply interpersonal influence and engage in collective action to protect the planet’s natural resources and its inhabitants from further harm”. Stober’s (2013; 2014; 2019) approach to ‘nature-centred leadership’ applies modern stakeholder theory to the definition. In the context of a sustainability masters course a more specifically climate-focused definition of leadership is as “a continuous, collaborative and transformational process with the purpose of overcoming the knowledge-action gap in adaptation and mitigation to the super wicked problems of climate change” (May, 2015, p 39). In her contribution to Benjamin Redekop’s (2019) edited book exploring critical perspectives on environmental leadership, Evans (2019) argues that environmental leadership must encompass social justice as well as environmental sustainability, and to this end must be supported in everyone in a sustainable society.

The focus in these definitions on leadership as a relational, collective process is characteristic of much modern scholarship on leadership. Bendell et. al. (2017; 2019), from the perspective of critical social theory and critical leadership studies, propose a move away from dominant conceptions of leadership that see it as the property of individual heroic figures acting upon others. And Western’s (2008; 2019) eco-leadership proposes “leaders as being agents distributed throughout organizations (of all kinds) taking a holistic, systemic, and ethical stance” (Western, 2010, p 36), and organisations as “ecosystems within ecosystems” (Western, 2008, p 4). In this ‘post-heroic’ framework, which draws on complexity theory (Stacey, 2001), leadership is considered as a distributed property of a complex adaptive system rather than as a role (Uhl-Bien et al.,

2007; Faruqi, 2012; Elkington and Booyesen, 2015). It represents a conceptual move away from individually-focused frameworks, and has developed in part as a response to the increasing ‘wickedness’ of modern leadership challenges – discussed in the next section.

2.5.3 The leadership of wicked and super-wicked problems

The concept of wicked problems was first articulated in the early 1970s (Rittel and Webber, 1973): it describes social issues resistant to solving, for which among other features there is no single definition or solution, and no right or wrong answer, only better or worse. The concept is widely used, including in leadership studies (Grint, 2005; Faruqi, 2012), though it has been criticised as resting on theoretically shaky foundations (Lönngren and van Poeck, 2021) and as over-used and under-nuanced (Alford and Head, 2017). However for the purposes of this study, it provides a useful heuristic for describing the context in which the research participants work, especially when further refined to encompass the super-wicked.

Climate change is defined as a super-wicked problem among many legal scholars and policymakers (Lazarus, 2008; Levin et al., 2009; 2012). Features that make it a super-wicked problem, in addition to the features of wicked problems, are (1) the human tendency towards irrational discounting of the future (Levin et al., 2012) combined with the fact that the longer it takes to address the problem, the harder it will be to do so; (2) “those who are in the best position to address the problem are not only those who caused it, but also those with the least immediate incentive to act within that necessary shorter timeframe”; and (3) “the absence of any global law-making institution with a jurisdictional reach and

legal authority that match the scope of the problem” (Lazarus, 2008, pp 1160-1161). I have only been able to identify one organisationally-focused study using the concept (Temby et al., 2016). This investigation of civil servants in the US, Australia and Canada found that the research subjects thought that collaboration was crucially important when working on climate change adaptation as a super-wicked problem, but that they experienced systemic barriers to its successful operation. Hirschhorn and Horowitz’s (2015) exploration of leadership in ‘extreme working environments’ looks at environments where decisions must be made fast and are irreversible, not super-wicked exactly but sharing some characteristics. They propose an extension of the social defences model in which “danger, excitement, and protective frames” replace “work, anxiety, and social defences” (Hirschhorn and Horowitz, 2015, p 199), but this has not been widely taken up in the environmental field.

Leadership in the context of a super-wicked challenge is seen as particularly challenging. Mehreen Faruqi (2012) points to the frightening nature of the demands on leaders working with awareness of complexity and the super-wicked. Wilson and Kosempel (2016, pp 44-45) point to “the intrinsic conflict between framing a problem as critical, which puts the onus on authorities to solve it, and framing it as wicked, which puts the onus on everyone to solve it”. The symposium introduced by this article includes discussions of aspects of consciousness as a response to the challenges. The implication here is that, arising from the scale of the challenge of the climate crisis, concepts of leadership are needed that put humans into their planetary context, and human leaders must develop the capacity to think outside the human frame: to become aware in their own minds and bodies of the long timescales of evolution and the

experiences of the other creatures with whom we share the planet; to be able to collaborate not just across organisational boundaries but across species boundaries. For example, Satterwhite et al. (2016) propose that leaders need to develop the ability to work with 'deep time', seeing humanity in its context within the very long timescales of the Earth's history ; and Koskela and Schuyler (2016) propose the need for what was popularised by Otto Scharmer (Scharmer, 2009) as 'presencing': "sensing and actualising one's highest future possibility" (Scharmer and Kaufer, 2013, p 19).

2.5.4 Examples of leadership contexts and tasks

Context and task matter. Gallagher (2012, p 7) points out that "institutional settings might stimulate environmental leadership and ... its practice might differ depending upon which institutional frame it is enacted within". Within the systems-psychodynamic field, the organisation's role, purpose or 'primary task' (Miller and Rice, 1967; Roberts, 1994b), and the way it responds organisationally to the demands of this (Menzies Lyth, 1960), are seen as profoundly affecting the emotional experience of the work at an organisational level (Cardona, 1999).

Context- or task-specific studies identified for this review include Prado-Lorenzo and Garcia-Sanchez's (2010) investigation of the organisational factors that enable boards of directors to exercise leadership on carbon reporting (they find that boards are essentially focused on the responsibility of creating economic value, which limits their capacity to address responsibilities that conflict with this); and Arroyo and Preston's (2007) exploration in Moser and Dilling's (2007) book on climate change communication of how businesses respond to mandatory public policy, which the authors apply to a consideration of how

businesses can respond to climate change. Kythreotis' (2012) study of the difficult relationships between UK environmental voluntary groups and local government found that leaders in the voluntary groups were cynical and suspicious of local authorities' motives for partnership, and more comfortable working with each other than with local authorities, but sometimes prepared to be pragmatic and responsive if it would help to build a shared power base.

Mitra (2013) analyses the climate change campaign organisation 350.org, and its leader Bill McKibben. The article is based on a discourse analysis of published communication materials, and explores from a critical dialogic perspective uses of identity, communicative naming, relatedness, and other aspects of how Bill McKibben and 350.org communicate. The choice of 350.org is explicitly based on the intractability of the issues 350.org is addressing. Mitra describes how identity references, communication style and activities seem called on to flex in response to the intractability, suggesting that the nature of the work creates significant pressures on both the organisation and its leader.

2.5.5 Environmental and climate change leaders' capabilities and skills

Without returning to the assumption that leadership is a matter only of personal characteristics, we may still consider that how leaders behave is a significant question for this study, not least because it may be seen as important by leaders themselves. Benjamin Redekop in his (2010) edited book on leadership for sustainability proposes that leaders need to facilitate intrinsic motivation to act for the common good, and foster love of nature as an important step towards sustainability. Some studies (e.g. Robertson and Barling, 2013; Ewest, 2015; Robertson, 2015) find correlations between transformational leadership practices

and pro-environmental behaviours in employees. Work at Ashridge Business School (Bond et al., 2010, p 28) suggests the value of a relational framework that acknowledges competing demands on leaders, in particular the need “to hold the dynamic of an holistic, complex world view, whilst, at the same time, grappling with the day-to-day.” In a specifically epistemological perspective on the need to work across boundaries, Sarah Trainor (2012, p 511) argues that climate change leaders of the future will need to be boundary-spanners (Haslam et al., 2011) between scientific research and application; between natural, physical, and social sciences; and between the known and the unknown (i.e., uncertainty).

I conducted a search of brochures, course descriptions, blogs, and other marketing materials from management and leadership education providers with a specific focus on the environment, such as masters courses in environmental management, or leadership for sustainability programmes, and popular books on leadership with content relating to sustainability and climate change. The results of the search suggest that leaders need the ability to work across organisational and disciplinary boundaries for multi-party collaboration; communication and influence; empowerment; ethics, responsibility, respect for the natural world; innovation; long-term thinking and purpose; maintaining many strong relationships; self-awareness, self-reflexivity and critical thinking; narrative skills; systems thinking; tenacity and resilience; and an understanding of power in social relations (Quinn and Baltes, 2007; Parkin, 2010; Mead, 2014; Grayson, 2017; Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, 2021).

Much of Jonathan Gosling's psychoanalytically-informed work discusses leadership in relation to sustainability (Gosling et al., 2012; Gosling and Kaipa, 2017), including how leaders can handle the possibly catastrophic social impacts of the ecological and climate crisis. In a 2017 lecture he refers to the inevitable betrayal exercised by leaders (Krantz (2006), exemplifying it strikingly through a description of the impacts of climate change, the existential fears that it evokes, and our underlying knowledge of the near-impossibility of the task of preventing catastrophic climate change. Gosling defines the challenge for leaders of how to hold on to hope and some idea that things could be done right, while still acknowledging the likelihood of failure at a "point at which our own meaning systems are stressed to the point of breakdown" as he puts it in a 2016 article on similar themes (Gosling, 2016, p 45; Gosling, 2017).

The descriptions of leadership capabilities in this section, and the context-specific examples in the preceding section, signal some tensions that social defence theory may be able to illuminate. There is a strong emphasis in the literature on the value and significance of collaboration, boundary-spanning, and handling uncertainty – sometimes in the very ambitious sense that would require a significant development in human cognitive capacity. But the reality of the lived experience of leaders from the empirical studies that are closest to the focus of this study seems to be one of huge difficulty with collaboration in the most ordinary sense of the word: the scientists and activists in the Randall and Hoggett study struggled with communication and relationships with people outside their own frames of reference, and the civil servants in the Temby study wanted to collaborate but were prevented from doing so by systemic barriers. Kythreotis' study also points to difficulties with collaboration. Where there is a

baffling difficulty, or a need to do something that none the less seems to be prevented somehow, we may wonder if a social defence is present, and consider that social defence theory could be a helpful tool for exploring such contexts.

2.6 Summary

This chapter shows that working on climate change affects people significantly. The climate crisis evokes a range of powerful unconscious feelings and their associated defences, widely studied by psychoanalytically-informed scholars in the field of climate psychology. Studies of organisational life focusing on sustainability professionals and others working on climate in organisations indicate that this work carries significant emotional demands; and those who communicate climate change to the public work in an epistemologically, politically and socially complex field that seems likely to carry similar emotional demands.

The chapter also shows that research into the effects on people in organisations of working on the communication of climate change contains some significant gaps. Studies looking at the experience of working on climate change in organisations do not generally draw on psychoanalytically-informed climate psychology. There is a substantial literature on leadership in climate change and environmental sustainability that points to the presence of significant challenges and tensions in leadership, but most of it is not psychoanalytically informed and much of it is either not organisationally focused or explores corporate sustainability leadership. The systems-psychodynamic framework for looking at organisational experience has illuminated how difficult feelings associated with the organisation's work – and the unconscious role the organisation plays in society – can affect culture, ways of operating, and the experience of leaders, and this field has much to offer the study of

organisational dynamics and leadership in organisations whose task includes addressing climate change. But the literature review shows that systems-psychodynamic scholars have paid limited attention to this work setting. Only three such studies could be identified (Prins, 2002; Mnguni, 2010; Randall and Hoggett, 2019), and the literature search found no systems-psychodynamic literature looking at the experience of leadership in organisations with a focus on communicating climate change.

The review suggests that there is a place for such a study. Its potential value could include extending the range of organisations to which the systems-psychodynamic paradigm has been applied, and exploring the relevance of 'depth climate psychology' to organisations both theoretically and experientially – bringing the insights and tools of the two fields together to enrich both. The study could also support those working in organisations communicating climate change by providing insights and validation of their experience.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

Section 3.1 of this chapter provides a summary of the chapter's contents. Section 3.2 sets out the research objectives and questions. Section 3.3 describes and justifies the research strategy, including the choice of participative action research and 'organisation in the mind' methodology, which offered an opportunity for participants to investigate leadership in their settings, and allowed for the unconscious aspects of work experience to enter into the research. Challenges and risks of the chosen approach are also described. Section 3.4 explains the sampling strategy; section 3.5 describes the formation of the co-operative inquiry group and how the fieldwork was conducted in practice; and section 3.6 covers how the data were analysed to generate themes and findings.

3.1 Summary

This phenomenological study addresses the gap in the literature identified in Chapter 2. It uses the experience of leaders as a lens through which to explore and understand organisational dynamics, the presence of social defences, and the extent to which these seem to relate to the climate emotions proposed by the existing body of literature. The study's primary intention is to understand (to be experience-near) rather than explain, and its data-gathering and analysis use abductive logic: that is, they work from the data to make tentative suggestions for possible preconditions to the data.

Working with a small sample of leaders from organisations engaging the public on climate change, the study was conducted using the New Paradigm participative action research method of Co-operative Inquiry (CI), adapted to include techniques to allow access to the unconscious. The method presented particular demands on

the researcher and on the participants. The substantial data generated during the fieldwork were analysed using an adapted version of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

3.2 The research objectives

3.2.1 Origins and overarching intention

Based on the literature review, I was curious about the painful feelings and projections that have been argued by scholars of 'depth climate psychology' to be present in response to climate change (see chapter 2 section 2.3.1). These include vulnerability; loss and grief (Lertzman (2015), Willox (2012); Weintrobe (2013b)); narcissistic rage and omnipotence, Oedipal and depressive guilt (Randall, 2013). I wondered to what extent some of these emotions might characterise experience in organisations working on climate change communication: and whether in these organisations, social defences (Menzies Lyth, 1960) might be evident such as splitting between this good organisation and that evil government or the corporate world; idealisation of a low-carbon future; and a certain rigidity or tendency to insist on the rightness of one's perspective coupled with possibly excessive shifting of identity and messaging (Prins, 2003; Mnguni, 2010; Mitra, 2013; Long, 2015). In connection with this I wondered how the systemic and sociological positioning of the organisations might affect the organisational experience.

The epistemological and ontological experience of the task of communicating climate change involves working at the boundaries between the postpositivist scientific paradigm and the realist and constructivist ontologies required by

public engagement (see Chapter 2 section 2.2.2). I wondered how this location would affect the emotional experience, especially in relation to anxiety.

I was interested in the role of leaders in relation to this particular task, with the questions of betrayal and failure articulated by Gosling (2016; 2017) especially in mind (Chapter 2 section 2.5.5).

So the study set out to explore the experience of leaders in its own right, out of a curiosity about the specific ways in which tensions in the leadership role are felt when the organisational task relates to climate change. The exploration of leadership also provides a way into understanding the organisational context, very specifically because of the likely heightening in leaders of the anxieties stimulated by the primary task in what I thought might be an 'extreme work environment' (Hirschhorn and Horowitz, 2015). Looking at leaders' anxieties might bring the wider organisational anxieties more clearly into focus, and help thereby to highlight the characteristics of these organisations at an emotional level.

3.2.2 Research questions

To investigate the above areas of interest, the overarching question of this study is:

What is the experience of leaders in organisations whose task includes engaging with the public on climate change?

My interest in the dynamics relating to climate change itself, described in section 3.2.1 above, generates the first sub-question:

How, if at all, do the conscious and unconscious dynamics thought to exist in relation to climate change play out in these

organisations and shape emotional experience within the organisations?

My interest in the epistemological aspects of communicating climate change stimulates the second sub-question:

What kinds of epistemological and ontological tensions are evident in leaders' experience?

Finally, I wondered whether the experience of working on this particular issue, sometimes characterised as a 'super-wicked' problem (see Chapter 2 section 2.5.3), would generate specific kinds of emotional responses. A third sub-question arising from this is:

How, if at all, does the experience of leaders relate to the characteristics of the problem of climate change?

3.3 Research strategy

3.3.1 Summary

The study set out to understand, through the lens of leadership, the social phenomena in organisations that engage with the public on climate change. Its methodology was drawn from the systems-psychodynamic tradition, in particular the tradition's organisational consultancy methods, concepts of social defences and organisation-in-the-mind, and interpretivist, experience-near approaches. The intention was to use a playful, experimental approach that would involve the research participants and help improve their practice in their own eyes, while including methods suitable for exploring the participants' defences. As researcher I adopted a philosophical position that was social-constructionist in epistemology and subtle-realist in ontology (Hammersley, 1992). In terms of the 'logics of inquiry' typology proposed by Blaikie and Priest (2018), the study seeks

'to understand social life in terms of social actors' meanings and [conscious and unconscious] motives' (p 93), using abductive logic, the starting point of which is the "lifeworld of the social actors being investigated" (p 22).

New Paradigm participative action research (Marshall and McLean, 1988; Reason, 1988; Reason and Bradbury, 2001; McArdle and Reason, 2008) provided the initial methodology for the research design and conduct: specifically a Co-operative Inquiry (CI) group (Heron, 1996; Mead, 2002b; Mullett et al., 2004) was convened. In the light of the experience of the CI approach, an adapted form of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2010) (IPA) was chosen for the data analysis because it shares the respect for the research participants' own sense of their experience which is central to participative action research, and because it is appropriately situated within the hermeneutic phenomenology that influences systems-psychodynamics.

The following sections expand on and justify the choices made in terms of research philosophy and strategy.

3.3.2 The systems-psychodynamic tradition: description and philosophy

Philosophically speaking, the work of consulting to organisations within the systems-psychodynamic tradition (outlined in Chapter 2), and research based on this tradition, have phenomenological characteristics in that they are concerned with structures of experience and consciousness. In some ways they parallel the psychoanalytic process at individual level, with the therapist/ consultant/ researcher being required "to stay with the experience... and to resist premature impulses to theorize and generalize, for fear that the particular moment or quality

of an experience will be missed” (Rustin, 2019, p 66). The organisational consultant/researcher must build a relationship of trust with the client/research participant and use the countertransference to intuit, explore and hypothesise emotions relating to the work and the presence of social defences (Diamond, 2008; Obholzer and Roberts, 2019). The stance is a reflexive, curious, questioning, dynamic one, respecting the relationship, assuming neither that there is a final truth nor that it is possible for the consultant/researcher to identify it; holding oneself open to the experience but interested in the regularities of experience as they emerge through the relationship between consultant/researcher and client/research participant. The approach has a good fit with the phenomenological concepts of intentionality and intuition (Spear, 2021). It is located within the interpretivist paradigm (Blaikie and Priest, 2018), seeking to understand what humans experience rather than only what they consciously know (Lopez and Willis, 2004), and so includes emotional phenomena.

3.3.3 Psychoanalytically-informed research: experience-near; working with defences; self as instrument

This study draws on the increasing body of psychoanalytically-informed research methods (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Hoggett and Clarke, 2009; Cooper, 2017; Rustin, 2019). Such methods, adapted from the consultancy and therapeutic experiences described above, share the concept of ‘experience-near’ (Hollway (2015), quoted in Cooper (2017)). Accounts of research in this framework intend to connect the reader emotionally as well as cognitively to the research participants’ experience, and to the meaning they and the researcher make from it – rather than setting out to prove cause and effect or separating the results of the research from its process (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p 459).

Psychoanalytically-informed research uses the premise that the stories people tell about their experiences do not have an objective truth or untruth – though they may have a relationship with an external reality – but reflect their (our) conscious and unconscious drive to protect their/our vulnerabilities and self-image: the ‘defended subject’ premise (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p 26). The researcher must – reflexively, respectfully and staying close to the data – connect with the vulnerabilities, the unmanageable feelings that need to be defended against, and interpret the stories to reach a recognisable account of the study participants’ experience that reflects these vulnerabilities.

Psychoanalytically-informed research uses the researcher’s countertransference to suggest insights: his or her feelings or actings-out are seen as possible manifestations of unconscious vulnerabilities and defences in the field of inquiry, which are projected into the researcher. This is known as the ‘self-as-instrument’ approach and has its origins both within the Tavistock tradition of infant observation (Bick, 1964; Rustin, 1989) and in the development of psychotherapeutic understandings (summarised in Rustin (2019, pp 26-27 and pp 67-68) of how the analyst’s own feelings might, through projection and projective identification, indicate aspects of the mental life of the patient (Heimann, 1950). In the present study the researcher’s feelings were explicitly considered as part of the data gathering and analysis.

3.3.4 Systems-psychodynamic research: ‘organisation in the mind’

This study adopts a concept much used within the Tavistock field known as ‘organisation in the mind’ (Hutton et al., 1997; Armstrong, 2005; Tucker, 2012): the mutually-interacting, dynamic relationship between the individual’s internal

psychic organisation and their experience of the organisation in which they work: their own particular response to an organisational dynamic. Within this concept, the working assumption, drawn from the group relations tradition (Shapiro, 1991; Armstrong, 2005), is that the dynamics in a group reflect the dynamics in the wider organisation. As through projective processes the individual's emotional experience of the organisation can indicate something of the shared organisational dynamic, the consultant's (or researcher's) countertransference can also suggest aspects of the client's (or research subject's) organisational experience (Boydell, 2009). This must of course be tested through other data and through discussion. The 'organisation in the mind' concept provides an epistemological basis for this study's data-gathering.

3.3.5 The choice of participative action research and co-operative inquiry

Action research (Lewin, 1946; Reason and Bradbury, 2001; McArdle and Reason, 2008) provided the overall framework for the study. Described as an 'orientation to inquiry' seeking to integrate "theory and practice, researcher and subject, everyday experience and academic knowledge" (McArdle and Reason, 2008, p 3), action research sets out to improve practice, develop the researchers' skills, or address problems, as well as adding to the body of scholarship in its field.

I was particularly drawn to New Paradigm participatory action research, introduced and developed by Peter Reason, John Heron and others (Heron, 1996; Reason and Bradbury, 2001; McArdle and Reason, 2008), because of its intention to involve the subjects as co-researchers on their own practice, researching *with* rather than *on* people. Several such research projects – for

example a study of power dynamics among managers – include deep reflexivity and methods that are designed to explore unconscious assumptions and motivations (Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen, 2001). These are features of NP action research that make it suitable for the study, as set out in the next paragraph.

As a matter of principle I wished to involve participants in the study in order to model social and environmental justice. I was concerned not to replicate the mindset in which the research participants exist in order to provide data for the researcher, much as the earth has in some traditions been seen to exist in order to provide resources for humans. Thinking about the social change epistemology described in Chapter 1, I wanted to offer an experimental, playful approach (Winnicott, 1971; Roberts, 1994a) that allowed collective learning through experience, and for the negotiation and conflict that is a feature of groups and organisations to be present in the moment as well as being talked about and thought about. I also wanted to involve the participants for practical reasons. As well as creating understanding, this study also aims to provide resources to support professional practice. One of the features of working in climate change is a strong sense of urgency, such that, I believed, taking part in the research would be more attractive if it enabled participants to see, sooner rather than later, the insights gained by the research process, and to find a way to use them. Given too the relative absence of thinking spaces for people who work in public engagement on climate change, I felt that the study would make a contribution to improve the experience of people working in this field if its fieldwork could serve the dual function of data gathering and the provision of a supportive space.

The specific approach chosen was Co-operative Inquiry (CI) (Heron, 1996; Heron & Reason, 2001, cited in McArdle and Reason (2008), p 12). This is a participatory method that has developed within New Paradigm action research, and involves a group of people coming together to investigate an agreed subject that is of interest to all of them, and to learn through their experience together as well as through experimentation in their chosen fields. The process involves both understanding and changing a situation.

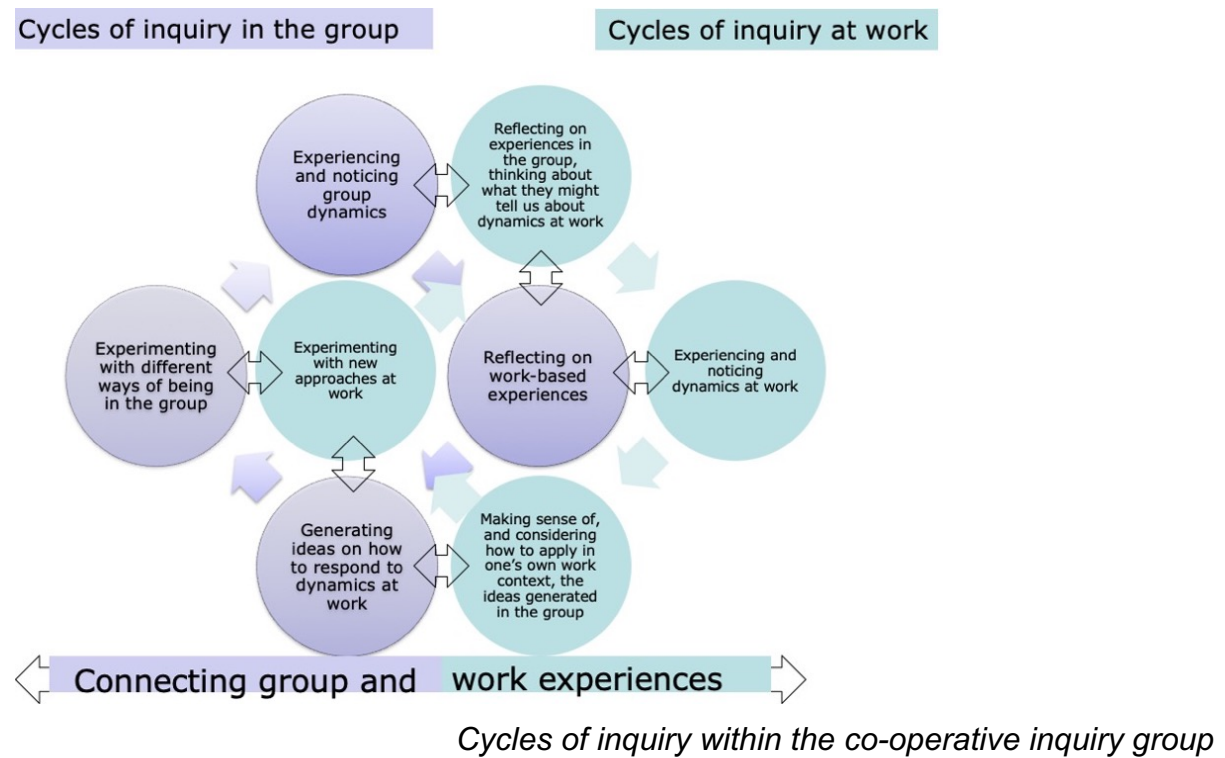
CI has been used to explore organisational culture (Marshall and McLean, 1988); with medical practitioners (Reason, 1999); with police officers as a form of leadership development (Mead, 2002a); to explore ecologically sustainable practice in a construction company (Ballard, 2005); to understand collaboration among public service agencies in Canada (Mullett et al., 2004); and in a domestic violence agency and a multi-disciplinary hospital team (Donnelly and Morton, 2019). It requires a shared area of interest, which may be defined entirely by the group or more by the researcher who initiates the project: the role and power issues that this surfaces may not be straightforward to handle and this is acknowledged in the literature (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Mead, 2002a), with the co-researchers' critical reflexivity functioning as an important tool in handling these issues. It is often situated within a specific organisational context, with the issues of power, authority, roles and boundaries that are part of organisational life being an explicit focus of the inquiry (Donnelly and Morton, 2019).

Within this framework I decided to convene to a CI group people in leadership roles in organisations that engage with the public on climate change. I defined

the group's task as being to explore their experience of leadership in their organisations, but I left the precise focus for the group to define. I hoped that the group would function both as a reflective space for thinking about people's work experience, and as a place where we could experience leadership and organisational dynamics playing out within the group – including at unconscious levels – and think about it together. Using organisation-in-the-mind principles, this would offer tentative insights into the organisational dynamics the group members experienced in their workplaces, which would then be triangulated by the members themselves sharing their opinions and learning in the group.

Action research requires cycles of inquiry and within CI this is intended to be a collective process (Heron, 1996). Group members would be invited first to identify a shared question within the overall framework of exploring leadership; then to explore the shared question through workplace activity in between meetings, experimenting with approaches to leadership, discussing perceptions of their organisation with colleagues, and bringing their experiences of these back into the group. I also hoped that we would be able to use our experience of the dynamics in the group, and experimentation with these, to inform practice in the workplace. In other words, I intended the group's process to follow two parallel and mutually-influencing cycles of inquiry. This is set out in Figure 3.1 below, which was shared with the group.

Figure 3.1



3.3.6 Time and hosting resources

The group met seven times between January and November 2019. This kind of timescale is relatively short for a CI group (see e.g. Ballard (2005) and McArdle and Reason (2008)). However in the absence of a single convening organisation to provide commitment, I believed that it was the maximum that I could expect (and of course it also reflects the time constraints of the doctorate). The absence of a single organisation to host the inquiry also meant that the only accountability between group members was the accountability we created together. Further, it was not a group with a pre-existing relationship, and the organisations represented in the group were very different from each other. I was clear in advance that this might create difficulties in terms of the group's ability to sustain and resource itself, and with this in mind I paid attention to the dynamics as we began to work together.

3.3.7 The choice of processes within the group: social photo matrix

The CI process needed to include methods that encouraged and enabled access to the unconscious. One such method is the Social Photo Matrix (Sievers, 2007; Mersky and Sievers, 2018), where participants share and free-associate to photos on a common theme, in order to create meaning that would not be readily accessible through words. It is a method similar to, and derived from, the social dreaming matrix (Lawrence, 2005; Long and Manley, 2019), and is considered valuable for working with 'defended subjects' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). In a social photo matrix, participants bring individual photos that have meaning for them in relation to the common theme; in turn each photo is viewed by the whole group; members associate to the photos, and offer amplifications. After all the photos have been viewed, there is a period of time in the same session for sense-making and the generation of themes.

This seemed a particularly appropriate approach for three reasons. One is that as a visual method it would be felt as relevant to the participants' work. Climate change communication often involves sophisticated use of the visual (see e.g. *Climate visuals* (2017)). The second reason is that the method has a substantial record of use in studies of organisations (Waggett, 2018) and of leadership (e.g. Klenke (2008, pp 257-286) and Meyer (2013)). Thirdly the experience of taking part in a social photo matrix is generally of an experimental and enjoyable group process that fits the study's intention of providing a playful space.

I intended to invite participants to take photographs that, for them, symbolised their experience of their organisation and (later) of their leadership, and use these to create social photo matrices (Sievers, 2007; 2013). The original

intention was to do this in meetings two and five, though in practice the method was only used in meeting two.

3.3.8 Other processes used: free-association and reflective analysis

This use of visual materials was intended to complement other activities within the group, including reflective discussions of individuals' experiences of leadership challenges. The design of these discussions involved the use of a technique drawn from 'work discussion' practice within the Tavistock tradition (Obholzer and Roberts, 2019; Rustin, 2019, p 264), whereby the individual bringing an experience speaks for a few minutes and then half-withdraws, listening to the other members of the group free-associating and reflecting on what they have heard. The technique allows for some access to the unconscious.

Action research principles suggest that the group should be involved in the analysis of the data generated by its activities, through discussion and through reflective journaling. Sense-making discussions were explicitly included in the meetings, informed by my own writing up on emerging themes, which I brought to the group for consideration. I also asked the group members to do some writing of their own, though journaling proved not to be possible.

3.3.9 Individual reflections

I offered to establish confidential and private debriefing sessions for all participants on a one-to-one basis twice during the life of the group. The primary purpose of these sessions was to enable participants to express their responses to the CI process, to the group more specifically, and/or to their experience of

their own organisation and their leadership. These regular sessions were also intended to ensure that participants were receiving enough emotional support to enable them to continue their membership of the group; and to provide space for the individuals' own sense-making. I planned to conduct short one-to-one telephone interviews with group members after the last meeting of the group, to provide a setting for final reflections and debriefing.

These debriefing activities were designed beforehand in the light of the specific characteristics of this group, which are described under *Sampling strategy* below and required me to take more of a leadership role than would be usual in CI. They were then amended in the light of experience once the group began its work.

The table at the end of Appendix 3 summarises the planned structure of the fieldwork, meeting by meeting.

3.3.10 Practical and ethical challenges and risks of the approach

The approach was ambitious in the timescale available, and also in terms of the complexity of the processes and the attempt to bring together practices from adjacent but different traditions. The key challenges and risks both practical and ethical are set out in Table 3.1 overleaf, together with a short commentary on what happened in practice. More detail on the latter is given in the next chapter.

Table 3.1: risks and ethical challenges of the project, mitigation activities and impact

In a co-operative enterprise it is hard to separate the risks from the ethical questions raised by the work. I have incorporated both in the table, highlighting ethical questions within each risk area.

	Risk	Mitigation and what happened in practice
1.	Role dilemmas	
	My role would be as co-researcher with the group members, albeit with a research question different from theirs. I would also hold the role of facilitator of the group's activities, and – as possibly the only member of the group with experience of working with the unconscious at work – it seemed likely that I would need also to act as consultant from time to time. There was a risk that the roles would conflict: that the consultancy role would require me to work on the boundary of the group whereas the co-researcher role would require me to be a group member. This might present ethical challenges as well, in that the spread of roles might make it difficult for me to respond to group members' needs.	Action research as a tradition is familiar with role dilemmas, and the researcher's reflexivity is an important tool for working with them. The role 'must be negotiated sensitively as the project goes along' (Heron and Reason, 1981). I documented my reflections and I also took dilemmas to supervision. Having initially said that I would not record the meetings, I sought and gained consent to make recordings after the first meeting to give me more space to facilitate. The additional 1-1 meetings that I organised also helped me to stay in touch with how people were feeling and respond to their needs. The experience was very challenging, and my difficulties probably contributed to the group's difficulties; at the same time the experience brought me in touch with some of the complexities of leadership in this context.
2.	Unfamiliarity with systems-psychodynamics	
	I hoped that the group would use the systems-psychodynamic framework for its own exploration. But it was clear that if they were not willing, or not able, to do so, that role could turn into a somewhat punitive investigation on my part, from outside: inappropriate for action research, and ethically problematic if it resulted in people feeling judged. If they were willing in principle but needed time to develop their understanding, that would combine with the short timescale to create problems.	I tried to maintain sensitivity to participants' responses to the systems-psychodynamic ideas. I explained the ideas in writing and orally to prospective participants, and at the first full meeting of the group, and tried to exemplify them in the here-and-now as we began to work together. For some group members the approach seemed to be felt as valuable; for others less so. Power issues were raised by the fact of my being the only member with this background. I reduced the amount of interpretation in the light of this.
3.	Working with two models	
	It might be difficult for us to work within the cycles of inquiry characteristic of New Paradigm research and the co-operative inquiry model, while also exploring the here-and-now evidence, in the group, of the wider dynamics.	This did indeed prove to be the case (see analysis in Chapter 4). My own tendency to control while wishing to collaborate was a contributory factor in these difficulties.

	Risk	Mitigation and what happened in practice
4.	Recruitment and retention	
	<p>Recruitment and retention of group members might be difficult. Leaders might feel they did not have the time to take part in a co-operative inquiry led by an individual they did not know, and whose outcomes were uncertain, and/or they might be anxious about exposing themselves and their organisations to people working in their field in what can be an intellectually competitive environment. They might initially form an impression of the benefits to them of participating that they then felt was not borne out by their experience. So they might refuse to take part, or agree to join and then withdraw, or agree to join and then not attend meetings reliably.</p>	<p>The careful process for selection described in section 3.4 below was designed to mitigate the risks of recruitment and retention of participants. I considered that the experience would offer the immediate benefits to the participants of receiving emotional support in a challenging role, and of deepening their own understanding of the function of leadership in climate change communication. This was communicated in the participant information pack alongside the explanation that the primary purpose is to conduct research. Confidentiality and anonymity were explained in the pack and also discussed in practice when they arose.</p> <p>There was indeed difficulty with commitment to the group: some members withdrew and others frequently cancelled meetings or arrived late. This was discussed in the group and in the interviews, and records kept for analysis.</p>
5.	Distress	
	<p>It was quite likely that difficult and distressing feelings – about climate change, about organisational life, and/or about leadership – would surface in the course of the project, for the researcher as well as for the other participants. (I distinguish here between distress and harm as do Hollway and Jefferson (2013).) This is an ethical question. One function of the co-operative inquiry group would be to provide a containing space for these feelings to be explored, but containment might not always be adequate.</p> <p>It was possible, though I believed unlikely, that some participants might come to realise through participation in the research that they were finding their leadership roles intolerable. They might as a result decide to leave their organisations, or might suffer anxiety or stresses.</p> <p>It was also possible that the competition between organisations that is present in this particular field would affect relationships within the group, to the extent of creating distress for individuals that the group could not enable them to process.</p>	<p>I warned participants of the risks in the participant information sheet and in the taster meetings and conversations, and set up one-to-one sessions to discuss, confidentially and privately, any feelings participants might be having during the life of the group. These could be used to explore and help to resolve any adverse feelings about their role or personal experiences. I made it clear that I was not a qualified counsellor and also provided contact details for an independent, qualified and climate-aware psychotherapist.</p> <p>I made active use of the support systems provided for doctoral students at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust to ensure adequate processing of the difficult feelings of my own that arose: including research supervisors, tutors and fellow-students (within the confidentiality of the research process).</p> <p>Two members of the group began to describe their difficult feelings towards the end of the process. One member of the group used the group to consider her role, and made the decision to leave her job. I believe this arose from a recognition of some of the intolerable aspects of the work and was an appropriate decision for her to make at this time in her career. Distress was present but adequately held.</p> <p>Relationships between some members of the group were difficult and some of this difficulty may have been due to competition, but the group did address these difficulties and I do not believe that they involved undue or unprocessed distress.</p>

	Risk	Mitigation and what happened in practice
6.	Social photo matrix	
	<p>A difficulty might arise with the social photo matrix, if participants' defences were too strong (Sievers, 2013) or if I did not introduce or facilitate it in a way that made sense to them. Those unfamiliar with the process might experience distress at inadvertently exposing the unconscious aspects of their work experience (an ethical question).</p>	<p>Information on social photo matrix was provided beforehand and its use was discussed with the group once it had formed. I also ensured that I had received adequate training on the method.</p> <p>The relationship difficulties in the group, and some of the anxiety and commitment dynamics, did affect the social photo matrix. In its own terms this aspect of the fieldwork was problematic, though not I believe distressing; but valuable data was generated from the difficulties.</p>
7.	Facilitation	
	<p>Facilitation of the group would be likely to be challenging, given the risks raised above and the multiple roles required of me (researcher, group member, facilitator, consultant). See also item 1 and the ethical question raised there.</p>	<p>My consultancy and facilitation experience is substantial and I believed that with supervision I would facilitate the group in an appropriately professional manner, with awareness of my own biases such as my reparative focus on climate change and my tendency to see the tensions and difficulties in leadership rather than its positive side.</p> <p>In practice, holding and organising the group proved more of a challenge than facilitating it. But I was mostly able to maintain enough of a consultancy stance throughout. To the extent that this was not possible, reflections on the experience generated valuable data.</p>
8.	Participant input into the findings	
	<p>Issues of different perspectives on the experience would need to be addressed. There was a risk that participants without a systems-psychodynamic background might not recognise their experience in what I said or wrote, and action-research principles needed to allow space for their views to be considered.</p>	<p>I planned to offer debriefing interviews to all participants; and envisaged that one of the outputs of the group could be an agreed report signed off by everyone and available for them to share with others (leaving my analysis and writing up for the thesis as a separate activity). In practice this did not prove possible, and on reflection I believe that the tension between the action research and systems-psychodynamic principles made it too difficult for the group to access its own agency sufficiently to create a shared report.</p> <p>All members of the group were invited to contribute to the identification of themes during the process, and they did so. A philosophically-appropriate method for in-depth analysis was chosen, and this is detailed in section 3.6 below.</p> <p>I met with the group members towards the end of the thesis writing-up process and shared the findings with them, offering material that protected individuals' privacy.</p>

	Risk	Mitigation and what happened in practice
		Their responses suggested a resonance of the findings with their own perceptions.

3.4 Sampling strategy

This section summarises the basis for how participants were recruited to the CI group. Further detail is given in Appendix 2.

Participants needed to be in a formal leadership role in one of a range of different kinds of organisations that included climate communication as part of their work (for example campaigning organisations and alliances, community groups, government and local government, and university climate units). An upper limit of nine people was set for the group. Participants would need to have an informed willingness, be curious and open to learning and to being changed by the learning, and be prepared to put in the time to attend the meetings and to do some exploration, experimentation and thinking in between the meetings. They would need to be clear that they were taking part in a research project and not (consciously, at least) expect instant answers.

During the two years before the fieldwork began I kept a rolling, expanding list of organisations that engage the public on climate change in the UK (details in Appendix 2), and held informal conversations with people in different organisations to expand contacts and ideas. Participation by those with whom I had an existing close working or personal relationship was avoided. But the field of climate communication is a small one, and avoiding everyone I already knew would skew the membership of the group.

The recruitment literature described the systems-psychodynamic framework for the research and set out the criteria for joining (see Appendix 2 for the recruitment material and advertising approach). In summer 2018 the project was advertised using the channels given in Appendix 2.

Following the advertisements, I held conversations with almost everyone who expressed interest, in order to clarify what participation would involve; to establish that the individual met the criteria; and to enable them to decide whether they would like to proceed. In November 2018 all invitees were asked to confirm their intentions, provided with the formal project description and consent forms (Appendix 2), and invited to a taster session at which they could raise any last questions, meet the others interested in the group, and make their decisions. At the end of this process a group of six plus myself was in place.

3.5 The co-operative inquiry group

Following the recruitment described above, the group formed in late November 2018 and met for the first time in January 2019. Appendix 3 provides material given to the group before the first meeting, and Appendix 4 gives the full (but anonymised) pen-portraits of all the group members at that stage. Table 3.2 below gives a shorter and further anonymised version of the pen-portraits. Some details have been changed to protect individuals' privacy.

The experience of recruitment and forming the group proved to be significant in terms of data gathering and is analysed and discussed in the succeeding chapters.

Table 3.2: the group members

Name	Description	Organisation
Arthur	Male, white, 40s. Heading up policy, advocacy and campaigning on climate change. A team reported to him and he also worked in a matrix structure. He had been there two years, and had previously worked on climate change as a civil servant	The UK branch of a large federated international charity with a focus on the environment. Annual income of the UK branch in 2018-19 was about £60m
Fred	Male, white, 50s-60s. Chair of his local climate action group in outer London.	The local voluntary group is part of a national & international network of community initiatives involved in raising awareness about the causes and impacts of climate change and facilitating

Name	Description	Organisation
		practical local community responses to address them.
Lesley	Female, white, 40s. Founder and chief executive of her organisation.	A small, growing social enterprise (employing about ten people including Lesley) which specialised in training in climate change communication. The charity depended on grants but had been successful in expanding its work.
Louisa	Female, white, 40s. Worked in climate change and sustainability within the built and natural environment. Her sustainability officer role was about green infrastructure and access to quality open space.	An outer London borough council with about 1,000 employees. Budget savings of £12m were being sought for the financial year 2019-20 against a backdrop of previous cuts.
Rachel	Female, white, 30s. Employed as environmental manager. The work involved working with a national network of volunteers and partners.	A large religious organisation
Tim	Male, white, 50s. He supported one organisation in engaging with sustainability and climate change, and had other responsibilities on boards of voluntary groups with an environmental focus. In one of these he was responsible for HR issues. Most of his work was voluntary.	An international network on sustainable living; a religious group in the UK; other organisations

3.5.1 Fieldwork and the data collected

In the first meeting, the group completed the required ethics documentation, shared their motivations and interests first in pairs and then as a whole group, agreed simple ground rules, and decided on a shared inquiry question within the overall framework of exploring leadership: 'What is healthy leadership in our contexts and how can we nurture it?' Further group meetings were held in February, April, May, July, September and November 2019, with the February meeting including the social photo matrix. Three people left the group during its lifespan – two in February and one in September – leaving three plus myself from September onwards.

One-to-one meetings were held with all members except those who left in February (for these members the meetings were offered but not taken up). Because there was turbulence in the group and I judged that they were needed, I conducted more one-to-one conversations than planned: twice in order to check in with individuals about their experience of the group, once to establish the individuals' desired personal focus for their learning in the remainder of the meetings, and once to conduct a coaching session.

Appendix 5 is a detailed list of the data collected, which consisted of the following categories:

- notes of the taster meeting and the first group meeting
- recordings, transcripts and notes of the remaining six group meetings following agreement that these would be recorded
- emails, phone calls and texts (between the whole group and with individuals) before and after the meetings
- one-to-one meeting recordings, transcripts and notes
- my reflective journal, including dreams
- photos and other material from the social photo matrix and the last group meeting

3.6 Data analysis

As described above, I had intended that some of the data analysis would be done with the group, through shared writing processes. It became apparent during the fieldwork that the group would not be able to work collaboratively in this way.

Because of the tensions inherent in the design and because of turbulence, represented by the three departures and described in more detail in the next chapter,

the CI process was fragile. Cycles of inquiry were not easy to see, as individuals' day jobs demanded much of their attention, and their capacity to experiment with healthy leadership or think about it very much in between meetings was very limited. This turbulence and fragility formed an important aspect of the data being generated by the group – discussed later. My contribution to and response to the turbulence was also relevant in generating data about leadership. But it meant that there was little collective capacity to analyse leadership and organisational dynamics, and that an analysis method putting more of the responsibility for this on me as the researcher was called for. This section describes and explains the choices made on data analysis.

3.6.1 Philosophy

An approach consistent with the philosophical basis of the research design was required: phenomenological and participatory in approach, based on systems-psychodynamic principles, focusing on participants' own meaning-making and interpretations of their experiences, with reflexivity expected as a key aspect of this (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). It was important for the analysis to stay as close as possible to those principles and allow the participants' voices to speak, sharing their own meanings even if these were not fully articulated at the time. Similarly the analysis would need to be very specific about including systems-psychodynamic perspectives; and the evidence for any conclusions would need to be particularly carefully considered and linked to the data.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a method drawn from academic psychology (Blaikie and Priest, 2018; Rustin, 2019), fits well with these criteria. IPA (Smith et al., 2009) is now a well-established method in psychosocial

research and has been used within the systems-psychodynamic paradigm (Steyn and Cilliers, 2016; Gray, 2021).

3.6.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: key concepts and principles

IPA is a qualitative research approach in the phenomenology tradition, committed to the detailed and idiographic examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences. By 'idiographic', IPA means the specifics of a particular experience, from which a researcher may move out to see the similarities and differences between each experience and create common themes. To create understanding, IPA draws on hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation. It occupies a middle position between the hermeneutics of empathy and the hermeneutics of questioning: it is concerned with both the insider perspective, seeing the world from the participant's point of view; and with an 'alongside perspective', puzzling over the participant's response from a stance that is more external to the participant (Smith et al., 2009, p 36). It employs the concept of the double hermeneutic: the researcher sets out reflexively to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what has happened to them.

The stance of the researcher in IPA is less participative than in CI. This is illustrated by its use of the term 'case' to describe the individuals who participate in the research, whom CI might be more inclined to describe as co-researchers or participants. However in other ways this study's focus suits IPA in terms of the philosophy and research intention of understanding the experience of leaders in organisations, and exploring the relationship between how people experience their organisation and how this experience is collectively shaped into meaning.

Practically too, the existence of substantial transcribed data from interviews, coaching sessions, and the group meetings meant that an idiographic approach was possible, enabling a careful building up from the particular to the thematic.

3.6.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: usual protocols

IPA is most often used with individual interviews and in this section I describe the standard processes within this framework. The next section describes some of the additional demands that this study makes of the methodology and how those demands were met.

The overall shape of an IPA analysis of qualitative data is as follows (Smith et al., 2009, pp 82-107). For each 'case' or individual interview:

- Reading and re-reading the material (usually, but not always, interview transcripts)
- Initial exploratory noting of semantic content and language use – making descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments and seeking to identify participants' objects of concern and their experiential claims
- Developing emergent themes based closely on the above
- Searching for connections across emergent themes and creating a list of superordinate themes, with illustrative text for each

Once the individual case analysis is complete, the researcher looks at patterns across cases and creates a master list of themes, with illustrative text from each case where the theme appears.

3.6.4 Additional demands of this study, and how they were met

Table 3.3 sets out the additional demands that this study makes of the IPA methodology and how those demands were met by extending or adapting the protocols.

Table 3.3: how IPA was adapted to serve the needs of this study

Item	Demand	Issue	How the demand was met
Group dynamics are important in this study. IPA's recent use with groups tends to involve looking at reported experience; group dynamics are seen as problematic			
1.	The dynamics of the co-operative group were an explicit focus of the inquiry. What happened in the group <i>as a group</i> needed to be considered and analysed in itself for possible relevance to the dynamics in participants' own organisations, and/or to the psychology of climate change.	Originally focusing on individuals, IPA has begun to be used with groups (Stablein, 2002; Palmer et al., 2010; Tomkins and Eatough, 2010; Phillips et al., 2018). However, most published examples work with data derived from focus groups, whose primary purpose is to share and make sense of pre-existing experiences. To the extent that group dynamics are examined it is in order to identify how they contributed to the experiential claims.	The dynamics in the group are examined to provide tentative evidence of the organisational context experienced by the group members. This analysis is systems-psychodynamic in nature and its results then form part of the dialogue which precedes the creation of themes.
This study looks at the group as an entity in itself over time. IPA generally takes one or two snapshots			
2.	The co-operative inquiry group met seven times and it was intended that its learning would deepen over time via cycles of inquiry. The overall shape of the series of group meetings is a significant aspect of the evidence. Rather than atomising it or ignoring its development over time, the data analysis should retain its integrity (Blaikie, 1993).	IPA usually either involves one interview per case, or sometimes two linked interviews, with both being treated as snapshots.	The result of the analysis described in 1 above is an account of the group as a temporary organisation, a fractal representation of the participants' Organisation in the Mind. This account includes a description of how the group evolved and changed over time.
Explanatory intent. IPA has more of an 'understanding' focus			
3.	As well as understanding the experience of leaders, this study is interested in identifying the extent to which distinctive social defences are to be found in the organisations under	IPA tends to focus on understanding experience. More explanatory interest can be accommodated within IPA but needs to be handled carefully.	The data is analysed first with attention paid primarily to the participants' experience; there is then, as permitted within IPA, a stage of 'dialogue' between the data and the body of

Item	Demand	Issue	How the demand was met
	consideration, and whether there is a link between these social defences and the defences identified by climate psychology scholarship.		systems-psychodynamic theory, to consider whether and how the theory could be taken as illuminating the data
Data mostly not interviews. IPA is usually based on interviews or focus groups			
4.	The study collected about 150,000 spoken words plus several thousand more words in emails and other written materials. Most of these were not interviews, and the interviews that were conducted generally had two purposes: to assess the state of the participant's relationship with the co-operative inquiry group as well as to allow them to explore their experience of leadership.	IPA usually draws its data from people's accounts of their experience, through which the objects of their concern and their experiential claims are elicited by open questions. The interviews and focus groups have only this purpose.	The data were analysed insofar as they allowed for assessment of the participants' objects of concern and their experiential claims. Other data was bracketed and considered as part of the context or as part of the group dynamics (see item 6 below), with the researcher's reflexivity being brought to bear to make the assessment. Careful and conservative assessments of what 'counted' as themes were made.
The social photo matrix			
5.	The social photo matrix (SPM) in meeting 2 was conducted in order to allow some access to group members' unconscious experiences of their work.	The method is not used within IPA. Although a full SPM analysis could have been conducted to provide more evidence of the participants' working context, its results would have been dubious and unvalidated given the difficulties in the group on that day.	Standard SPM analysis methods were not used. The text of the SPM was treated as part of the meeting.
Talk as discursive action			
6.	In the meetings of the co-operative inquiry group, participants may be making experiential claims or they may be using talk as action in relation to conscious or unconscious intentions, and/or dynamics within the group. For example, a participant might state agreement with another participant's views as a means of creating an alliance based on shared identity. This would be	IPA focuses on the experiential claims represented by what people say; it does not have much attention for talk that functions as discursive action (Palmer et al., 2010).	Talk functioning as discursive action was identified and analysed as part of the analysis of the group material (items 1 and 2 above).

Item	Demand	Issue	How the demand was met
	relevant data for the study's purposes.		
Researcher as participant			
7.	As a member of the co-operative inquiry group and in accordance with its participatory principles, I contributed to the group's dynamics to a greater extent than would usually be the case for an interviewer, and my own experience of climate organisations is intentionally part of the data brought to the group. This participation role creates added complexity in the data but is essential to the group's experience.	Within IPA, the researcher's stance is engaged and curious but not fully participatory. This allows the respondent to connect with their experience and think about it uninterrupted by other concerns or dynamics.	As in focus groups within IPA, the role of the researcher in contributing to the group dynamics is considered and bracketed. The researcher's own objects of concern and experiential claims are analysed as a 'case'. This analysis also considers the researcher's own defences and valencies, for example struggles with dependence.
'Cases': organising the data			
8.	The data included group dynamics as an area of interest in its own right: both the group as an entity over time, and the individual participants. A decision was needed as to how to group and define the data in terms of cases.	IPA would normally treat each interview as a separate entity but then look to integrate themes across encounters, initially within 'cases' (usually individuals) and then across all cases. Focus group data is analysed in a similar way: if there is more than one focus group each is analysed separately and then shared themes are identified between groups (Palmer et al., 2010).	Four members of the group stayed long enough for their experiential accounts (both in the group meetings and in one-to-one conversations with the researcher) to be available for analysis as cases. These four individuals are treated as individual cases within the IPA framework. The researcher's own experience is also subjected to IPA analysis and treated as a fifth case. The group data is analysed with a systems-psychodynamic lens and the resulting account is treated as part of the context for the individual cases.

3.6.5 Design of the analysis: summary

Initial analyses of the four individual cases were conducted, and tentative themes for each case were created. The behaviour and dynamics of the group over time were then analysed to provide tentative evidence of the organisational context experienced by the group members. This analysis is systems-

psychodynamic in nature: while still forming part of the IPA framework, it is separate from the experiential analysis recommended by Smith et al. (2009). There was then an iterative dialogue between the data, the researcher and the researcher's own defences and valencies, and the researcher's psychological knowledge (Smith et al., 2009), including the separate systems-psychodynamic analysis of the group. The latter is not treated as independent fact but as a dynamic component of the dialogue. The superordinate themes were then created out of this dialogue. Finally the study's research questions were 'put' to the themes, and the accounts of this process constitute the findings of the study.

3.6.6 Description of analysis

The analysis process involved the following stages (Smith et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2010; Phillips et al., 2016).

3.6.6.1 Collating and engaging with the data

All the meeting transcriptions, related email correspondence, my dream notes, and notes from my reflective journal, were set up as tables in MS Word. The meeting in each case was treated as the organising event, and emails, dreams and reflections were included insofar as they related chronologically to the meeting (and see below for an additional treatment of the dreams). This resulted in seventeen documents: the recruitment stage and the taster meeting, the seven group meetings, and nine one-to-one meetings. In the tables, each paragraph of text was given its own row with a line number; five additional columns were added, the first for feelings (my own, and feelings I sensed in the data) and observations, the second for objects of concern, the third for experiential claims, the fourth for group material and the fifth for

possible themes and meanings, including my own possible contributions to the dynamics observed. This process parallels the hand-written notes usually described in accounts of IPA analysis and its electronic form represents my personal preferences as researcher. Colour-coding of text was used to indicate how the comments in each column related to the text they referred to. Examples of the tabular format are given in Appendix 6.

I read and re-read the full dataset, first to capture my own feelings, responses and observations, and then to comment on (and bracket) the group experience and dynamics where they appeared. The first reading was accompanied by listening to the recording, where one existed; the recording was kept to hand and revisited whenever a query arose about the tone or intention of a piece of text.

3.6.6.2 Use of dreams

The use of the researcher's dreams is an accepted aspect of psychoanalytically-informed reflexive research traditions (Soldz and Andersen, 2012; Holmes, 2018; Clancy and Vince, 2019) just as it is part of psychoanalytic practice (Rustin, 2019). In this study the working assumption has been that dreams taking place during the fieldwork are available to support thinking about the unconscious aspects of the fieldwork experience, both for me as the dreamer and for the group. Dreams during this period could be seen in part as social dreams in the sense used in the social dreaming matrix (Lawrence, 2005), with unconscious material from the group being present in my unconscious and surfacing in the dream. I took all my dreams to my regular psychotherapy sessions as they happened, and thought

about them with my therapist. This enabled me to distinguish the personal meaning of the dreams from the experience of the group. I also, after the fieldwork was completed, took all the dreams to a focus group consisting of my supervisor and fellow doctoral students, asked them to associate to the dreams, and captured their responses. Although the dreams are recorded chronologically with the fieldwork, all the reflections on them are recorded as a separate document with further reflections added (Appendix 7).

3.6.6.3 Analysing the individual data: the creation of cases

I then focused on identifying the objects of concern and experiential claims of four of the participants: Arthur, Lesley, Louisa, Tim (the members who stayed with the group for the whole or a substantial part of the group's existence); following their threads through all the correspondence and meetings, both one-to-one and group, to create four cases, each with their identified themes. The social photo matrix was included in the analysis using this approach: the four individuals' photos and their contributions to the SPM discussion were treated as IPA text for their case. This analysis included my own subjectivity as researcher as an aspect of the data, both through the use of the 'feelings' column in the data tables and through my reflective journal and dreams at the time of the fieldwork, which as described in the preceding paragraph were included in the data tables as text.

Fred is not represented through a case because he was not present in the group after February. Within the systems-psychodynamic tradition he would be seen as still present in the group mind, but the terms on which he withdrew meant that I did not feel that I had his permission. I hope I have done justice

to Fred's important role in the group in terms of how he (and his departure) was experienced by others, including myself. Rachel withdrew after attending only one meeting, so there was simply not enough data for a case.

The full cases are given in Appendix 8, and summary versions in section 4.4 of Chapter 4.

3.6.6.4 Analysing the group data with a systems-psychodynamic lens

Following this stage, I analysed the group aspects, addressing the bracketed data and considering the group behaviour and dynamics, individuals' responses to the group, and the connections they made between the group and their work, somewhat separately from the individuals' directly-described experience of their work. My own subjectivity is part of this analysis in the same way as for the individual cases described in the preceding section: I consider both the personal aspects of this and the possibility that my experience represents aspects of group and organisational experience. Bracketed data from the social photo matrix is also included in this analysis insofar as the dynamics in the matrix seemed to reflect broader group dynamics. This analysis was conducted using a systems-psychodynamic lens, setting out to create a picture of the context in which the individual cases could be seen and thought about. The analysis resulted in an account of the group as a temporary organisation, tentatively proposed as a fractal representation of the participants' Organisation in the Mind. This account then formed a part of the later dialogue (section 3.6.6.6 below) which created the superordinate themes across all the cases. As part of this stage a summary account was created of the group and individual meetings and what happened

between the meetings, with notes about political, social and climate-related events in the news at the time. This helped to provide indications of the external context of the group and its members' organisations.

3.6.6.5 Reflexiveness and researcher subjectivity: the fifth case

Following this analysis of the context the fifth individual case was created: that of myself as researcher. This case provides a considered, reflexive analysis of aspects of my countertransference in relation to individuals and the group, enabling an element of triangulation. This approach is based on the innovative approach taken by Gray (2021) and represents a methodological development within IPA.

3.6.6.6 Dialogue and the creation of superordinate themes

The themes from the five cases, and the account of the group as a temporary organisation, were subjected to a rolling, spiral process of dialogue between the data, the researcher including the researcher's defences, and the researcher's psychological knowledge as recommended in Smith et al. (2009). In this dialogue the group account is not treated as independent fact but as a dynamic component of the dialogue. As they began to emerge from this dialogue, the themes were deepened and enriched at each stage of the rolling process. Key to the dialogue process was the application of both the hermeneutics of empathy, walking in the participants' shoes; and the hermeneutics of questioning, subjecting the data to the theoretical frameworks of psychoanalysis and to reflections on "what it might mean for participants to have these concerns in these contexts" (Smith et al., 2009, p 79).

This process resulted in the identification of themes and supporting text for each case. Themes from the five cases were then further analysed in accordance with standard IPA protocols, to create superordinate themes and supporting text for each. Appendix 9 gives the relationship between case themes and superordinate themes.

3.7 What is not covered by this study

As will be clear from the research questions, the study focuses on organisational experience and does not explore the motivations and biographies of the research participants, except insofar as these were raised by them and form part of their own sense-making about their experience.

The study does not intend to claim universality or to assume that the particular experience it describes would apply in all similar situations. The study's findings derive from its particular time and place, as well as from the phenomenology of the experience of the particular individuals who took part. I hope none the less that the thematic and theory-informed presentation of the powerful emotional experiences identified can enable them to be used by people working in climate change communication, to make sense of their own working experiences.

The study does not include organisational observation, although two visits to participants' workplaces did take place during the fieldwork and some impressions were gathered. This means that the triangulation of the systems-psychodynamic analysis of the group experience is carried out primarily through participants' own accounts of their working experience and the researcher's analysis of these - supported by a presentation to the group members after the study was completed which seemed to indicate that they recognised the themes identified. Because of the

limited extent of this triangulation, the hypotheses generated in relation to organisational dynamics as part of the discussion in Chapter 5 should be seen as tentative.

Chapter 4: The quality of leaders' experience – isolation, exclusion and fragility

4.1 Summary

In this chapter, I present my findings with a focus on the experience of the group and its members. Section 4.2 explains how the study's research questions are explored in this chapter and the next. Section 4.3 introduces the story of the group and situates it in what was happening in UK society during late 2018 and 2019. Section 4.4 describes the individual cases, including that of the researcher; and section 4.5 is the systems-psychodynamic analysis of the group material. Section 4.6 summarises the findings.

4.2 How the research questions are addressed

This chapter stays as close as possible to the experience of the research participants consistent with making some patterns out of the data and enabling the experience to be apprehended by the reader. The chapter begins to address the overarching question 'what is the experience of leaders in organisations whose task includes engaging with the public on climate change?'. The individual cases, analysis of the group dynamics, and themes created as a result of the IPA analysis provide a rich description of leaders' experience and form the basic findings.

That experience is then summarised in Chapter 5 through the articulation of superordinate themes, which continue the response to the overarching research question. The three sub-questions: 'what are the ontological and epistemological tensions experienced by leaders?', 'how, if at all, do the conscious and unconscious dynamics thought to exist in relation to climate change play out in these organisations and shape emotional experience within the organisations?'; and 'how,

if at all, does the experience of leaders relate to the characteristics of the problem of climate change?’ require discussion of theoretical material and consideration of the wider context. They are explored in Chapter 5 as part of linking the themes to existing literature and context.

The experience of leaders is conveyed in this chapter in some detail, with the intention that this description has value in itself as a mirror to the experience of those working in this field. Through recognition and validation, this mirroring should help people working in climate communication to put words to the experience and help it to move from the ‘unthought known’ (Bollas, 1987) – something known only at the unconscious level, and therefore more likely to drive defensive responses – into the conscious mind, where it can be thought about.

4.3 Summary of events

We begin with the key events during the fieldwork: an overview of what happened in the group, and in the interviews and coaching sessions; highlights of what was discussed, who left and who stayed. This is accompanied by brief indications of events covered by mainstream media in UK politics and society at the same time, and what was happening with the weather and climate – in the UK and worldwide. This context is provided in order to remind the reader of some of the societal issues that would have been present for this politically engaged UK-based group and its members, and to highlight some echoes of these in the group. For example, temperature records were broken several times in the course of the year, and extremes of heat, wind, rain and floods characterised the UK weather. Politically the prolonged parliamentary stalemate over Brexit, and the incremental collapse of the government, were succeeded by the resignation of prime minister Theresa May and

the election of her successor Boris Johnson. In the group, difficulties over coming together, a prolonged sense of extreme tension, the incremental loss of members Fred, Rachel and Tim, and repeated stalemates over how to work together, were succeeded with a sense of relief by the forming of a smaller group.

Table 4.1 provides this contextual overview in text format, and table 4.2 summarises the information and provides it in visual format using icons.

Note. It will be seen in tables 4.1 and 4.2, and has been suggested above and in Chapter 3, that the group contained some difficult dynamics. It is important to acknowledge at this point that the individual members tried very hard to enable the group to do its work effectively. The feeling (which seems likely to have echoed their workplace experience) was of people who were well disposed to each other, who wanted the work to be successful, and were willing to keep trying – but who were collectively struggling with dynamics that made these good intentions very difficult to fulfil.

Table 4.1: key events during the fieldwork

<i>Date</i>	<i>Events in society, with focus on UK (Wikipedia (2021) except where indicated).</i>	<i>Climate and weather in the UK (Met Office (2019)) and worldwide (IPCC)</i>	<i>Key events in the group</i>
October 2018	'People's March' protest against Brexit. Rebecca's journal indicates a wave of public concern about climate change.	Fifth sunniest October since 1929. Mean temperature 0.1 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010	Tim and Fred confirm they are still interested in joining the group. Invitations to Arthur, Lesley, Louisa, and Rachel are issued, discussed and accepted.
November 2018	English Channel migrant 'crisis'. First Extinction Rebellion protest in London. Theresa May's Brexit deal put to Parliament. Events marking 100 years since end of the First World War.	Mean temperature 1.1 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010	'Taster' meeting – Tim attends, Fred cannot find the room. Last members of group agree to join. Group is finalised. Date set for first meeting in January 2019. Arthur, Lesley and Tim introduce themselves to each other by email
December 2018	Parliamentary vote on Brexit postponed to January. Theresa May wins vote of no confidence. Drones disrupt flights at Gatwick.	Mean temperature 1.9 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010	Louisa introduces herself to the group by email
January 2019	Parliamentary debates on the respective roles of parliament and government in relation to Brexit. Government survives no-confidence vote. Car and food industry representatives warn about no-deal Brexit impacts. Bomb and car hi-jackings in Derry.	Mean temperature equal to long-term average 1981-2010. Widespread snow causes road and rail disruption	Rachel calls Rebecca to say that she is starting a new job and is unsure whether she will be able to commit to the group. It is agreed that she will see how it goes. Rachel introduces herself to the group by email. First meeting: all present; anxiety; some conflict; shared question agreed ('What does healthy leadership look like in our contexts and how can we nurture it?'). Doodle poll for subsequent meetings reveals there are no dates that everyone can commit to. Differences over location for meetings.
February 2019	School climate strikes in the UK begin. Labour Party MPs resign to join the Independent Group. Government loses vote on Brexit. Knife crime reported at highest level since records began in 1946. Brexit uncertainty prompts stockpiling by businesses and families.	Mean temperature 2.3 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010. 25 and 26 February are the hottest February days since records began. Wildfires on Saddleworth Moor and in Wales	Second meeting on 26 February with social photo matrix. Apologies from Rachel. Lesley cancels on the day because of caring commitments and joins by Zoom. Fred, Arthur, Louisa, Tim and Rebecca in person (Louisa goes to the wrong venue and is late). Severe technology problems disrupt the meeting. Irritation, frustration. Rebecca's journal that morning refers to the 'unseasonably warm' and 'record-breaking' weather. Tim: 'this amazing weather and blue sky'. Afterwards, shared reflection via a Google Doc on what is happening in the group.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Events in society, with focus on UK (Wikipedia (2021) except where indicated).</i>	<i>Climate and weather in the UK (Met Office (2019)) and worldwide (IPCC)</i>	<i>Key events in the group</i>
March 2019	Government loses vote on Brexit. EU agrees 3-month delay to Brexit requested by UK. Petition to revoke Brexit gains over 6m signatures. Pro-Remain MP loses vote of no confidence by local party. Government loses all 'indicative' Brexit votes in the House of Commons. Independence Group becomes a political party, Change UK.	Mean temperature 1.3 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010. Storms and a wildfire	Shared reflection continues in the Google Doc: Fred's feeling of being "conned"; baffled responses from others, but a shared sense that things are not working well yet. Rachel announces she is leaving the group.
April 2019	EU agrees further delay to Brexit (till October 2019) requested by UK. Journalist killed in Derry. Extinction Rebellion protests in London. Notre Dame cathedral in Paris is destroyed by fire. Nigel Farage launches Brexit Party. Julian Assange arrested in London	Mean temperature 1.0 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010. Record high temperature on Easter Sunday. Storm and wildfires	Third meeting postponed by two weeks because Lesley has caring commitments. Fred announces he is leaving the group and expresses angry feelings to Rebecca by email. 1-1 interviews held with Arthur, Lesley and Tim. Their sense of difference from each other expressed. Postponed meeting held: Tim gives apologies, Lesley joins by Skype; Arthur, Louisa and Rebecca in person. Reference to the heat. Sense of connection and being on task: work discussion process covering Arthur's tension between positivity and pessimism, and Louisa's feeling of climate work being downgraded and feminised in her organisation, and used as a cover-up.
May 2019	Local elections in the UK. Boris Johnson announces intention to stand for leader of the Conservative Party. Theresa May announces that she will resign.	Mean temperature 0.5 degrees below long-term average 1981-2010. Generally 'benign' with one wildfire	Fourth meeting held – Lesley, Louisa, Tim and Rebecca in person; Arthur on Zoom. Louisa begins the meeting with a breathing exercise. Tensions and conflict. Work discussion process covers Lesley's gendered sense of needing to adapt herself to others, and Tim's wish to explore community. Louisa tells the group that she is taking a low-carbon building job at a different local authority.
June 2019	President Donald Trump's state visit to the UK. Theresa May resigns. Theresa May sets goal for UK to be net-zero by 2050. Six Select Committees of the House of Commons commission the citizens' assembly on climate change. Parliamentary attempts to prevent no-deal Brexit. Discussions between Theresa May and Irish Taoiseach about Brexit	Mean temperature 0.2 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010. Thunderstorms and heavy rain cause flooding. Australian 'Black Summer' begins: unusually intense bush fires (Burgess et al., 2020)	Rebecca writes to the group confirming arrangements for the fifth meeting and suggesting the creation of themes arising from the work so far.
July 2019	Theresa May is succeeded by Boris Johnson as leader of the Conservative Party and prime minister. Parliamentary attempts to prevent no-deal Brexit continue	Mean temperature 1.2 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010. Rail disruption due to heat and thunderstorms; flooding. Highest temperature on record (38.7 degrees in Cambridge)	Rebecca shares suggested emerging themes. Fifth meeting held briefly on Zoom: Lesley, Louisa, Tim and Rebecca (but the meeting is aborted after Arthur cancels at the last minute and Lesley and Louisa have connection/ technical problems). 1-1 call with Louisa. Louisa has British citizenship ceremony.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Events in society, with focus on UK (Wikipedia (2021) except where indicated).</i>	<i>Climate and weather in the UK (Met Office (2019)) and worldwide (IPCC)</i>	<i>Key events in the group</i>
August 2019	Boris Johnson asks the Queen to prorogue (close) Parliament from early September to mid-October. IPCC releases report on land use and climate change (IPCC, 2019b)	Mean temperature 0.9 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010. Impacts of flooding: Whaley Bridge dam damaged, evacuations. Widespread power outages. Strong winds. Hottest ever August Bank Holiday	1-1 meeting with Tim, at which it is agreed he will leave the group.
September 2019	Government loses its majority after Conservative MP 'crosses the floor'. Bill to prevent no-deal Brexit is passed into law. Large school/young people climate strikes held. Supreme Court rules that prorogation of Parliament is unlawful and Parliament returns. IPCC publishes special report on the oceans and cryosphere (IPCC, 2019a), and report highlighting growing gap between targets and reality (IPCC, 2019a)	Mean temperature 0.5 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010. High rainfall. Flooding disrupts rail and flights	Sixth meeting. Arthur, Lesley, Tim and Rebecca on Zoom. Louisa cannot connect because of her new employer's restrictions on use of specific platforms. Tim joins for the first few minutes to tell the group he is leaving. Agreement on way forward for future meetings. After the meeting Rebecca writes to Louisa to update her. 1-1 call with Louisa.
October 2019	Extinction Rebellion protests in London are banned by the Metropolitan Police under 'section 14' orders. Parliament prorogued and returns to hear legislative programme and Brexit plans. The VAT rate on low-carbon building materials is raised to 20%. A further Brexit delay is agreed till January 2020. Legislation to suspend Fixed-Term Parliament Act is approved; election date set for December 2019	Mean temperature 0.5 degrees below long-term average 1981-2010. Heavy rain and flooding	Rebecca takes part in Extinction Rebellion protests and is arrested. 1-1 coaching session for Lesley (at her workplace), in which her feelings of 'birthing' her organisation are explored.
November 2019	Parliament is dissolved for the general election. Extinction Rebellion wins case against the Metropolitan Police and the section 14 orders are found unlawful. Prince Andrew steps down from public duties. Terrorist incident at London Bridge	Mean temperature 0.9 degrees below long-term average 1981-2010. High winds and rain; flooding and trees falling	1-1 coaching session for Louisa: her personal history of leaving her home country is explored. 1-1 coaching session for Arthur, discussing his frustration with his organisation's culture. Seventh and last meeting of the group: Louisa cannot make the date; Arthur, Lesley and Rebecca, at Arthur's workplace. Sense of connection and honesty; further discussion of the members' core dilemmas. Lesley announces that she will leave her job
December 2019	Conservatives win general election with 80-seat majority. Change UK wins no seats and announces its dissolution	Mean temperature 1.3 degrees above long-term average 1981-2010. Heavy and frequent rain caused disruption. Met Office announces 2019 as 'year of extremes: record-breaking heat and rain, along with notable spells of cold and windy weather'	Christmas greetings exchanged between group members

Table 4.2: visual representation of key events during the fieldwork

Feelings in the group															
Absence and departures from the group															
	Oct 2018	Nov 2018	Dec 2018	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	Mar 2019	Apr 2019	May 2019	Jun 2019	Jul 2019	Aug 2019	Sep 2019	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019
Politics															
Climate records															

Key

	Irritation, conflict, tension		Work-group mentality		Mutual affection		Absence		Departure		Brexit protests, discussions		Extinction Rebellion protests		Parliamentary activities		Parliament closed
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	School climate strikes		Temperatures at least 1°C above 1981-2010 average		Wildfires		Storms		Flooding
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4.4 Individual cases with themes

4.4.1 Summary

Table 4.3 contains a description of each case's individual, their role, the organisation/s in which they held these roles, and – to connect with the emotional experience of their work – the image they brought to the social photo matrix, and what they and others said about it.

The table is followed by a series of textual descriptions of each case with illustrative quotations. Each of these sections also begins with an image showing the key themes of the case.

As explained in Chapter 3 section 3.6.6.3, the 'cases' are the five members who stayed with the group for the whole or a substantial part of the group's existence, including myself as researcher. In order they are Arthur, Lesley, Louisa, Tim, Rebecca.

Table 4.3: the group members, their roles, organisations, and work

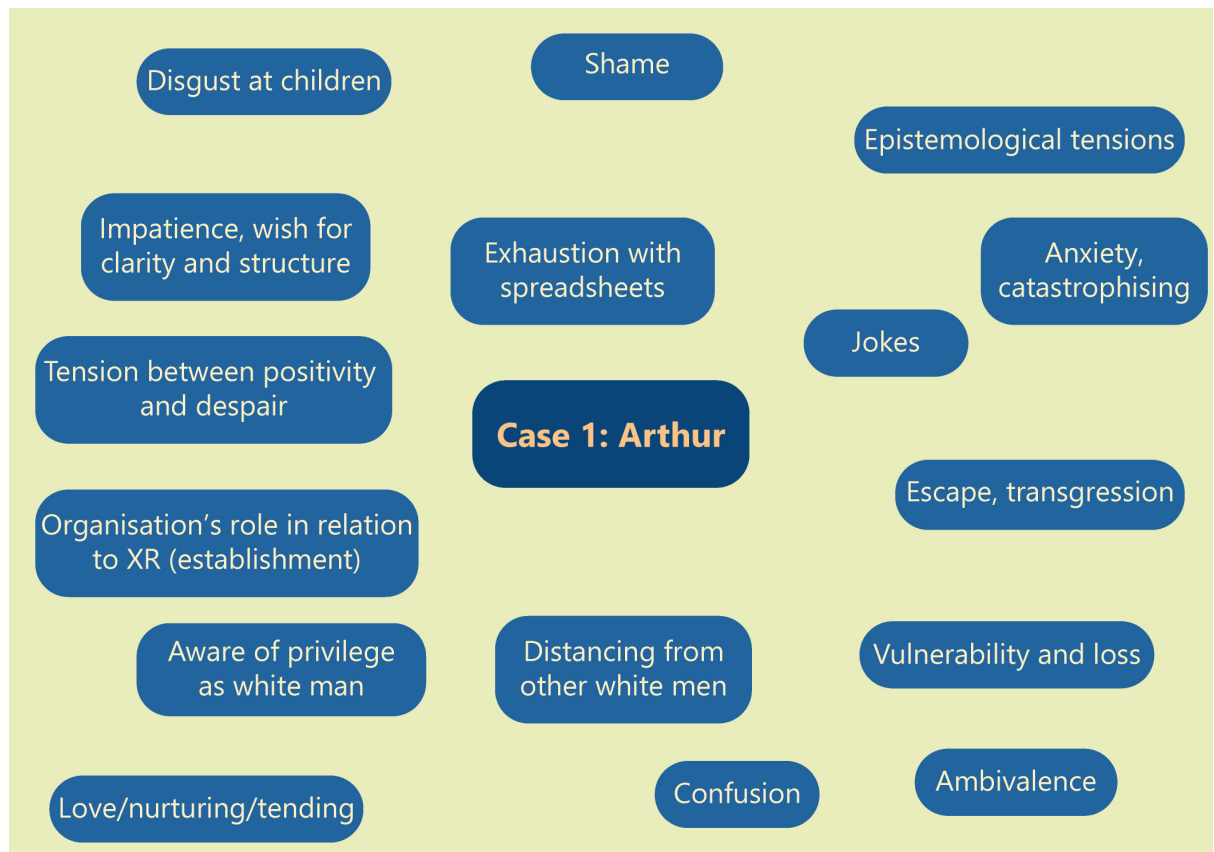
Name	Member and role	Organisation	Social photo matrix image showing member's work	Extracts from member's description of the image
Arthur	Male, white, 40s. Heading up policy, advocacy and campaigning on climate change. A team reported to him and he also worked in a matrix structure. He had been there two years, and had previously worked on climate change as a civil servant	The UK branch of a large federated international charity. Annual income of the UK branch in 2018-19 was about £60m. The exact focus of the charity is not provided here for privacy reasons.	A young people's climate strike outside a government building in Germany. The group saw a contrast between the vulnerability and uncertainty, almost passivity, of the young people on the one hand, and on the other the angularity and concrete of the building and the potential violence of the security people.	These kids were striking ... it is this kind of brutalist government building, em, kids saying, you know, "Our future – you need to do something", and...and the response is: let's make sure we've got as many tooled-up police and security guards as possible standing between these <i>obvious terrorists</i> and, you know, the people who are supposed to represent them and defend their future. And it made me weep in a kind of very sort of hopeful way. ... It gives me hope that these kids are doing what they're doing, but then you look at the reaction, em...
Lesley	Female, white, 40s. Founder and chief executive of her organisation.	A small, growing social enterprise (employing about ten people including Lesley) which specialised in training on climate change communication. The organisation depended on grants. It had been successful in expanding its work.	Lesley on top of a green hill with a notebook, on a bright sunny day, with tower blocks in the distance. The group thought it was beautiful, expansive, inspirational. They wanted to be there. They felt the contrast between the hugeness of the space and the tower blocks, and the smallness of the human figure. They felt as if Lesley cared about the setting and whatever was in the notebook. There was a tentativeness and gentleness in how they discussed the picture.	It's weird to – run an organisation when I do it because I really like nature ...but I spend most of my time in front of a computer in an office learning how to run organisations instead of being in what I'm trying to work to protect. So, I try to take regular time out to go to this spot, and that's where I write the strategic documents and try and keep...keep my feet grounded on where I'm supposed to be... But yeah, it can obviously feel quite lonely in that role, so I think that's reflected.

Name	Member and role	Organisation	Social photo matrix image showing member's work	Extracts from member's description of the image
Louisa	Female, white, 30s. Worked in climate change and sustainability within the built and natural environment. Her sustainability officer role was about raising the agenda for green infrastructure and access to quality open space. Moved to a different London borough in July 2019, into a role project-managing a low-carbon housing project.	The organisation is an outer London borough council with about 1,000 employees. Budget savings of £12m were being sought for the financial year 2019-20 against a backdrop of previous cuts.	A vase of flowers on a table, with a delicate model snake or sea-monster or dinosaur, made out of paper. The group saw a creative contrast between the monster and the flowers, and noted that the vase and the flowers looked more substantial than the monster.	I chose them, because it's a table and because it represents some of the sensation that I have when I facilitate or chair ... And there is a very mixed feeling about creativity in thinking how to engage maybe complicated issues. So, this is representing me with the aspect of creativity, but also how I perceive my style, it's very delicate and gentle because one of the strengths I have is not so much my teeth but the ability to understand the very, very fine characteristics of each person around the table, and bring them together, nearly in a game. It's not always as fun but...it is, but in that way. And that is probably where...like my edge is.
Tim	Male, white, 50s. He was supporting the engagement of one organisation with sustainability and climate change, and had other responsibilities on boards of voluntary groupings with an environmental focus. In one of these he was responsible for HR issues. Most of his work was voluntary.	An international network on sustainable living; a religious group in the UK; other organisations	A walled garden belonging to the religious group, with some areas being dug up and protective tape and bollards visible. The group felt a sense of transgression – as if someone had walked where they should not have – and the temporary nature of the diggings in this old garden.	It's the archaeological dig because there's a plan to build a new bit in part of the garden, and it reflected a lot of my feeling about the work I'm doing with organisations and digging stuff up, and I was kind of very conscious of the roots that had been dug up. They didn't find anything, but they've dug up a lot of old roots. But for me, it connected a lot with the work I'm doing with organisations and the messiness of people's personal stuff that's coming out and the organisational dynamics and so on of the disruption...and preparation for doing useful things.

Name	Member and role	Organisation	Social photo matrix image showing member's work	Extracts from member's description of the image
Rebecca (researcher)	Female, white, 50s. Treasurer of a community low-carbon group and also active in the Climate Psychology Alliance; run Climate Cafes and workshops on talking to friends and family about climate change. Freelance group facilitator and consultant some of whose work is with climate change organisations	<p>Low-carbon group: small, with £7k annual income and seven trustees. Relies on volunteer engagement to organise public educational and awareness initiatives and practical projects.</p> <p>National/ international membership organisation; annual income around £8k. Runs climate awareness events and conferences for people in the psychological professions and members of the public</p>	Image of flipchart sheet from an annual planning meeting, pinned to a colleague's curtains. In the discussion there were associations to Viking ships and clouds, and gloom at being reminded of flipcharts and planning.	I think the asphyxiation and sense of being trapped is absolutely how I feel about it. I was very struck by the Vikings and the fleet of ships, em, eh...which speaks to me of aggression and invasion and ambition, but also possibly violence, and I suppose my intention in capturing something about how I feel about my work is in part about that sense of oppression, asphyxiation, but it's also about the emptiness of the 2030 that is kind of...the sense of...'that's impossible.'

4.4.2 Case 1: Arthur

Figure 4.1



Arthur's role in the group was often a jokey one, keeping difficult feelings manageable and perhaps also representing his ambivalence about the group. Responding to an image of Fred's allotment in meeting 2, he talked about the idea of growing one's own food, and then added: "I don't know, I assume it's food. [Pause] Might be drugs."

He occasionally expressed a sense of not knowing what we were doing or why, and of confusion in the group: "In that classic way of not being the first to say 'eh, what?', I didn't ask and assumed others were getting it." (After Meeting 2, in writing – refers to group experience). And at work there was a similar sense of

people in positions of authority making baffling decisions:

a particular area that we had, you know, programmed into our plan, you know, had been approved and was all part of what we were doing, and so, you know, some people were ... busy working on it...and then, randomly, they're like, 'Oh, well, I think you should kind of present on this and let's discuss it and decide whether we want to do it.' (Coaching – refers to work experience).

In the first meeting he expressed an epistemological tension between the complexity of the issues and the simplicity and clarity needed in communication.

Sometimes this sense of confusion became a wish for more clarity of purpose and structure, for me as convenor to take charge and make things work. In Meeting 6, during a discussion about how to go forward in the group after Tim's departure, with emphasis that suggested a controlled frustration, he proposed: "if there is something else that is useful...then let's try and actually kind of set out what that is and how we approach it" (Meeting 6).

He was aware of, and seemingly concerned about, his privilege as a white man in a senior leadership role, and indicated his reluctance to be associated with the other white men in the group. "I don't feel like I'm coming in as it seems like Fred did, with a very very firm view of what what, what it needed to be and what it shouldn't be." (Interview)

At the same time, he represented an organisation that is part of the British establishment, and was aware of the responsibilities this required of him.

During a discussion about XR in the last meeting, he acknowledged feeling slightly guilty about not being involved, and explained that his organisation was

“cautious... it just doesn’t go down well with ...some of the people that give us money, to encourage, you know, somebody to break the law” (Meeting 7).

The work of climate campaigning seemed to be a vehicle for the enactment of his loving feelings, and grief for the losses created by climate change: “I read a story yesterday about koalas becoming functionally extinct in Australia because of the bushfires and it made me cry, and, eh, I cannot watch the *Our Planet* episode with the walruses falling down the cliff without crying” (Meeting 7).

He expressed and enacted a wish to nurture and tend to other creatures including the other-than-human (for example, his pet which he stopped an interview to show me); an enjoyment of fertility and growth was also evident. Responding to the pictures in the social photo matrix, he described a “little tended patch” (the allotment) and associated to a building image with a shared building he knew in London with “just loads and loads of little climate and environment organisations, all in this one building, em, all sort of working in the same space but in their own...bit of it.” (Meeting 2)

Linked to these feelings was a sense of connection with vulnerability: his own, the animals threatened by climate change, and that of the young people protesting about the failure to act on the climate crisis (see Table 4.3 for the image he brought representing this).

Occasionally in the group something more aggressive emerged in response to references to children, which seemed to be the shadow side of the nurturing feelings.

He characterised his organisation as sharing his values, a big positive after

working in the civil service for some years; but also as “a big organisation that likes me to fill in spreadsheets,” and as not always giving him the autonomy and respect that he felt was appropriate. The chief work preoccupation that he brought to the group was the tension between the positive, energetic, optimistic approach that he believed to be an important aspect of leadership, and his underlying belief that as a society we have left it too late to address the climate crisis. This was also experienced as a split between leadership inside the organisation, which was stuck, painful, infuriating, and split; and externally-focused leadership, which was felt to be positive, fun, and energising. Like Disneyland workers (“the Disney smile”, meeting 3) he felt he had no choice but to use the positive tone. Inside was where there was space to acknowledge pessimism, but it was also where the envy and disgust were: a dreary, tiring, draining, demoralising, depressing feel, with a hint of danger, a feeling of being checked up on, and a pull to escape from the pressures through transgressive behaviour.

He worried about the transgression; in the final meeting, describing having made a possibly inappropriate joke at work about a new government minister, he said “I actually said that out-loud! ... I’m prone to that kind of, em, “Oh, did I just go too far?” kind of thing, eh...” (Meeting 7)

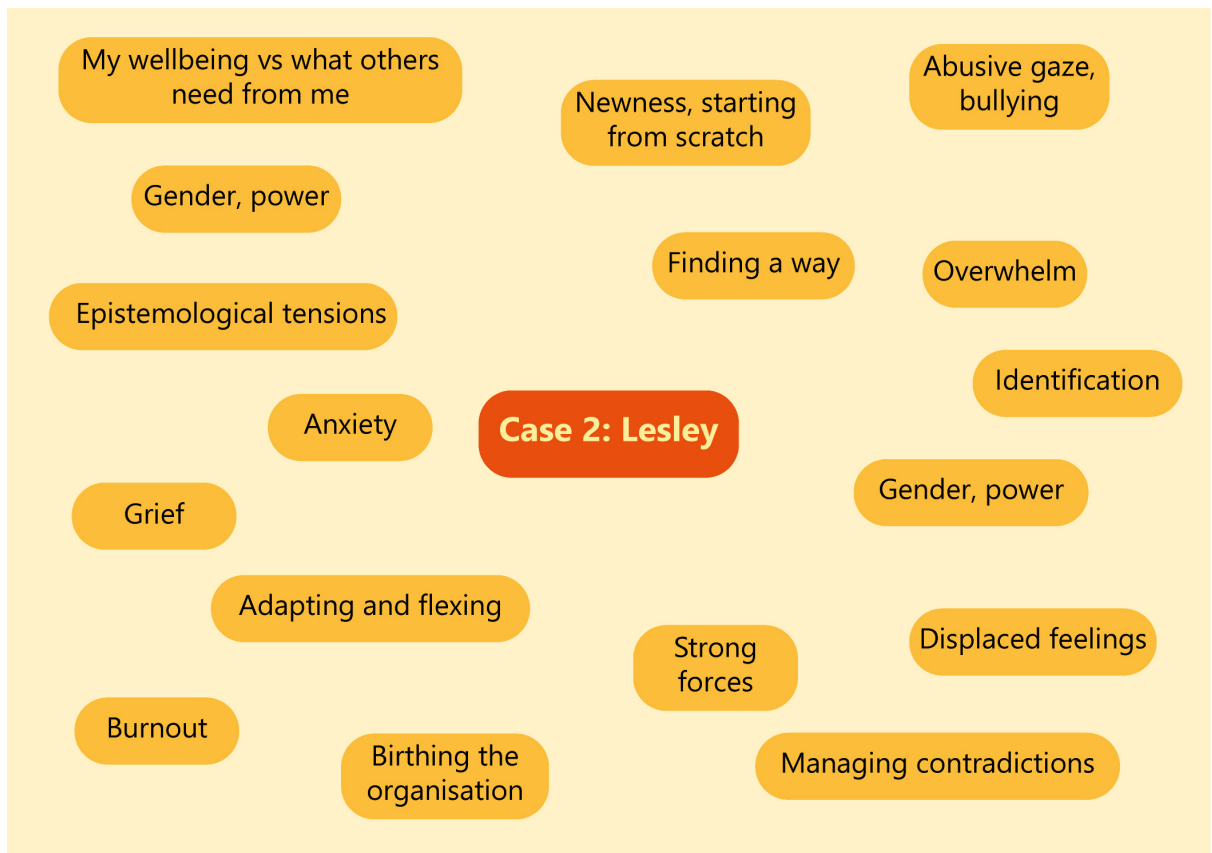
In the early meetings of the group Arthur expressed anxiety about feeling new, unsure, not knowing what’s going on, and wanting to fit in with the rules and hierarchies. Some of these statements can be seen as serving to differentiate him from the other men in the group whom he saw as taking up the ‘knowledgeable’ role (Fred, for example, mentioned earlier); others served to

emphasise his status (“feeling new to this field, worked for civil service before, used to hierarchies, was pretty good at leadership in that context but this field feels different, people’s motivations are different” – Meeting 1). Later he acknowledged an internal struggle with obsessive checking, and a fear of and guilt about his own transgressive urges and felt capacity to damage: “I am prone to sort of catastrophising ...getting a bit pissy with my colleague the other week, the conversation in my head afterwards... ‘I’m going to ask for this and, God, I’m just going to imagine what happens if my boss won’t agree to it ...’ And then I’m getting...I’m having a fucking fight with her in my head...It’s just...it gets ridiculous!” (Meeting 7)

Arthur’s experience of leaving the civil service was associated with government policy decisions to move climate work into a different department. I wonder if some of his feelings of being potentially out of control may have derived in part from this experience. Feelings of shame seemed also to be present for him, and fear of exposure. In the first meeting, he knocked some dried coconut shreds off a plastic plate and they scattered all over the floor. He seemed utterly mortified. These feelings are linked to the work through shame about waste, and making a mess, and perhaps through the experience of feeling that he had been rejected by government.

4.4.3 Case 2: Lesley

Figure 4.2



Lesley was acutely aware of the inevitable tensions and contradictions in her work. Some of these are expressed in her social photo matrix contribution (see Table 4.3). A further set of contradictions arose from the epistemological positioning of her organisation, and is described as a layered struggle with conflicting worldviews:

I do quite regularly feel angry with environmentalists. So, we're training them and we're like, "This way gives you a 90% chance of being able to get through to your neighbour. Why waste your energy feeling angry at that neighbour? You can't change that neighbour. But you can change how you relate to that neighbour." And some environmentalists, of course, don't want to. They're angry at their neighbour and they don't see why they should cultivate empathy for their neighbour as a tool for effective communication. Then I'm angry [laughing]!
(Coaching)

Lesley's role in the group was frequently to surface power dynamics – especially on gender. She felt aligned with the researcher and Louisa as the women in the group, against the two older men: “if I was having any strong emotion, it would just be irritation at the men in the group...does it not occur to them that there are other people in the room?” (interview). For her, the ‘old white man’ (Meeting 3) dynamics she saw in the group were not unfamiliar to her from experiences at work. Her explicit identification with me (“I’ve been identifying with you, and I’ve felt like...cross on your behalf” – Interview) may have made it difficult for her to acknowledge any difficult feelings that arose in response to my behaviour, and it is possible that some of these were displaced onto the men in the group.

Lesley was often the one to make connections between feelings, behaviour and dynamics in the group and the experience of working in the climate movement: for example, in Meeting 4, she made a connection between Tim's sense of looking for a home and “what is our place in the world and how do we fit into the big system and will we have a home in a hundred years' time and, actually, is there any place on this Earth that's treating our home like our home.” Her insights felt powerful to me. This making of connections was something that I also did, and I wonder if in part the fact of Lesley doing it too represents the identification with me which she acknowledged.

Lesley described her work as constantly requiring her to invent new policies, procedures and ways of doing things. She was intensely preoccupied with supporting the growth of her organisation and managing its establishment as an entity separate from her. This was difficult and sometimes overwhelming: it felt

like a birthing experience, like being a new parent, like being overtaken by a strong internal force that cannot be resisted. She felt as though she was never doing enough, as if it was always urgent, and as though she and the organisation were new all the time even though she had been with the organisation for several years. She wondered whether it would be possible to finish this task before burning out. An extreme example of the strong forces that Lesley felt subjected to [redacted] is given in Appendix 8.

Lesley felt the epistemological tensions and complexity in her work, the difficulty of knowing, and the pull to simplify highly complex and uncertain information and take on “that parent role of providing assurance and guidance to people who don’t work in climate change...and it’s just a big responsibility to know how to pitch it and...and whether we’re pitching it right. Em...yeah, it’s, em...it’s really hard to know.” (Meeting 3)

The complexity she felt at a personal level was illustrated by her choice of image in a farewell activity at the end of Meeting 7:

Figure 4.3

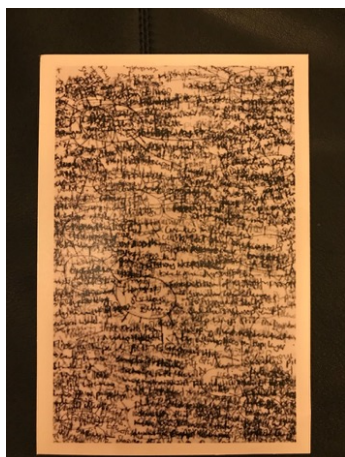


Image chosen by Lesley in Meeting 7 (Wyatt, 2011)

the layers and layers and layers and layers, em, and the...all the...individual things but trying to sort of work together, and the chaos of it all, but then it's kind of all contained and, em, I think it's just, em...visually summarises that point that I was saying before about there are no reference points. (Meeting 7)

She was also preoccupied with her sense of the tensions between her own wellbeing and what the organisation needed from her. She experienced a strong demand to “adapt and flex” herself to others’ needs and a concern about how she appeared to others. She explicitly linked this to working on climate change:

We spend...so much of the really animated part of our conversation thinking about, you know, ooh, how are we presenting ourselves and how are we communicating ourselves and what do we mean and how are we reaching people and what, you know, what are we about and what do we want – and those questions are really important, but they're dominating the conversation, em, and I think...that comes from people's anxieties really. (Interview)

Towards the end of the fieldwork Lesley talked about her experience of grief, and her belief that “the way that you cope with grief is that you look to transform it... And if you're looking at grief on the horizon, so it's not something you can yet transform, you...you look at what you can do and not what you can't do, and then you take it one day at a time.” (Coaching)

She acknowledged experiencing anxiety and related health conditions. She felt a link between these conditions and her work, describing them as burnout symptoms, and connecting them to her need to find a way in any situation – illustrated in her response to grief above.

As indicated in the first paragraph of this case, Lesley believed that an important aspect of climate communications work was to be empathetic, to

acknowledge the existence of the other, and to be able to manage uncertainty and maintain hope. Being empathetic was not always easy when there was frustration about failure to act, but she kept her empathy focused on those for whom she felt her role and task required it. This could mean that her frustrations were displaced to others, perhaps those (inside or outside the organisation) who denied the need for empathy or who behaved selfishly or abusively. It felt very difficult to allow her feelings, because she felt that “other people won’t be able to manage that. It’s actually a fear of, I think, how other people will react to what I’m experiencing and, in turn, me finding it really difficult to cope with them not coping...” (Coaching).

Part way through the last meeting, Lesley suddenly said “It’s, em, it’s quite hard to be present for the conversation because I’ve just decided to quit my job [laughing]!” (Meeting 7). She did indeed leave her role and the organisation.

4.4.4 Case 3: Louisa**Figure 4.4**

Louisa’s role in the group was a playful one, exploring feelings through free-association. She felt connected to Lesley and was sometimes protective of her (Interview): for example, in Meeting 4 she expressed lively views during a discussion on gender stereotyping that she felt Lesley was caught up in. She was otherwise isolated in the group and on the edge or outside of it. It was not only that she was often absent, but also that she was somehow not allowed in: her playful style seemed to exist in isolation, her associations were not picked up and built on by others, in one meeting she adopted a facilitation role which I then took back from her. She referred to the nineteenth-century English worldview that “nature is good if it stays in place and doesn’t speak” (Interview): I wonder if this spoke to her experience in the group, that she felt she was

expected to stay silent. She also experienced her work being marginalised, and linked marginalisation to feminisation: following a restructure, “climate change has been put into the girlish part of the organisation, where there is communication and policy” (Meeting 3).

Louisa left behind her family in southern Europe as a young adult, to study and work on environmental projects. She became a British citizen during the life of the group. She described a sense of loss, and not having a permanent home of her own in the UK but in other ways being linked to the UK establishment. In the coaching she described a recent gathering of people her age from southern and central Europe in which they danced and watched films together: she felt as if that period of recent history in which the Balkan war took place had been forgotten and not reflected on. I wondered if this was also a description of a painful period in her own life, involving loss of connection with people who shared her origins; and perhaps also her sense of the difficulties with work relationships, which she described in terms of “battles” and “war”, aspiring to the patience Nelson Mandela brought to his work and joking “I hope I’m not gonna stay 27 years in jail for it” (Coaching).

Her practically-focused work – creating homes for others when her own experience included leaving behind a home – could be characterised as trying to find a place to think in a fast-moving system. She was focusing on the challenges of developing long-term productive relationships (“being civil through a lot of battles” – Coaching) across divides both cultural and values-based, like the police-officer friend “who ...was on the S14¹ team. Hard to talk to him about

¹ The Metropolitan Police team that enforced the order forbidding XR to congregate in central London during the October rebellion in 2019

climate.” (Coaching)

This work was difficult in the face of her sense of urgency over the climate crisis, which conflicted with the immediate urgencies of building projects and the exigencies of local-authority funding challenges:

I lost my wits with the procurement last week, cos I was like [laughs] “Aah, you don’t understand...we need to do this! Quick!” Whereas, for them, I don’t think it’s in their mind that there is an urgency, em, and for me there is, you know
(Coaching)

She was aware of her fear about climate change, which linked to other fears that she worked hard to manage. “When I don’t notice [fear]... I behave in a way that covers it up. But if I notice it, I [can think] it’s just fear, there’s no real danger.” (Interview). Her work – especially the job she moved to in July – served to manage the fear by doing something concrete. But she felt that her work might also result in damage. She worried about the reliability of the low-carbon technology that she was responsible for introducing, whether it was being introduced insensitively and without regard for existing inequalities; and whether it would prove to be more wasteful than fossil-fuel technology in the long run. This anxiety also constituted a difficult epistemological tension in her work, engaging with the different assumptions of contractors and building professionals in relation to ‘what counts’ as a low-carbon decision. For example, fuel cells, which have intense production costs in terms of carbon and may last no longer than ten years: “You look at the science in isolation they make sense, but in reality...I was in a room full of er, scientists and engineers. When I expressed my concern they said oh well, anything would be engineered and manufactured, and er so compared to other options it’s better.” (Coaching)

Connected with this worry was a sense that her work risked misleading members of the public into thinking that it is easy to fix climate change: “big lying to people really ‘if you buy an electric car and put a solar panel on your roof - ping!’” (Interview); or that it covered up the real work of the local authority: “Oh, but, no, we are doing the real business – you take care of making sure that everybody thinks we are the good guys and say the positive things ...” (Meeting 3).

4.4.5 Case 4: Tim

Figure 4.5



Tim described his general focus as a kind of action inquiry in leadership and change agency, in relation to the climate crisis. He had a deep sense of complexity in his work and life. In the group he often resisted closure and definition – for example in the first meeting on a proposal for how to work

together, in response to which, according to my notes, he “intervenes and says he really doesn’t want to be organised” (Meeting 1); and in the fourth meeting on defining the issue he brought for the group to work with:

I don’t know that I have a straightforward dilemma or thing that I...have to bring. Well, I probably...I could bring very narrow things, but I...I guess, mostly, what I’m coming to this group with is a sense of... Oh, actually, a first thing is that I don’t feel like I’m a leader. I mean, I think I’m, em, I’m not a natural leader. I’m involved in a lot of processes, groups and networks and projects, and...I’m often part of the leadership, but I’m not the leader, and I...that’s really... (Meeting 4)

This sense of complexity and not wishing to move too quickly to definition could also be felt as ambivalence, putting himself outside of consensus or the mainstream. It felt paradoxical then that he was frustrated that others did not bring what he saw as sufficient commitment for the group’s task, which in his eyes had the potential to be a personally and collectively transformative one, at the level of how human consciousness could develop in response to the climate and ecological challenge:

I think if...if...there’s a transformation or if – no, if there’s something that I feel is most worth working for, em, it’s a kind of Teilhardian thing of...em...human consciousness having the opportunity to evolve into something healthy [laughing]... I feel like the biggest thing I can be part of is the planetary experiment, and I guess I think the most interesting thing about that experiment is a kind of Teilhardian consciousness thing. (Interview 1)

Tim made several suggestions that the two of us should meet up on a one-to-one basis. He left the group because of the sense of disjuncture between the level of commitment needed and what others were able to offer; and also because he wanted to explore the possibility of developing a working relationship with me outside the boundaries of the doctoral project. This is

discussed in case 5.

As indicated by the image he brought to the social photo matrix, Tim wanted to explore mess, dirt, toxic dynamics, narcissistic leadership (Interview 1), and “how do we develop agency around this, this stuff, and this agency for...transforming ourselves from formulators”. But at the same time his multiple roles in multiple organisations meant that he often felt on the edge and isolated, unable to get into the mess, perhaps. His key stated preoccupation in his work was the challenge of making and being part of a supportive community, sensing himself to be often outside of groups:

And...I think, if I have a core challenge, it's one of actually being in lots of different spaces and not having a kind of home space or not having a clear position in a structure. So, it's kind of this thing of being a bit free-floating and, em...so, I guess it's kind of having [laughing]...it's very hard to have a feeling for how...useful I'm being or, em, whether I'm putting my energy in the right place (Meeting 4)

He saw the need for community as a characteristic of the wider climate movement and XR in particular: “XR is, em, was initiated with this narrative of, you know, a particular theory of change and urgent action and all this structure that's around organising action, but, actually, a lot of people are coming to it for community” (Interview 2).

This desire for community, and the difficulties around it, played out in the group. There were tensions around him. He was highly educated and very experienced, and this was hard for the rest of the group to handle. It combined with the perceptions of others relating to his age, gender, and class to form a barrier, which was exacerbated by his own occasional blind spots about aspects of his privilege (see Cases 1, 2, 3 and 5). The level of knowledge was

also projected into him by others: for example, when listening to the recording of Interview 1, there was a word I could not understand. I played it again and again, assuming it was a physics or philosophy term, or the name of a person I had not heard of. After about twenty replays I realised that the word was 'so-what' (Interview 1).

I experienced the resistance to his knowledge myself quite forcefully, for example during Interview 1, where he was introducing various concepts in order to explain his position, and I felt as if he was trying to create a teaching relationship, "which I am resisting. I feel threatened" (my reflections on Interview 1). Some of my difficulties with this aspect of our relationship are described in case 5. Tim himself may have felt unheard and lonely in response to this resistance: during the first interview when I said that I had felt he had a strong wish to connect over what he was saying, he said "I'm not terribly interested in saying things that nobody's listening to [laughing]." (Interview 1).

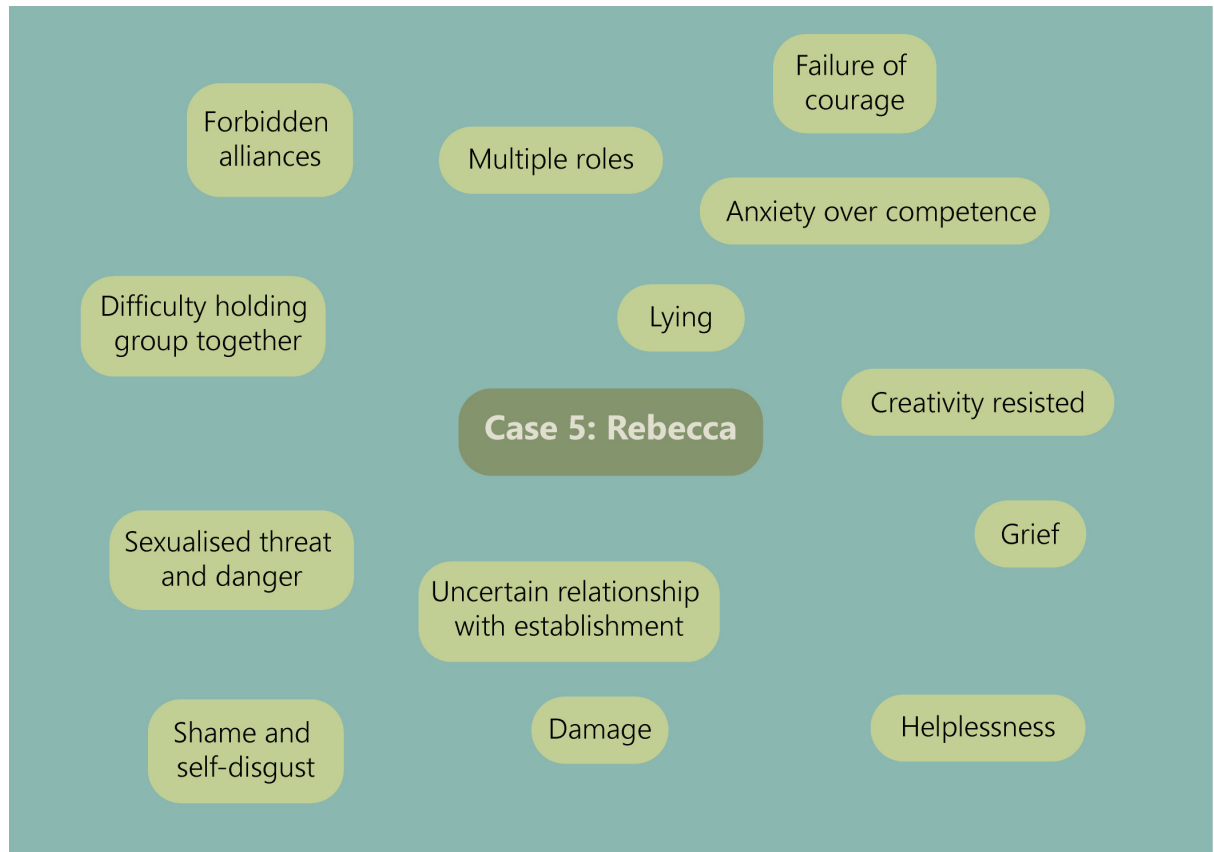
'Being on the edge' had an additional meaning for Tim. It related to the sense of being at a social tipping point, connecting to his interest in a transformation of human consciousness but also to the potential for social collapse. At the end of Meeting 2, during the reflections on the social photo matrix, he described some aspects of work that he was finding difficult, and added a quotation from the thirteenth-century Persian poet Jalad-Al-Din Rumi:

I keep using this quote [laughing] from my trustees. We had a meeting last summer and we, we spent two days talking about, really, how do we cope with being at the edge, on the edge of social collapse, societal collapse, and this line from Rumi

about...which is: sit still and listen, for you are drunk and we're on the edge of the roof.² (Meeting 2)

4.4.6 Case 5: Rebecca, the researcher

Figure 4.6



I had multiple roles in the group. I recruited the participants, designed the overall shape of the process, organised the meetings and was researcher, facilitator and group member. I was aware of bringing to the work high levels of anxiety about whether I was capable of doing the fieldwork well enough to proceed with the doctorate, and these multiple roles contributed to the anxiety.

² Here is the full text of the poem and reference: Which is the road by which I came? I would return, for it likes me not here;/One moment's absence from the Beloved's lane is unlawful according to the doctrine of lovers./If only in all the village there is someone – by Allah, a sign would be completely sufficient./How shall the finch escape? For even the simurgh is footfast in this stout snare./My heart, do not come wandering in this direction; sit there, for it is a pleasant station./Choose that dessert which augments life, seek that which is full-bodied;/The rest is all scent and image and colour, the rest is all war and shame and opprobrium;/**Be silent, and sit down, for you are drunk and this is the edge of the roof.** Rumi, J. a.-D. (2009) *Mystical poems of rumi*. Translated by Arberry, A. J. and Javadi, H. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

In the meetings my contributions were often to note painful or difficult feelings and link these to the experience of working in climate change.

I experienced a sense of threat and danger in my relations with the group, especially in its first six months. Some of the sense of threat was sexualised, with anxiety about the taster session being focused on potentially being alone with two men. Some of it felt more cerebral, with feelings of superiority and inferiority at different times over what and whom I and others knew. I felt as if I was being pulled towards – and resisting – not-quite-appropriate relationships and alliances, which I felt might conflict with my facilitator and research roles: with Lesley and Louisa as the women in the group, and with Tim in response to his need to know that he was being heard, and to enable him to leave the group (see case 4). My reflection on this sense of the inappropriate in relationships is that they were also representative of creativity, with something that I felt to be forbidden about them. There was a feeling of huge difficulty holding the group together, and an impression of threat related to this, which was both disproportionate to the issue and went beyond the natural anxiety of the doctoral researcher faced with the prospect of her fieldwork collapsing. This is illustrated by a dream in which I was running a climate-related event but people were sitting separately, not talking, and I was panicking and trying to bring in a friend who shares my supervisor's first name. My interpretation at the time was that the group risked collapsing, and that it was my impossible job to keep things together. Reflecting on the experience I think that I defensively turned my dependence on the group members (my fieldwork depended on their presence) into a story in which the responsibility was entirely mine. As part of this defence I was also very anxious about the creative capacities of other members of the

group and of the group itself, and was mobilised to deny them or shut them down. It could be thought that I held multiple roles in order to withhold the roles from others and inhibit creativity. In Meeting 1 this anxiety was manifested in a conflict between Fred and me:

Fred picks up the point about co-operative inquiry again, and proposes a collective focus. I respond with some issues about the amount of commitment available from the group ... and what people may feel they have signed up to – that it might need to be a fairly light version of action research – and it is becoming a conversation between me and Fred. Tim intervenes and says he really doesn't want to be organised. (Rebecca notes, Meeting 1)

I was anxious about Fred turning everyone away from participating. I'm saying that people will not want to do what Fred is asking for. Am I sacrificing him for the group? (Analysis notes of the above)

In Meeting 4 following the conflict over gender stereotyping described in case 3, I intervened in a way that prompts me to wonder whether the gender-related conflict, with its potential for creativity, was very frightening to me:

Perhaps we should shift our focus a little bit, not that...not that I think these issues are not important about, em...we might have different views on gender dynamics, but, em, for Lesley's...to help Lesley, we should be staying with what she has said to us. (Rebecca, Meeting 4)

Can't bear the conflict. Using the facilitator role to shut down the conflict... Fights over power and gender get in the way of the work (Analysis notes of the above)

The epistemological tension over how the group would approach its work, suggested in the conflict between Fred and me in Meeting 1, came to a head in April when he decided to leave. After leaving he refused my request for a conversation, repeating his earlier comment about the methodology, saying that he felt I was not really a participant but an "unacknowledged researcher into

group member's [sic] feelings and group process" (Fred, to Rebecca, after Meeting 2). My feelings in response to this incident – in which I felt Fred's anger and, I now think, was suppressing significant anger of my own – were extremely painful, so much so that I could not engage with it, and it was one of the last aspects of the fieldwork to be fully analysed.

Linked to the sense of threat were feelings of shame, fear, and self-disgust, exemplified in an early dream about covering up faeces. The feelings were also present in Meeting 2 where I felt ashamed and frightened for much of the time and especially when I was struggling with the technology and could not ask for help until it was too late; and in interactions with Tim, when feelings of inadequacy made it hard for me to listen to what he was saying, and where in our second interview I felt as if I was lying to him about the potential for a working relationship between us if he left the group (although in fact we agreed there could be no work between us until after the fieldwork was concluded, and we have not worked together). These feelings sat alongside an underlying sense of inauthenticity, fraudulence or impostor syndrome – visible in the first and third meetings, when because I did not feel like a full member of the Tavistock Clinic I did not feel able to request proper catering for the meeting, and instead provided informal snacks on improvised dishes; and in preparation for the first meeting when I was giving my own answers to some reflective questions I had asked the group to look at. My analysis notes of these answers say "Something false and unintegrated – a defence – in this section" (Meeting 1). A dream about trying on an academic-style gown is a further illustration of these feelings, which also link with concerns about status, money and the establishment. These examples suggest a submerged awareness of the

potential for abuse or instrumentality in the relationship between the group and me.

During the fieldwork, I experienced two dreams which, in addition to their personal content, I believe brought me in touch with some feelings related to the group and to the climate crisis. Both dreams capture my sense of the damage humans have done and are doing to the world and my feelings of grief, helplessness and incompetence in relation to this. I give both dreams in full below because of their significance:

I'm by the water's edge and there is a large baby bird on a boat or jetty across the water from me, perhaps twenty yards from where I'm standing. It is about the size of an owl or puffin, but fluffy, with black and white wavy stripes. The bird jumps into the water and plummets downwards. It struggles back up to the surface but then cannot get out of the water. It's under the water quite close to me, wriggling, and I look at it, trying to pluck up the courage to dive in and rescue it. I am frightened of the cold of the water but also of drowning. I imagine jumping in but then I realise I don't have the courage. I am going to leave it to drown. The bird dives down again. The rest of the dream is faint but I think the bird does get rescued or rescues itself.
(Dreams, 8 April)

I'm holding a very small child, maybe two or three years old. It is very beautiful, very delicate, tiny little feet. It's bright and cheerful and intelligent but it is terribly burnt, its head in particular. It is sitting on my right arm. I feel an almost overwhelming grief. Someone comes along and talks to me. She or he says: "Will he be able to have children?" The question is addressed to me, not to the child: a kind of "does he take sugar?" question. The child and I look at each other, meaning "what an idiot". There is also terrible pain in this moment. I put the child down and it patters off on its beautiful little feet. In a second scene I am in a lecture theatre and the child is sitting opposite me surrounded by adults who are contributing to the conference. The child is also contributing: he or she is talking like an adult but there is the delight and energy that feels like a child. Full of strong emotion. (Dreams, 16 April)

After having these dreams and one other, I stopped remembering my dreams

between May and the end of the fieldwork: an indication perhaps of the difficulty of bearing the feelings, and an acting out of the first dream's failure of courage.

Once Tim left the group, the one-to-one coaching sessions were established, and I could see the end of the fieldwork, my sense of threat and anxiety diminished sharply and it became easier for me to connect with the remaining members. There was a sense of relief that the group now consisted of people who understood each other. In October, I took part in the Extinction Rebellion protests in London. I found myself caught up in the activism dynamic, became determined to try to hold on to the road that XR had occupied, and was arrested twice. I brought this to the last meeting of the group during our check-in round, describing myself as in a "meerkat-like state of high alert" and also sharing a difficult encounter with friends that illustrates, I think, my sense at the time of how hard it is to manage when people do not understand each other, and my relief that in this last meeting we could relax:

I was out with friends the other night for dinner, and I kind of...I made the wrong assumption, as to they would be interested and positive and kind of "tell me all about it", but they were *not*. They were kind of...one of them was like, you know, "I don't agree with law-breaking" (Meeting 7)

Of course, similarity and mutual understanding are comfortable – but they may also indicate the loss of the potential for creativity that comes with this narrowing of perspective.

4.5 Context: analysis of group material, with a systems-psychodynamic lens

4.5.1 Summary

This section contains an account of the group material. The account focuses on

the phenomenology of the dynamics rather than at this stage reaching firm conclusions about their origins. However some preliminary thoughts have been included about how the group dynamics might link to the work of the group's members on communicating climate change – especially in terms of resonances between the group experience and what was observed to be happening in society at the time or was reported by group members as an experience of their work. These resonances are then explored further in Chapter 5.

This account contains some material from the individual cases that relates to the individual's role in the group. Where this is the case, quotations used earlier in the cases are not repeated.

4.5.2 Theme A

Severe difficulties in forming and functioning as a group; internal patterns of isolation, exclusion, and loneliness

The most obvious aspects of these difficulties are evident from Table 4.1 at the beginning of this chapter. Examples include one member's inability to find the room for the taster meeting; the departures of Rachel in March and Fred in April; rescheduling the April meeting because it would have consisted of only three members; a member going to the wrong location and two members experiencing connection failures and technical difficulties in Meetings 2, 5 and 6; the departure of Tim in September; one of the remaining three members being unable to attend the last meeting; and arranging more one-to-one meetings than originally planned. Most meetings contained conflict, usually suppressed; the group meetings (3 and 7) that followed a series of one-to-ones were more productive, as if the one-to-ones had provided an external resource that the group could not

provide on its own. These group meetings were also relatively small (four members at Meeting 3, three at Meeting 7). The pattern over time could be thought of as the group progressively needing to get rid of or displace more and more of its members in order to manage.

A further manifestation of the group's difficulties was in the way members suggested new times (Meetings 3 and 6) or put forward their own locations (Meeting 2) for holding the meetings; and how work commitments (Arthur, Meetings 4 and 5; Louisa, Meetings 5 and 7) and caring responsibilities (Lesley, Meetings 2 and 3) were allowed to take precedence over meetings. It was as if these aspects of daily life could not be allowed to change: they were where members' firm, positive feelings and commitments were located, and by comparison the group was perhaps no more than a provisional diary entry.

In addition to these very visible indications, which might suggest that the group was felt as existing in opposition to one's own needs, at a feeling level within the group there were less obvious internal patterns of isolation, exclusion, and loneliness, centring both on the group as an entity and on individuals within it. These were suggested by three early dreams: the first, after Meeting 1, involved running a climate-related event at which people were meant to be a group, but were sitting separately and not talking to each other (see case 5); the second, the night before Meeting 2, included hearing shouting and argument from people in the next room, and fearing that I would lose my job (Dreams, 26 February); the third is the dream about the burnt child given in case 5, which can be thought of as representing the group's own ambivalence about its existence – represented in the child (Dreams, 16 April). The dreams carry something of my own anxieties

and frailties – which will have influenced the group experience – and can also be seen as providing a space for the anxieties and frailties of the group to be expressed. Members Fred, Louisa, and Tim in different ways acted as vehicles for the patterns of isolation, exclusion, and loneliness. When Fred left the group his name was repeatedly – almost ostentatiously – forgotten by other members (“What’s his name? I keep forgetting his name, the...who dropped out early on?” – Tim, Interview 2), who then never described him in positive terms. Louisa was frequently late or lost or unable to join, and her contributions to discussion seemed to get lost as well (case 3). Tim was described as difficult to work with or criticised for unthinking privilege, he also had his own criticisms of the other group members, and he never found a way to get support for his feelings of loneliness within the group (case 4). And my own feelings of being responsible for the group’s difficulties are also part of this pattern (case 5). The tendency at a group level then is to project responsibility and scapegoat individuals for what is happening in the group. This suggests some unprocessed feelings linked to something quite primitive – wanting to quit, perhaps; wanting people to leave; hatred of myself as convenor.

Difficulties in forming and functioning as a group are of course common; a group without a single organisation to hold it together is likely to be vulnerable, as suggested in my risk assessment; some of this group’s difficulties can be laid at my door for struggling to take up my authority and to allow the Tavistock Centre to exercise an organisational holding function; but these difficulties are extreme compared with other group work in my experience, and suggest some strong feelings were at play.

Do the difficulties reflect the difficulties of co-operation and trust on the problem of climate change? Do the loneliness and isolation reflect common experiences of leadership? In the attachment to one's own location, work commitments and caring responsibilities, are there echoes of how in response to the call to change working or domestic habits and spending patterns, people defend their day-to-day practices?

4.5.3 Theme B

Difficulty in achieving depth of engagement because of technology, power, privilege, difference, and opposing views over epistemology, purpose and process functioning defensively to keep members at a distance from each other

When meetings did take place despite the difficulties described in the previous section, there were still several ways in which group members were prevented from engaging closely with each other and thinking together. The role of technology in this dynamic was hinted at in the taster meeting, when Fred did not pick up a late change to the room booking at the Tavistock Centre because he did not have a smartphone. Wrongly assuming that he would have seen my message or the signs I put up, or would have been informed by the reception staff at the Tavistock, I was mortified to receive an email from him later that evening describing what had happened. I was annoyed, and so I believe was he; and both of us had relied on technology rather than thinking in a relational way about how we could ensure we would be able to connect.

This problem became both acute and chronic in Meeting 2, held at Tavistock Consulting (ten minutes' walk from the Tavistock Centre). The planned social photo matrix involved everyone being asked to send me a photo representing their work, and these then being formed into a timed slide show. On the day of

the meeting I had not received a photo from Louisa and texted her a reminder. When she arrived – late, because of not having understood the new location – it became evident that she had emailed me her pictures, but they had not sent because the files were too big. Lesley sent her apologies on the day of the meeting, so I set up a Zoom connection for her using a Tavistock Consulting laptop. Lesley's own laptop did not deal well with the Zoom software and she was unable to make her camera work; the sound was also poor. The guest wifi connection at the Tavistock prevented use of email clients, so despite pausing the matrix while I tried to load Louisa's photo into the slide show, I was not able to load it; those in the room looked at it on a phone passed around between them, and Lesley could not see it at all.

In addition to these difficulties with digital technology, the social technology of the photo matrix also functioned to keep the group members at a distance from each other. I had planned it as a simple container for sharing the less conscious aspects of members' experience of their work (Chapter 3 section 3.3.7 describes the principles and Appendix 10 provides the explanation used in the session itself); but in practice, with anxiety levels and irritation understandably high, the matrix felt over-structured and rule-bound rather than helpfully containing, and we made only limited use of the technology. Group members commented afterwards:

We also seemed to get lost in technology for a quarter of our allotted time when we actually have our key resources present, these being ourselves. I felt that our 'Social Photo Matrix' exercise was over long and yet without opportunity to fully explore the material and evaluate the process and its usefulness to us. (Fred, after Meeting 2)

I found it hard to relate what we were doing to that original framing and I also struggled to draw ideas/learning from our consideration of the photos. I'm conscious that I had nothing to contribute in the second part of the session – this is why. (Arthur, after Meeting 2)

I wonder if we are chartering together in unknown waters and the desire of controlling with structure and techniques is an emotion like mine of over criticising myself for being late and slow at processing. (Louisa, after Meeting 2)

Questions of knowledge – who knows what, about what, and about whom – proved to be another axis along which the group members kept at a distance from each other. In the group, epistemological tension was evident from the first meeting when Fred proposed a working approach closely aligned to co-operative inquiry, which was resisted by other members of the group. His departure six weeks later was explicitly based on frustration with what he saw as a collective refusal to stay within the CI methodology, and inappropriately psychoanalytic interventions from the researcher:

My residing feelings are those of disappointment and irritation. We seemed to find it difficult to start and to focus and I feel this derives from a lack of commitment to our initial stated intention, that of Co-operative Enquiry [sic]. This term dropped out of Rebecca's briefing last time, and now seems utterly lost as a concept and a process. Since this was a key attractor to me joining this group I am left feeling I've been conned and that we are on a completely different journey... (Fred, to the group, after Meeting 2)

I'm not sure I've totally understood the co-operative enquiry concept, so I don't share Fred [sic] frustration about direction. My reference point for this is 'learning set' – a group of peers sharing learning with one another and supporting one another with a shared issue and/or specific issues but which are relatable to the entire group. (Arthur, after Meeting 2)

I think that with leaders from such a variety of working areas, there is inevitably a very significant opportunity for learning here, even though we are not yet certain as to what that will continue to look like. Currently, I am most interested in how the

group is arranging itself, how our different characters are playing themselves out and how I am personally emotionally reacting to that. (Lesley, after Meeting 2)

I am not as experienced in collaborative inquiry methodology to be annoyed if things are not running by the academic script. (Louisa, after Meeting 2)

I did come away from the last meeting feeling frustrated, partly because of the late start and technology problems, and partly because I didn't feel we deepened our exploration of what's really going on for us in climate leadership. (Tim, after Meeting 2)

It was as if Fred's knowledge of CI could not be respected or used. It is dismissed in the other group members' responses and he is made to leave rather than explore the questions he raises. The pain in his departure was available to me to feel, though not to think about until later, and is described in case 5.

Similar epistemological tensions arose between Tim and the remaining group members. Operating from the position that the climate and ecological crisis is an opportunity for a transformation of human consciousness, he believed that, by not putting in the time and commitment, the group was failing to enable this work to be done. His departure was based on this tension. And as with Fred, the group strongly resisted his knowledge and experience – it was as if it could not be used in any form. Tim's education and connections were part of what distanced him from others (see Case 4), and the fact of some pre-existing one-to-one connections between individuals and myself were also part of this dynamic. For example, Fred and I had met by chance at a conference between the taster meeting and the first group meeting; Lesley and I knew each other from a leadership programme; and Tim and I live in the same small city. These

connections were felt by others and may have amplified the competitive feelings normal between members of a new group, and the concerns about gender, privilege and power that are described next. A dream in May brought these issues of knowledge to the surface:

rather boring dream about being at a big gathering: XR or Climate Psychology Alliance or something like it, lots of hippy-like people who seemed to have knowledge I don't have, and I felt confused about my role and what to do. (Dream 5 May)

Within this theme the arrival of Extinction Rebellion (XR), with its call to 'Tell the Truth', surfaced some epistemological tensions in the group at the level of their work. 'Tell the truth' (Extinction Rebellion, 2021a) is a call to governments and climate campaigners to be uncompromising about the implications of climate science. Exemplified by XR's standard public talk *Heading for Extinction (and what to do about it)* (Extinction Rebellion, 2021b), XR's perspective is an explicit challenge to what before 2019 was a general consensus among mainstream campaigners that climate communications must be careful not to frighten the public excessively (see Chapter 2). The group seemed to believe in one meeting that XR's position could be considered as paradoxically not science-based because the findings of 'the science' (the social science of climate change communication) were to stay positive and avoid frightening the public. The equation of climate science and social science in this discussion suggests a struggle with the different epistemologies, and an 'as if' mentality in which the differences between them must be denied:

all the recent climate communications research that's come out has been, you know, we have to be hopeful, we have to be hopeful, we have to be hopeful, and I went on [a] recent communications [training] day, and the whole...the whole thing was we've got to be hopeful and that's the only messaging that

works. And it's interesting because I see XR partly as just being set up in reaction to that, em, and...and I think it's interesting that XR claims, you know, to be...to be science-based, but it's kind of ignoring the recent science communications or the science of how to communicate climate change (Lesley, Meeting 3)

Power, privilege and gender also served to keep the group away from each other. We sometimes found ourselves treading on eggshells about gender: conflict emerged in meeting 4 but it was shut down (see case 5). Lesley expressed irritation "with the men" but this could only be talked about when the men in question were not there (case 2). Tim is perceived as educationally privileged and this is part of the distancing from him (case 4). There was power inherent in my role of convenor but I put a lot of effort into feeling powerless and incompetent; I still wanted the power, though, as indicated by taking the facilitator role back from Louisa in Meeting 4 (case 3). Louisa consciously left her privileged background behind, and in her role in the group there seems to be an absence of privilege (case 3).

The unusually strong feelings of incompetence I experienced may be projected into me from the group, which could not bear me to be powerful and may itself have been feeling powerless. Is the overt focus on masculine abuse of power a form of displacement in itself – a denial of where the real power sits in the group: with its convenor? If this kind of projection was taking place, it suggests that the dynamics of gender, privilege and power were being used defensively, as a further unconscious tool to prevent the group coming together and working effectively.

Did the design of the social photo matrix, with its technology and structure and techniques, function as an attempt to control, paralleling attempts to control

climate change with technology and structure and techniques? Does this wish for control play out in climate change communication? And were the repeated failures in this context an indication of a powerful unconscious refusal to allow the technology to do its work?

Knowledge issues of the kind experienced in the group do arise generically in leadership – leaders often have to know more than the followers about certain things, and there is also often a tension between ‘lateral’ or sibling-like relations between peers and ‘vertical’ or parent-child relations between staff and managers (Mitchell, 2003; van Beekum, 2014; de Gooijer, 2018). So it is possible that members’ leadership experience was playing out in the group. As Lesley pointed out, too (case 2), contests over knowledge are a central dynamic in talking about climate change. In fact, the work of communicating climate change takes place in a highly polarised context, and perhaps these polarities needed to be replicated in the group. The ‘hippies’ dream (case 5, and see also Wright et al. (2012)) suggests something of the polarities if we think of the popular identification of environmentalists with ‘hippies’: leading the climate revolution but undermined in the dream through the tone of dismissiveness (“boring”) and irritation about what they know. The unconscious expulsion of Fred and Tim (as people who know something that ‘we’ don’t) is part of this theme as well.

4.5.4 Theme C

Feelings of disorganisation, fragility, fear of collapse: as if the group has no idea what it is doing and has to work it out carefully from scratch at every meeting

The group had episodes of being and feeling disorganised. Several examples of this are given in theme A, and it is further exemplified in the repeated

discussions about how to work together in meetings 1, 3, 4 and 6 and in one-to-one meetings: with Arthur, Lesley and Tim in April; with Louisa in July; with Tim again in August. These discussions tended to repeat what had been said previously. In meetings 3, 4 and 6 I found myself repeating, sometimes at length, the instructions for a simple process of thinking together about a member's work issue. These repetitions felt necessary: the group's internal conflicts meant that it was difficult to hold on to what we could actually do together. Other confusions over how meetings would work include questions over who would be there in person and who would join virtually: for example Lesley before Meeting 3: "I hadn't realised that others were meeting in person rather than all of us on skype, I'm not sure how I missed that, sorry. I couldn't really hear a lot in the last meeting, but I'm happy to give this a go again" (Meeting 3)

Alongside the disorganisation, there is some evidence that the group felt itself at times to be fragile and at risk of collapsing. I certainly felt this myself: my April dreams about leaving a bird to drown and about a burnt child are described in case 5 and they both contain fragility. I also mentioned this explicitly in the April interviews:

I'm a little concerned about our group. I think it's...I think it's going through a fragile phase, em, but, em, I'm kind of keen to...sort of think about it with...with...with members and, em, you know, not to just kind of plough on like Theresa May (Rebecca, in Lesley interview)

why I'm keen to have this conversation is – there are several reasons, really. One is that I think, you know, the group is at a fragile, a fragile state, isn't it (Rebecca, in Arthur interview)

There is some evidence that my feelings were shared. It is true that fear of collapse can more obviously be located in individuals: Lesley feared that she

would not be able to establish her organisation before burning out (Coaching); and Tim quotes Rumi about being on the edge of the roof (Meeting 2)). But there is also evidence of this fear at a group level: there was some anxious reparative behaviour at the beginning of Meeting 3 in April (Louisa: “Have you enjoyed the sun?” Lesley: “Oh, it’s been so nice, so amazing, unlike February”³; and in the same meeting Lesley, having joined remotely from her workplace, remarked: “I just need to check that I’m not destroying everybody else’s work by talking really loudly and I might move room” – Meeting 3). These examples suggest a group anxiety about collapse, consciously located in me and focused on the possible collapse of the group, but also unconsciously shared by others and relevant to wider collapse anxieties.

Over the summer feelings of impatience, aggression and disillusion were more obviously manifested. This was exemplified by Tim in meeting 5, when others’ technology did not initially work and he said “he [would] turn his sound and video off and withdraw while everyone else got sorted out”. My notes express similar feelings – “I want to do that too: ‘you can all fuck off’” (Meeting 5). Tim’s departure in September may reflect a collective wish to break the tension even at the expense of breaking the group.

Table 4.1 certainly suggests a sense of fragility in wider society, most obvious in the political difficulties over Brexit but also echoed in the extreme weather and the surfacing of climate concerns through Extinction Rebellion and the youth climate strikes. Prime Minister Theresa May’s government became gradually more and more fragile during the first months of the year and eventually

³ The ‘February’ reference is to the unseasonal and record-breaking heat in February of that year, suggesting anxiety

collapsed. Her tenacious, careful, repeated attempts to get her Brexit proposals through Parliament were replaced by Boris Johnson's 'Get Brexit done' – an echo, perhaps, of the group's increasing impatience and inability to live with its own fragility.

Could the need for repetition echo the way in which bilateral talks on climate change are often described as going over the same ground again and again?

Could a similar dynamic be at play?

4.5.5 Theme D

Creativity, sexualised as excitement and threat; intrusion; grief; birth; hope

The preceding sections have described dynamics that functioned to make the group's work almost impossible at times. This section explores some indications of creative and hopeful energy in the group, and how this was resisted.

Tim, who usually travelled by bike, came to the taster meeting and meetings 1, 2 and 4 in his cotton shorts. They were perfectly respectable but the fact of his legs in shorts, especially in the winter meetings, was hard for me to ignore, and felt intrusive ("the big intrusive table" was also an aspect of my experience of the room arranged for the taster meeting). The experience may have contributed to my decision to sit out the paired activity in Meeting 1 (pairing of course suggesting the sexual):

I look at the plan and try to connect with my excitement and good feelings about this. I wonder what to do about the paired activity I've designed into the session, since there's an odd number including me. I decide, uncomfortably, to sit that one out. (Rebecca notes, Meeting 1)

When the paired activity took place I was aware of anxiety in the group about it,

but also recorded an impression of people opening up to each other. Later in the same meeting I experienced further discomfort with an attempt to bring people together as a collective, described in case 5. My role in this meeting can be seen in two ways: as holding on to reality against unrealistically hopeful proposals, and also as preventing people coming together in creative ways because this would be frightening and/or lead to collapse. Both speak to the attempted emergence of creative possibilities in the group, and the difficulty of enabling creativity.

A short exchange between Lesley and Tim at the end of the meeting also illustrates a wish to connect – to understand, perhaps intrusively – and how this is shut down:

Lesley says she dropped [her phone] in the loo last week and
Tim says how did you do that? Her reaction suggests she feels
that was an intrusive question (Meeting 1)

The difficulty is illustrated also via Louisa's playfulness – a potentially creative resource for the group – which is often not heard or made use of.

Individual members of the group sometimes spoke of their grief and sense of loss. But in terms of group material, grief was only present obliquely, visible through the denial of loss described in Theme A and the disorganisation described in Theme C, through my 'burnt child' and 'leaving the bird to drown' dreams (8 and 16 April), and through the image of a model hippo used by Arthur in Meeting 7 to illustrate how he felt about the ending of the group.

Figure 4.7



Faience model hippopotamus (“William”), Egypt – end of Meeting 7

I was just drawn to this guy because I’ve seen him, I’ve seen him in the... Metropolitan Museum of Art. And he’s really old and he’s really quite perfect, like you know what he is, right? ... And this is 1981 to 1885 BC – this is a long fucking time ago... That’s how long we’ve understood and been around and been part of, you know, the world where these animals are, and here we are, you know... I don’t know how endangered he is because I don’t know enough about hippos but, eh, I bet he’s fucking endangered ... (Meeting 7)

Three dreams during the life of the group suggest birthing and the presence of hope. The first is the ‘leaving the bird to drown’ dream (8 April), with the liveliness of the baby bird and the moment of hope at the end when it seems to be able to escape from the water. The second is the ‘burnt child’ dream (16 April), with the delight and beauty of the tiny child alongside its terrible damage, and the doubt about whether the child will be able to reproduce (and implicit confidence that it will). The third is a dream in which the dreamer is a child, and there is a loved but invisible father:

I was also part of a small family group. I had some responsibility and was anxious about this. Someone was lost. Later in the dream this came back into focus and it was clear that it was the father who was lost. He was invisible and it wasn’t possible to find him. Then he was still invisible but I had found him. He was giant-sized, he picked me up with his invisible hands and I was swept into the air and held. I was not

frightened by this, it felt as if I had some new knowledge.
(Dreams, 5 May)

Creativity is essential for the task of responding to the climate crisis or to any other significant challenge, and it is interesting that it was so strongly resisted in the group. What is the threat that seems to be carried by creativity? Is there a deep fear of the transformation of society that is felt to be needed?

4.6 The experience of leaders: summary

The experience of leaders is conveyed in sections 4.4 and 4.5 through 'thick description', with the intention that this description has value in itself as a mirror to the experience of those working in this field. It is summarised in Figure 4.9 overleaf, which brings together the themes from individuals and the group analysis. The next stage of filling up the picture is to move to the superordinate themes that combine the themes from the five individual cases with the themes from the group analysis, and this takes place in Chapter 5.

Figure 4.9



Individual and group themes

Chapter 5: The meaning and context of leaders' experience – trauma-influenced social defences

5.1 Summary

This chapter offers a deeper perspective on the overarching research question and the three sub-questions. Section 5.2 introduces the superordinate themes formed from the individual cases and the group analysis. Section 5.3 then provides more detail on each theme, considering further the meaning of the experience described in Chapter 4 in terms of psychoanalytic understandings relevant to the theme and bringing in new literature as appropriate for the discussion. This section continues the work of Chapter 4 in addressing the overarching research question 'What is the experience of leaders in organisations whose task includes engaging with the public on climate change?'

The nature and effect of the epistemological and ontological tensions experienced by participants are then discussed in section 5.4 in the light of the psychoanalytic insights of section 5.3: this section constitutes the discussion of the research sub-question 'What kinds of epistemological and ontological tensions are evident in leaders' experience?'

Section 5.5 sets the discussion of the previous two sections in the context of the psycho-social literature on the human response to climate change: this section addresses the other two sub-questions 'How, if at all, do the conscious and unconscious dynamics thought to exist in relation to climate change play out in these organisations and shape emotional experience within the organisations?'; and 'How, if at all, does the experience of leaders relate to the characteristics of the problem of climate change?' Trauma theory is deployed to consider whether the basic-

assumption mentality Incohesion: Aggregation/ Massification proposed by Earl Hopper (2012) could characterise the experience of people who work in this field. Section 5.6 summarises the insights arising from the discussion.

5.2 Overview of individual, group, and superordinate themes

Figure 5.1 overleaf is a visual representation of the themes arising from the individual cases, combined with the systems-psychodynamic consideration of the group experience, to form the superordinate themes. These superordinate themes, in red, form the centre of seven clusters of group (blue) and individual themes, colour-coded by individual as in Chapter 4. The image gives an overview and indicates the relationship between the individual and group themes and the superordinate themes to which they relate.

The positioning of items within the clusters is not intended to be significant, except that the themes relating to each individual are clustered together.

Figure 5.1



Relationship between individual, group and superordinate themes

5.3 The superordinate themes

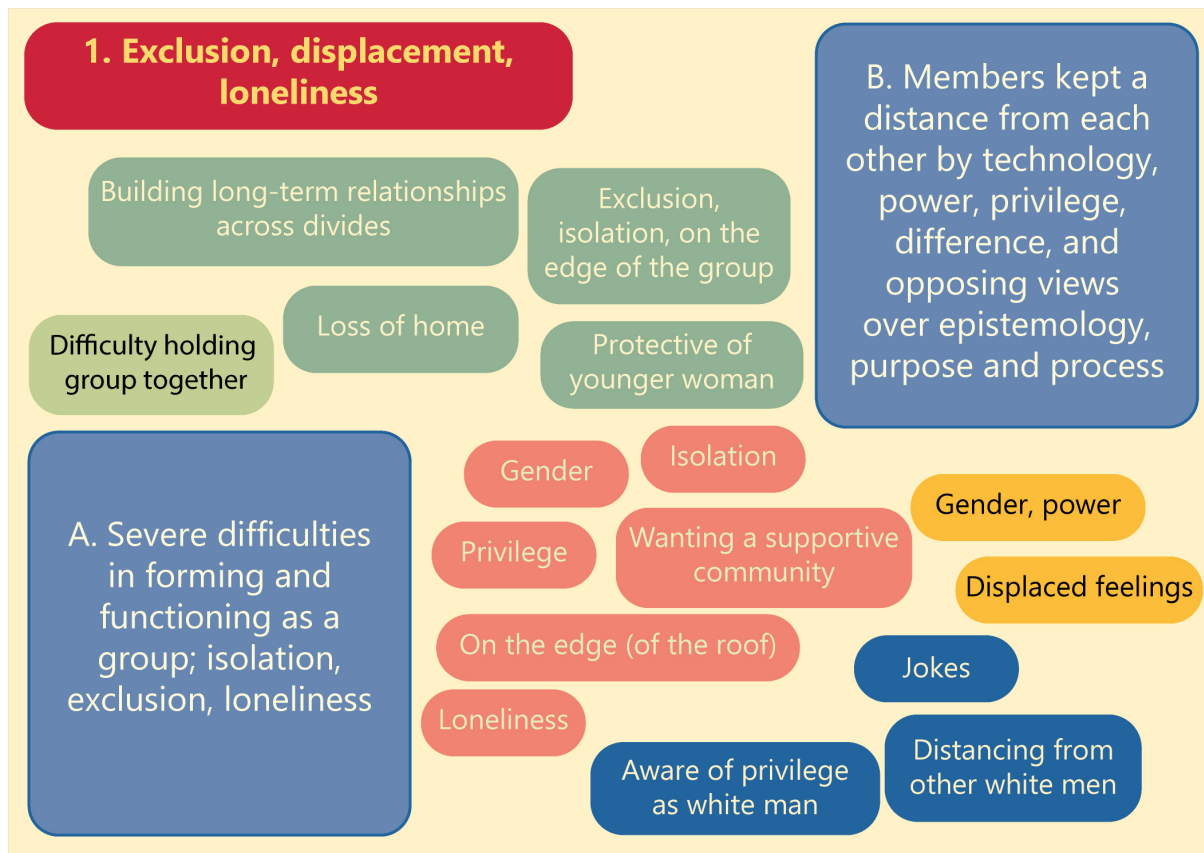
5.3.1 Introduction

The themes derived from individuals' experience were considered alongside the systems-psychodynamic analysis of the group, and the researcher's own 'case', using an iterative, spiral process of reflection. Themes that derive from either (i) experience in the group **and** the individual experience of three or more of the group members, or (ii) the individual experience of three or more group members, are given below as superordinate themes, together with the image relating to each one (and see Appendix 9 for the relationship between individual, group, and superordinate themes). Within the working assumption of the 'organisation in the mind' concept, the emotional experience of the CI group can be seen as potentially carrying aspects of its members' own organisations, but this is presented tentatively, with the direct experience of work serving as part of the triangulation.

In this account, quotations are kept to a minimum because they have all already appeared in the preceding chapter. The intention is that the nature of the experience begins to emerge at this point, informed by the depth of detail provided earlier.

5.3.2 Theme 1: exclusion, displacement, and loneliness

Figure 5.2



A central aspect of the experience of the CI group was exclusion and displacement, with members of the group at different times experiencing failure to connect to the group, failure to get to meetings, going to the wrong place, and an over-reliance on technology that did not work; difficulties in maintaining relationships, with three members of the group leaving during its lifespan; only two members of the group attending the last meeting; one member deciding at the last meeting to leave her job; and feelings of relief associated with some of these departures. The group convenor was part of these dynamics, colluding in the exclusion of two members and feeling the difficulty of holding the group together. Feelings of loneliness, an absence of affect, and guilt about both excluding and being excluded, seemed to be linked to this experience of

exclusion and displacement, and were also echoed in most individual members' experience of their work. For Arthur this centred on the conflicting responsibilities of and isolation in his leadership role; for Lesley, her sense of having to deal with issues of gender and power and feeling excluded from masculine privilege; for Louisa, being away from her original home and outside the mainstream culture of her local authority and the contractors she worked with; for Tim, being on the edge of most of the groups with which he was connected. Epistemological tensions were an aspect of the exclusion dynamic.

As well as displacement in the visible sense, there was perhaps also a displacement of powerful feelings that could not be acknowledged: a strong anxiety about power in the group was consciously centred on masculinity but may have been displaced from the group convenor.

In the following sections, the experience of the theme is linked to psychoanalytic understandings of the anxiety arising from unmanageable feelings in response to being excluded, and the processes of managing exclusion through projection. The nature of exclusion in the participants' work is explored.

5.3.2.1 Early experiences of exclusion

Feelings of exclusion originate in the first months of life when the baby, excluded already from her first home in the womb, is then – more or less frequently depending on the capacity of her parental figure – temporarily denied nourishment or skin-to-skin contact and has to learn to cope with the frustrations that arise. Later she is weaned; perhaps a new baby takes her place in her mother's arms; she begins to see that the adults in her life have a

relationship that existed before she was born, that they are powerful beings and that she is utterly dependent on them. The unmanageable feelings of rage and violence that this new knowledge brings are then the subject of guilt and anxiety arising from the unconscious belief that the child has enacted her violent feelings (Klein, 1940). This complex set of experiences may be more or less effectively navigated depending on the quality and reliability of the relationship between baby and main carer, and in particular the latter's capacity for reverie and containment (Bion, 1962) and ability to support the gradual 'disillusionment' that enables development (Winnicott, 1965). To the extent that this capacity is inadequate to the task, the baby may need to find ways to cope by becoming prematurely competent and independent: by developing a 'second skin' (Bick, 1968), and crucially for our purposes by creating an 'other' (often racialised – Davids (2006); Fanon (2008); Davids (2011)) into which to project the unacceptable elements of dependency. Thus the experience of being excluded may lead to the need to exclude.

5.3.2.2 Exclusion in adults, and at work

We carry into adulthood the remnants of the baby's feelings of exclusion, the experience that comes with those feelings of being subjected to the exercise of power, and the anxiety that derives from creating the 'other'. They may be re-triggered by adult experiences and experiences at work: for example in this study, the gender differences in the group, the researcher's psychoanalytic interpretations and other manifestations of power, and the experiences of missing or being late for meetings and of technology failures could all surface difficult feelings of exclusion (both being excluded and being the excluder – see previous section). If being in the group brings one in touch with

dependence and sibling rivalry, leaving the group could represent an enactment of these feelings and the defensive coping mechanisms described in the previous section.

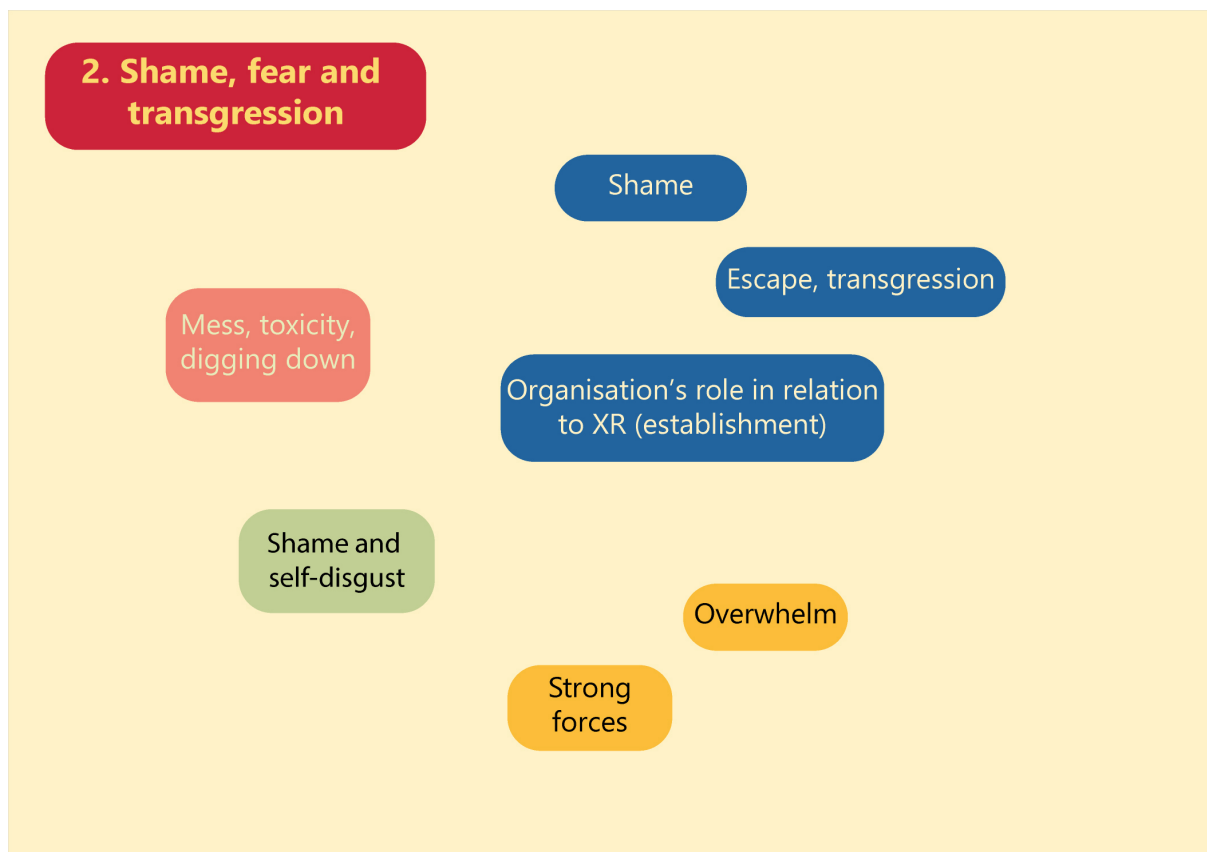
Of course one origin of the exclusion and displacement dynamics is the differing motivations of the participants to take part in the study. As researcher I wanted the group to work and learn from a full engagement with each other and the task. Other participants may have wanted a community, a safe place to feel cared for and heard. Everyone experienced ambivalence of different kinds. But it seems possible too that there is a connection between this theme and the challenges of co-operation and trust on the problem of climate change, and perhaps also the common experiences of leadership in this field. Isolation and loneliness may echo how it feels to work in the field of climate change communication, positioned neither as scientists nor as policymakers nor as ordinary citizens. The wish for a community, the loss of home and the need to move in order to do the work, represented most clearly by Louisa and Tim (cases 3 and 4), carry echoes also with the habitat loss, no-longer-habitable communities and forced migration endured by both humans and non-humans as a result of the climate crisis.

The apparent need to displace one feeling with another in the group suggests something unbearable or uncontrollable. It seems possible that some of the group processes (both those designed or structured and those that unconsciously arose) functioned as a means of exercising power, paralleling attempts to control climate change with technology and structure and techniques – including the social science techniques used in communication.

Similarly, the repeated failures in this context could be seen as an indication of a powerful unconscious refusal to allow the technology to do its work.

5.3.3 Theme 2: shame, fear, and transgression

Figure 5.3



Shame and fear – centred on making a mess with food and bodily functions, and on transgression – were present in members' direct experiences of their work, and visible in the group though not in the group dynamics. Some of these feelings were evidenced subconsciously through jokes and one-off minor examples of behaviour such as the shame at spilling food and the references to sex, drugs and alcohol; other aspects such as those reflected in my dream about faeces, the vomit story and one member's shame at his over-the-top joke (cases 1, 2 and 5) were acknowledged to be felt very strongly indeed. They were linked with a wish to escape (jokes, the need to leave the room, the use of

transgression to escape from the pressures of the work), and at a feeling level a sense of a powerful pressure trying to break through. An exception to the shame associated with bodily functions was the member whose interest in 'digging down into the mess' seemed not to carry shame – but who was never really allowed to start the digging.

5.3.3.1 Shame, fear and making a mess: early influences

Small children have a propensity to make a mess. They are learning through trial and error to control their bodily functions and to feed themselves tidily in accordance with social norms. Their creative impulses and aggression are partly expressed initially through engagement with bodily waste and food (Freud, 1916; Winnicott, 1971), and have to be channelled into more socially-acceptable means. Parents' responses to this learning will influence the prevalence of shame in the child's psychic landscape (Tangney and Dearing, 2002). Shame is a complex phenomenon with bodily aspects, felt as a wish to disappear or hide, an overwhelming feeling of being wrong, rejected or unwanted. In modern psychoanalytic thinking shame as a phenomenon is seen as distinct from guilt. Shame is global and focuses on who I am, a failure; guilt is specific and focuses on what I did to transgress the rules (Broucek, 1997, p 60; Lansky and Morrison, 1997; Tangney and Dearing, 2002, p 24). Scheff (1997) defines shame as 'the emotional correlate of a threatened [social] bond' (p 206), and Mollon (2002, p 139) notes that shame functions 'to encourage conformity to the prevailing group and culture'. It is this social aspect of shame – its origins in the experience of an unresponsive other and thence the threat of being ejected from a relationship (Morrison, 1999) – that seems particularly relevant to the current study.

5.3.3.2 Shame and mess in the group and at work

In the group, ashamed responses to making a mess are visible in the food spillage and the improvised containers, the dream about faeces and a story about vomit; additional material in the case appendices further supports this claim. The dream includes a search for a private place to deal with the faeces. There is shame-related fear in the case material given in the appendices. These are relational phenomena, responses to the social norms in which dirt and bodily functions must be hidden away.

The feelings are very strong, and carry with them – especially in the vomit story – a sense of a strong force trying to break through that needs to be fled: suggesting the presence of projective identification (Klein, 1946) at a social level (Menzies Lyth, 1960; Armstrong and Rustin, 2015a).

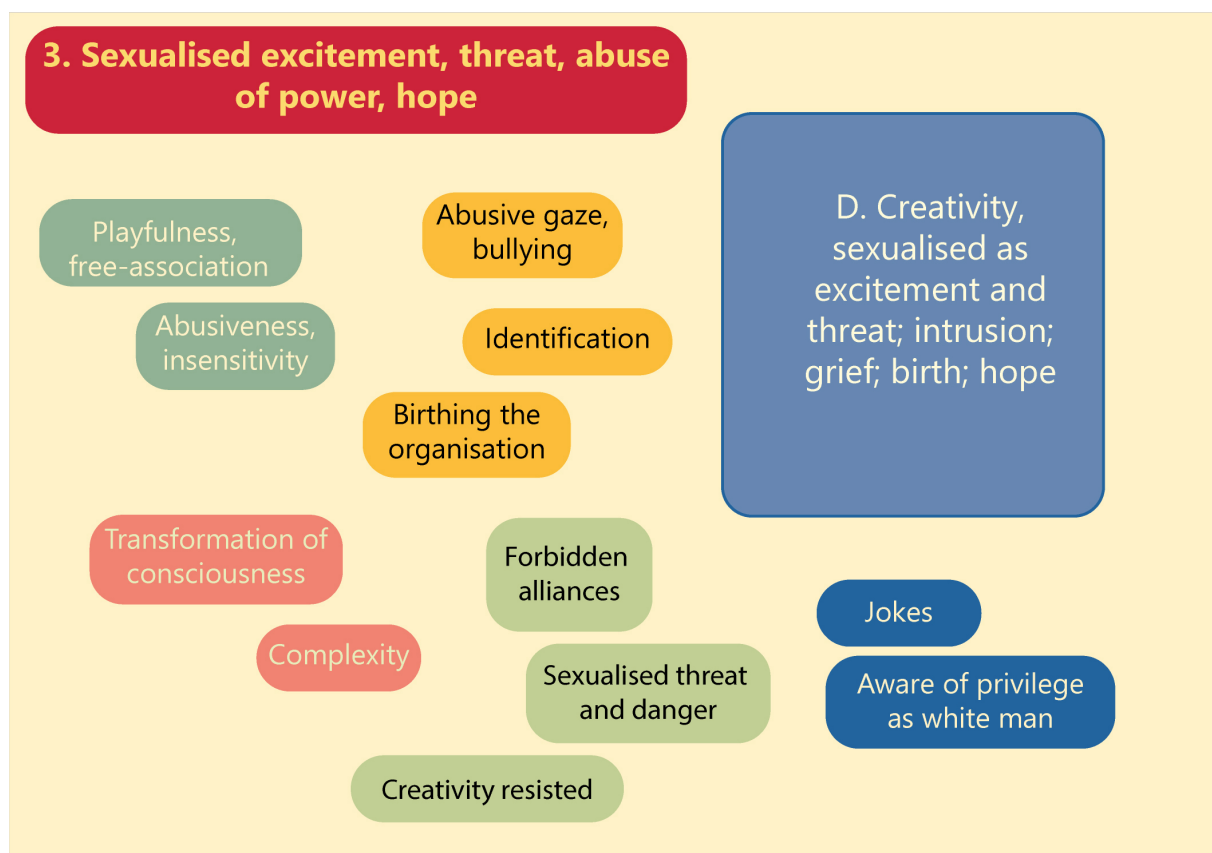
The wish to flee and hide suggests Bion's (1961) concept of basic-assumption fight-flight (shortened to baF), in which a group behaves as if its sole purpose in existing is to fight or run away from an enemy. Different basic-assumption mentalities are present in groups from moment to moment, but – bearing in mind also the patterns of exclusion and isolation in Theme 1 – in this group it seems likely that baF was a recurring and characterising mentality.

There may be a connection between the shame and wish to escape, and common feelings about fossil fuel extraction, its waste products and the damage the extraction causes both locally and globally, immediately and in the future. The scale of the impact is so great that it may create a sense of overwhelm, inescapable in the way that vomiting is inescapable. Donna Orange describes shame in relation to climate change as a systems concept,

a collective means of avoiding action: “if every time I drive to my doctor’s...I take on the carbon debt of the whole developed world, I may become unable to think creatively about what I, or we together, can do to make a difference” (Orange, 2016, p 73).

5.3.4 Theme 3: sexualised excitement, threat, abuse of power, and hope

Figure 5.4



A sexualised excitement and threat seemed to be present, exemplified as sexualised abuse of power or inappropriate relationships or alliances: Lesley’s experience of colleagues in case 2, the researcher’s associations to rape in case 5, the anxiety about potentially inappropriate relationships forming in the group, and Louisa’s concern (case 3) over whether the technology she was responsible for would be introduced insensitively without concern for the future.

Connected with the sexual threat is a potentially creative or generative version of sexuality: the pain, overwhelm and hope associated with childbirth (Lesley's image of her organisation being birthed, case 2). So among the threat and abuse there are traces of creativity (Louisa's playfulness in case 3, Arthur's concern for tending and nurturing in case 1). But in the group creativity was strongly resisted through defensive mechanisms (including my own defences), and it is not evident in individuals' accounts of their work.

The following sections explore the psychoanalytic links between sexuality, creativity and change, and the concept of perverse dynamics.

5.3.4.1 Sexuality and development

Growing awareness of sexuality is an aspect of early development. As set out under Theme 1, the baby becomes exposed to the painful knowledge that the figures on whom she depends also have a relationship with each other – that she is not the centre of the universe. Unprocessed difficulties with this knowledge can result in perverse dynamics, which include 'turning a blind eye', the need to know and simultaneously not to know (Steiner, 1985), and patterns of behaviour in which an object or subject is recruited for a purpose other than its intended one, and in which one's own pleasure is given primacy at the expense of the rights and needs of others: a form of narcissism, and repeated abusive patterns – which need not be extreme and are visible through apparently minor examples. According to Long (2008), perverse dynamics include the recruitment of others as accomplices to the perversion, and these dynamics flourish in situations where instrumental relations prevail.

Long (2012) also argues that trauma can be both cause and effect of perverse dynamics.

5.3.4.2 Gender, threat, and abuse in the group and at work

In this study, masculinity is often associated with threat and men are accused of the narcissistic, abusive position of ignoring the needs of others. The climate and environmental movement has a complex relationship with gender, with high-profile protests traditionally seen as masculine in style but thoughtful attempts made more recently to integrate the masculine and feminine, or playfully challenge the gender constructs (Connell, 1990; Extinction Rebellion, 2021c). On the other hand, as mentioned in Chapter 2, concern for climate has been shown to be socially constructed as feminine (Anshelm and Hultman, 2014; Daggett, 2018; Hollway, 2020; Nelson, 2020). For the research participants in this study, their gender is of course linked to their climate concerns, but as suggested in Chapter 4, as well as being present as a tension in its own right, gender may also be serving as a substitute for something else, as has been proposed in other settings (Stevenson, 2012): through projective identification, it may be a vehicle for other aspects of felt inequality, power and oppression such as the experience of being convened (forced to come together), and the potential for abusive or instrumental aspects within my own role as the convenor. This all-white group, one of whose members has experience of migration, may also be unconsciously in touch through projection with the experience of black and brown people who are most likely to be subjected to forced migration, and experiencing the anxiety that may arise for white people as a result of the collective denial of that experience (Davids, 2006; Davids, 2011).

5.3.4.3 Childbirth, hope and basic-assumption Pairing

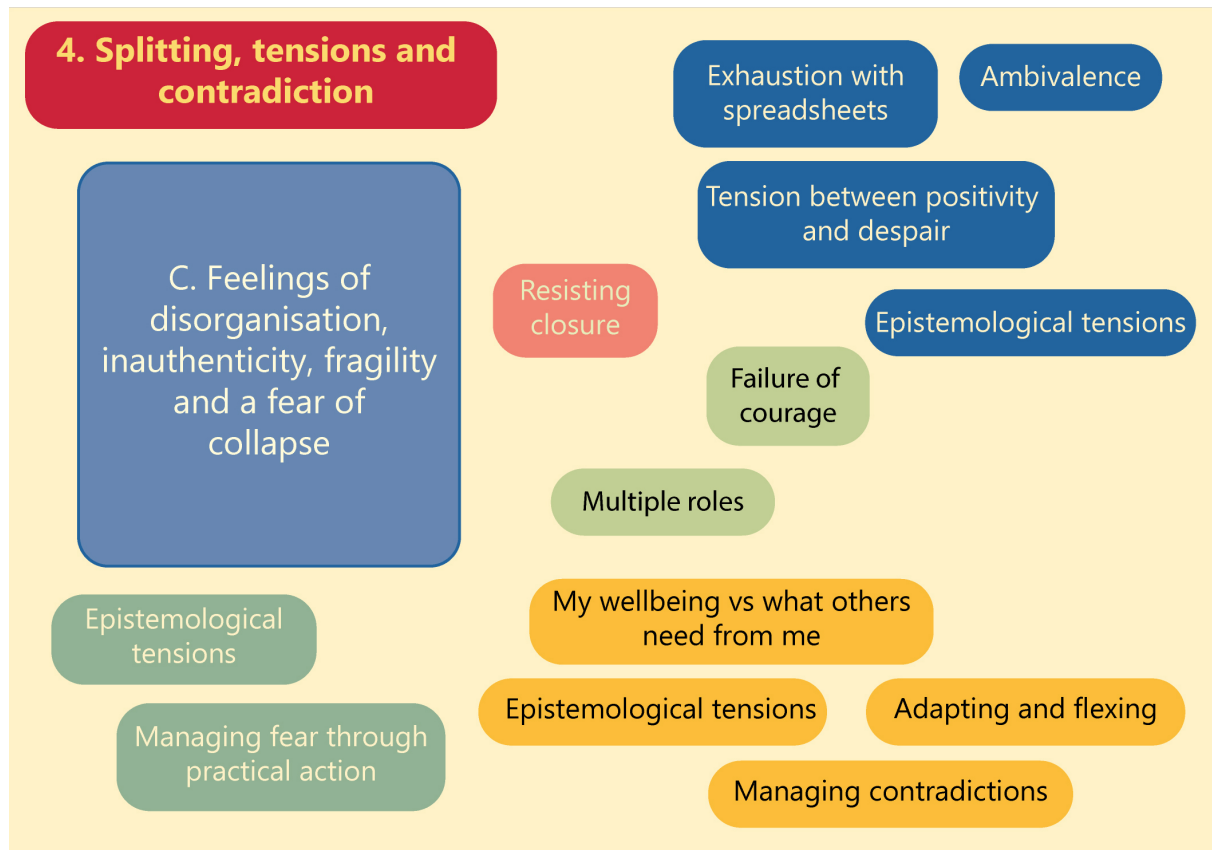
What was happening in society during the fieldwork for this study combined high levels of anxiety (Brexit, record-breaking weather); stuckness and conflicts, going on seemingly for ever (Theresa May's repeated defeats in Parliament); but also hope and a sense of potential community (XR, climate emergencies being declared, citizens' assembly). This could at a metaphorical level be a description of the experience of a difficult childbirth, and suggests an element of basic-assumption Pairing (BaP) (Bion, 1961) operating in society and perhaps affecting the group. From the summer onwards the arrival of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister put an end to the future-focused, never-to-be-fulfilled fantasy hope that is a feature of BaP. Simultaneously within the group the departure of the member who had held the hope of producing a different kind of human consciousness was followed by more depressive-position thinking as the remaining members discussed the more difficult aspects of their work.

The question of pairs and alliances was a live issue for the group. The forming of these always seemed to have an element of conflict: the women in the group identified with each other against the men; Tim proposed creating an alliance with me as an aspect of leaving the group; and I felt under pressure to hold one-to-one meetings when I felt the group was particularly fragile. Given these patterns I wonder whether the presence of BaP was an example of the behaviour that Bion noticed: "they were trying to break up the fight-flight culture by establishing pair relationships" (Bion, 1961, p 72): it was a response to the BaF mentality. Another way of putting this is that it is a perverse form of BaP. Hopper (2012) proposes two variants of basic-

assumption Pairing: “one concerns the conception and birth of the new and desirable; the other, ... ‘perverse pairing’, concerns the use of pain under the guise of pleasure leading to stasis and an absence of fertility and creativity.”

5.3.5 Theme 4: splitting, tensions and contradiction

Figure 5.5



Individuals all reported examples of splitting, tensions and contradiction in their work, linked with feelings of inauthenticity: for example, being acutely conscious of the urgency of the climate crisis, and wanting to reach commitment and move fast, while knowing that the work of engagement requires relationality and patience (Louisa, case 3); a belief that the external messaging and the needs of others require positivity, while internally there are feelings of despair and exhaustion (Arthur, case 1; Rebecca, case 5); a sense of there being an almost

infinite amount to do while feeling exhausted and drained (Lesley, case 2); the wish to work together creatively while also wishing to hold on to one's own habits (group analysis); working towards a transformation in human consciousness while being stuck in ingrained behaviour patterns associated with privilege (Tim, case 4); hating the group convenor and depending on her.

The following sections explore psychoanalytic thinking about splitting to inform the exploration of the polarities in the group and in its members' work context.

5.3.5.1 The defence of splitting in psychoanalysis

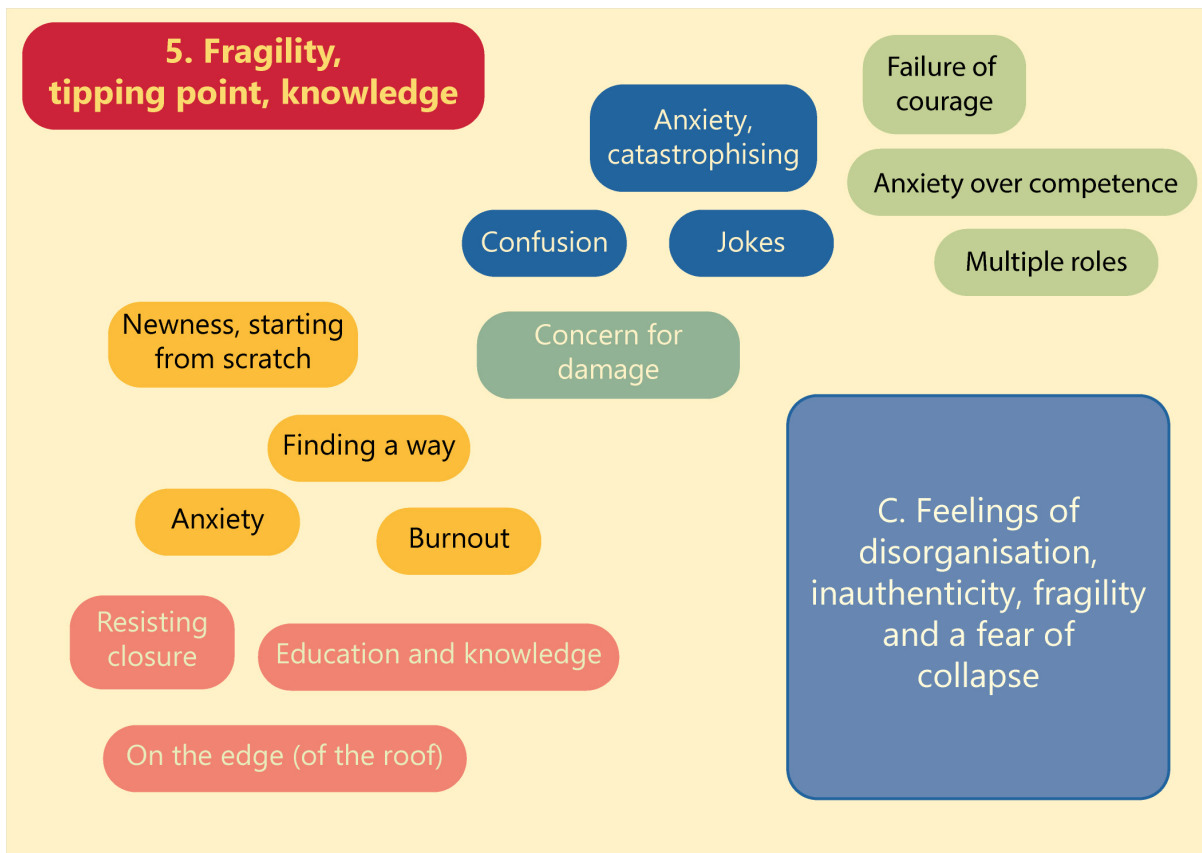
Splitting is seen in the Kleinian thinking drawn on by systems-psychodynamics as an essential part of early development (Klein, 1930; Bott Spillius et al., 2011, p 491-496). It arises when the infant cannot bear the experience of both love and hate of her main carer, and divides them into a 'good' figure and a 'bad' one. The hatred felt for the parent is attached to the 'bad' one and the restorative feelings to the 'good'. As a defence, splitting characterises the paranoid-schizoid position, deriving from feelings that cannot be borne at a very primitive level when the mind is at an early stage of development. Creating the good object and bad object, and projecting the bad object out into the external world, then enables the infant, with containment, to think about the bad object and in time to re-introject it in a bearable form, enabling integration of the good and bad. The early splitting shapes the mind so that it may recur under stress in later life. (Klein, 1946; Bott Spillius et al., 2011)

5.3.5.2 Splitting in this study

In the experience of participants in this study, it is the split between the perceived demand for energetic positivity and the experience of despair and exhaustion that has the strongest feel, with alternatives to positivity being felt as self-evidently impossible, non-negotiable. Others include the tension around urgency, damage and relationality; between the demands of the group and caring commitments; and between the scale of what feels to be needed and what the individual feels capable of. Some of the latter are explored in section 5.4 on epistemological tensions.

5.3.6 Theme 5: fragility, tipping point, knowledge

Figure 5.6



A sense of being fragile, on the edge, or in a dangerous position nearing a tipping point or approaching collapse was a feature of the group's emotional experience and was also evident in individuals' accounts of their work. The 'leaving the baby bird to drown' dream (Dreams, 8 April) and Tim's Rumi quotation in Meeting 2 represented the fragility **of** the group in my own mind as its convenor, and perhaps also carry the fragility **in** the group, deriving from its members' work. Linked to the fragility was a feeling of having nothing to fall back on and working things out from scratch – feeling new when we aren't, feeling preoccupied with what others are feeling (Lesley, case 2), and obsessive worrying (Lesley and Arthur, cases 1 and 2). A fear of being damaging and a wish to repair is part of this theme (group analysis), and it is linked with anxiety about what is known and not known, what and who can be trusted, and who is

an expert (group analysis; Tim, case 4).

Some of the questions about knowledge in this theme are obviously and explicitly linked to climate work. Is the (social) science right – how do we know what will be effective in public engagement (Lesley, case 2)? Will the technology work (Louisa, case 3)?

The fear of societal and species collapse arising from the climate and ecological crisis was not generally acknowledged in mainstream public discourse until after 2015, although it has been part of some forms of climate activism for much longer, and inherits strands of apocalyptic thinking that may be as old as humanity (Hoggett, 2011). In 2018-19 the fear had been brought to the surface by the rise of Extinction Rebellion and Deep Adaptation (Bendell, 2020), and it is hard not to see connections between the fragility and collapse anxiety in the group and similar feelings in members' work. To illuminate the theme, the following sections explore psychoanalytic thinking about knowledge, fragility, and collapse.

5.3.6.1 Thinking and knowing in object-relations psychoanalysis

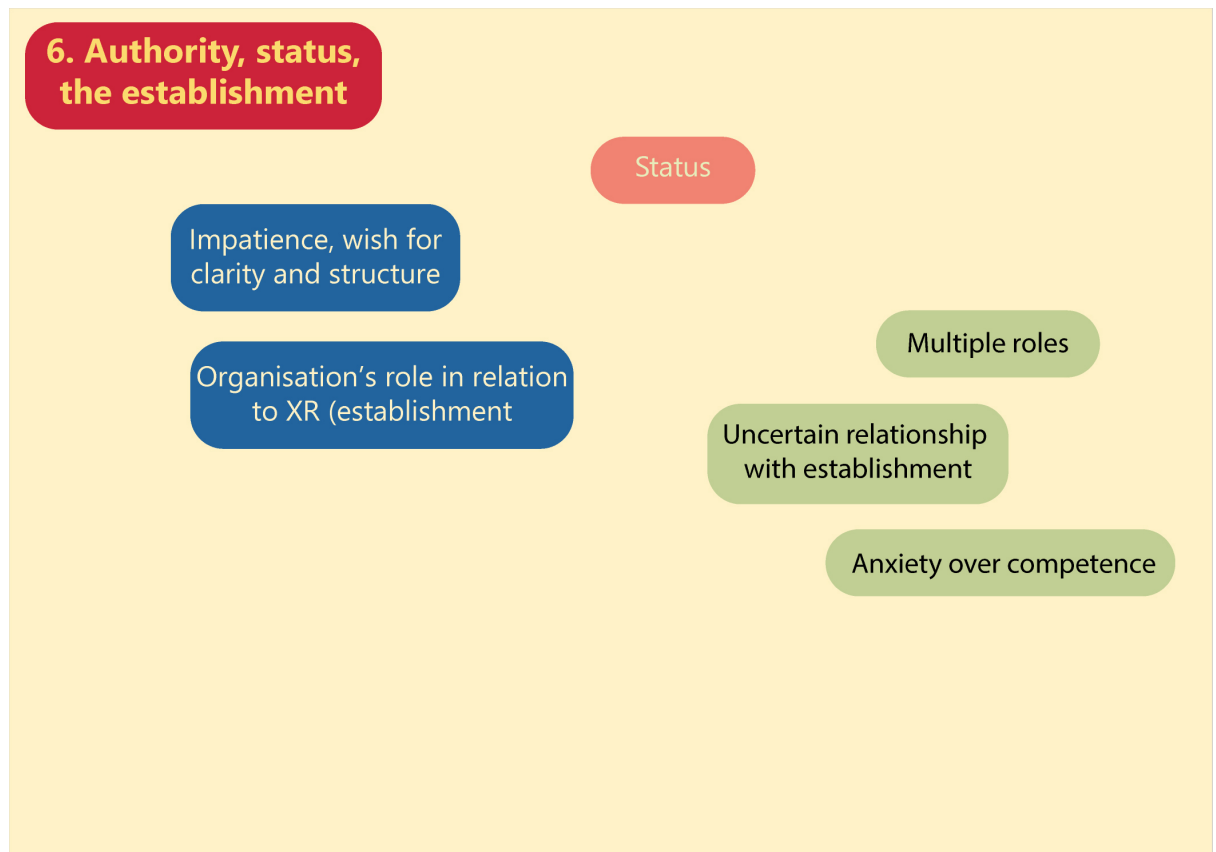
The position of not knowing is an anxious one and closely linked to feeling fragile, on the edge. Melanie Klein's theory of the epistemophilic instinct (Klein, 1928) and Wilfred Bion's theory of thinking (Bion, 1962) provide a helpful basis for engaging with this condition. Klein saw the epistemophilic instinct as both 'exploratory and ...aggressive, involving phantasies of getting inside the mother' (Bott Spillius et al., 2011, p 323). Bion's theory builds on Klein's proposal that the infant has an innate sense of the breast which prompts the rooting reflex. Bion calls this innate sense a 'preconception' and

argues that when a preconception is combined with frustration – perhaps a delay in reaching the breast – a thought is produced. More frustration than the baby can manage may lead to terror and splitting as described under theme 4. Theme 5 perhaps describes the fragile psychic state of entering into frustration, beginning to experience it – and the anxiety and uncertainty that this carries of a potentially violent epistemophilic impulse.

The theme also explicitly includes the sense of potential social and personal collapse, articulated in the Rumi “edge of the roof” quotation but also visible in the personal experiences of work. The feeling is of a precarious coping, strongly motivated but at risk of being destroyed from within and without. Psychoanalytic insights into the latency period of childhood have relevance here: in this period, as described by Margot Waddell (2002, pp 93-94), a desire for order and structure, and the acquisition of knowledge and skills, can defend against disruptive impulses and repair the damage the child unconsciously believes they have done (Klein, 1940). An awareness of the potential for emerging disorder, combined with a sense of not knowing and of being uncertain what is to be trusted, can be particularly difficult in this fragile state.

5.3.7 Theme 6: Authority, status, the establishment

Figure 5.7



Group members grappled with challenges linked to status, authority and their relationship with the establishment (the term is used here in the commonly-deployed meaning of “a social group exercising power generally... and having as a general interest the maintenance of the status quo” – OED (2021)).

The theme is present in the group, though not clearly in the group dynamics, so there is no corresponding group theme. My uncertain relationship with the establishment as represented by the Tavistock Clinic affected how the group was able to establish itself (case 5), and perhaps influenced Arthur’s desire for more clarity over purpose and working practices (case 1). Conversely, my use of

the authority represented by psychoanalysis was a factor in Fred's departure (group analysis), and Tim's departure too may have been influenced by group members' resistance to the authority suggested by his privileged education (case 4, group analysis).

Most clearly relevant to climate work is the difficulty in managing the relationship of an establishment-linked organisation with the civil disobedience tactics of Extinction Rebellion (Arthur, case 1). Arthur and Lesley feel inspired by Extinction Rebellion but they have to act in accordance with the demands of their supporters. Louisa left her status-conscious parents behind in order to do the work that she does, and status then re-emerged for her in her son's school.

The following sections reflect on this theme by considering systems-psychodynamic conceptions of authority and the establishment.

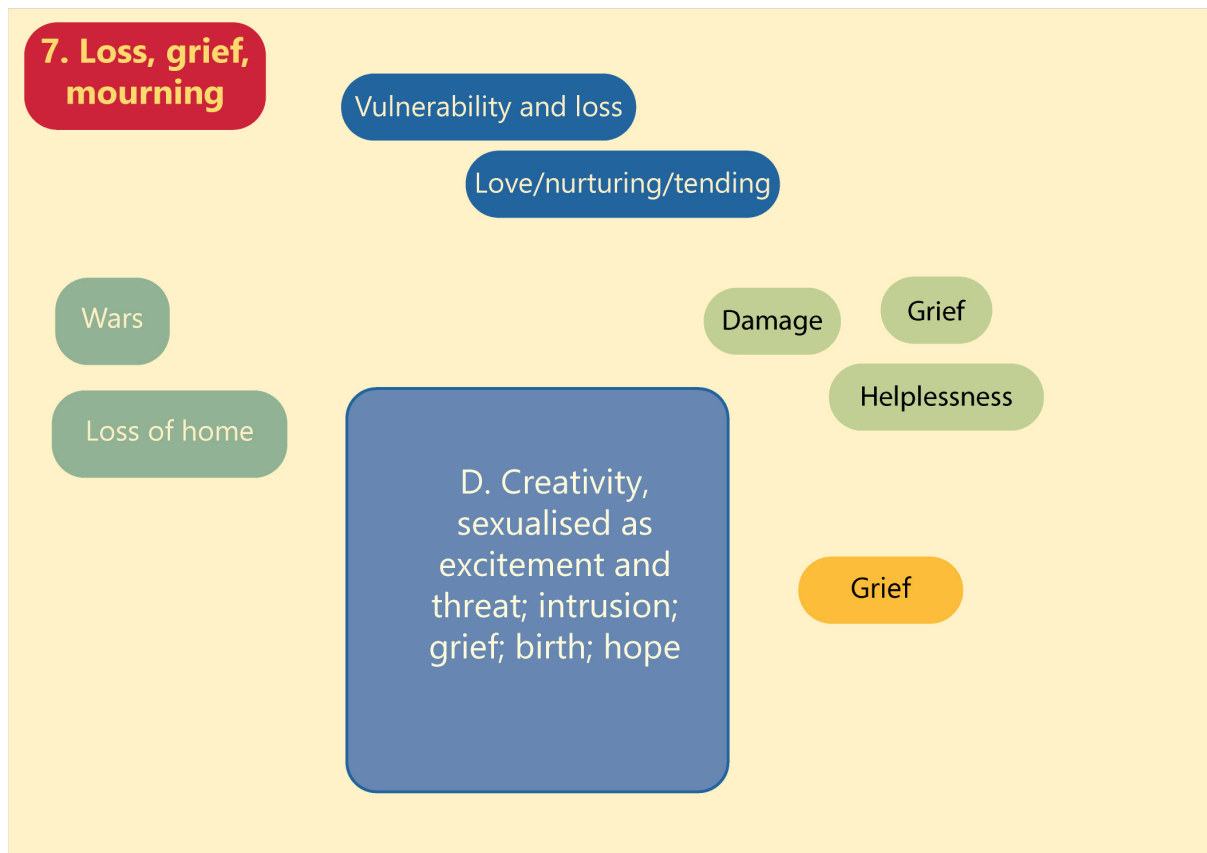
5.3.7.1 Authority

In systems-psychodynamics, authority is generally seen as a significant aspect of leadership and organisational effectiveness. 'Good-enough authority' (Obholzer and Roberts, 2019, p 50), appropriately held where it is needed, is described as essential to the effective functioning of organisations (Obholzer, 1996). In my role as convenor of the group, my authority was uncertain. There were attacks on it but also calls for me to exercise it more strongly. In part the uncertainty derives from my uncertain connection to the institution within which the study was taking place; and because in any case it needed to be negotiated through the relationship with the group. There may also have been difficulties with authority connected with the wider system in which the work was taking place, and this is discussed further in section 5.5.

5.3.7.2 The establishment

The concept of ‘the establishment’ in British politics and sociology is a contested one, reflecting the contested space in which the meanings of class, power and influence have developed over time (Middleton, 2021). In this study, the contestation is an important aspect of the experience: the research participants are by definition in the business of changing the status quo, but their work requires a positive relationship with members of the establishment who are in the business of maintaining it (OED, 2021). Another layer of this contest is what counts as ‘business’. There is a contradiction at the heart of the establishment: the business of maintaining the status quo (‘business as usual’ in climate policy) leads to destruction (Hoggett and Nestor, 2021): the continuation of policies and practices that will lead to a planet unliveable for many species, including humans. Further discussion of the nature of the contest can be found in section 5.4, which looks at the epistemological and ontological tensions surfaced in this study.

Paul Hoggett’s concept of the ‘internal establishment’ (Hoggett, 1998), explained in Chapter 2, is also relevant to this theme. Like the establishment in society, the internal establishment exists in groups in order to maintain the status quo: in this internal space its role is to keep the group’s ‘unthought known’ (Bollas, 1987) out of consciousness, where it might start to be thought about instead of being felt and acted out. The unthought known is part of the characteristic ‘flavour’ of a working environment and each organisation will have a different unthought known, though there may be patterns of similarity between organisations with similar primary tasks. A key question then is what the unthought known consists of in this context.

5.3.8 Theme 7: loss, grief, mourning**Figure 5.8**

As set out in Theme D in the group analysis, grief in the group was mostly visible only obliquely, through defence mechanisms. But it was very clearly an important aspect of experience for individuals and was brought to the group: my ‘burnt child’ and ‘leaving the bird to drown’ dreams and Arthur’s model hippopotamus are mentioned in the group analysis; other manifestations include Louisa’s loss of her birth home, Arthur’s grief for other species, and Lesley’s wish to use grief for transformation. Grief is harder to see in Tim’s material.

The connection between working in climate change and feelings of loss and grief is an obvious one, and it may not be surprising either that there does not seem to be much space for expressions of loss and grief in the experience of the group; that the focus should be the practical one of what to do with grief, how to

use it. They may have other places to explore their grief, and the group or the interviews with me may seem inappropriate locations for it. But if this practical focus is their usual approach to grief, the impact on participants may be to deny themselves the essential 'tasks of grief' (Worden, quoted in Randall, 2009), discussed in the following paragraphs.

The experience of loss and grief is universal, and the purposes, practices and tasks of mourning are important in all psychologies that work with the unconscious. In *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud (1916) explored the process by which the lost object is gradually, through mourning, allowed to depart: "as if every memory of the loved one has to be brought out and, bit by bit, relinquished...[and] interest in the world is re-established" (Hinshelwood, 1994, p 18). Melancholia – what we might now call depression – involves an unconscious identification with the lost object, including the hated parts of it as well as the loved parts, resulting in an obsessional inward focus and a stuck kind of self-hate.

Kleinian approaches to grief focus on its relationship with manic states of denial of the loss, or of its significance, and the role of the oscillating depressive position in which the individual can (temporarily) distinguish between what damage has actually been done and what is part of unconscious phantasy (Klein, 1940; Hinshelwood, 1994). Having an internal 'good object' provides the security and sense of well-being that helps people to navigate the mourning process. Mourning is different for every individual and in this sense it is deeply personal; and because mourning is about relationship it must also have a social element.

William Worden's (1982, 2018) influential model of what is involved in mourning proposes four 'tasks of grief', which at any point in the process may be either embraced or turned away from. Worden's model is distinguished from Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's (1970) 'stages of grief' model in part because it assumes, following Klein, that the experience of grief is not a journey with stages, but a series of oscillations between feeling and facing pain and turning away from it.

In this study, grief is visible and felt in individuals' experience and in my dreams, but only to be seen obliquely in the group. It is as if the social function of mourning is not permitted, or as if this group is not a safe place for it to happen.

5.3.9 Summary of the superordinate themes

The experience of exclusion and isolation suggests defences – including splitting – against dependence and vulnerability, including being vulnerable to one's own unbearable feelings such as hatred. The presence of shame suggests the experience of a small child who has made a mess, and whose significant adult is turning away in response to the mess. Sexualised excitement and abusiveness indicate perverse dynamics, perhaps manifest in the relationship between the convenor and the group members. The feelings of fragility, not knowing, and fear of collapse bring in the wish to (and fear of) attack that characterises the epistemophilic impulse. The difficulties with authority suggest the absence of benign inner authority figures, opening the door to the internal establishment fuelled by the death drive. Individuals' experiences of grief are generally kept away from the group, making the essential mourning task a private one and denying the group's role in supporting its members.

5.4 Epistemological and ontological tensions

This section explores sub-question 2: What kinds of epistemological and ontological tensions are evident in leaders' experience?

Epistemological and ontological tensions are part of the landscape of working in climate change. Arguments such as those around the role of values in communicating for social change (Crompton, 2010) and how to appeal across social and political divides (Marshall, 2015; Yale, 2021) are part of the bread and butter of the work of climate change communicators. The Climate Psychology Alliance (see Chapter 2) was formed in part out of a wish to explore the basis of some of these arguments and create new epistemological spaces. So at one level, this is all business as usual for climate communications, and the tensions experienced by group members are an ordinary part of the job. However the work of communicating climate change takes place in a highly polarised context, and the tone of some of the epistemological discussions can be overtly attacking at an existential level. An example is the polarities around the Deep Adaptation movement established by Jem Bendell (Bendell, 2020). A paper critiquing 'The faulty science, doomism, and flawed conclusions of Deep Adaptation' (Nicholas et al., 2020) accuses Bendell of mimicking the tactics of climate deniers, possibly the worst accusation that could be levelled at a climate campaigner.

Through working on this project, I have come to understand at a personal level how deeply the epistemological connects with the existential: how an attack on one's fundamental epistemology can feel like an attack on the self. The experience of Fred's departure from the group gives access to how powerful epistemological tension can be. Fred's angry criticism of me and the group can be seen

epistemologically as a response to the attempt in the study design to bring together approaches from different (though neighbouring and consistent) academic traditions, which itself echoes the need when communicating climate change to have some understanding of both climate science and communications science. This was a reasonable thing to do, but it evoked strong feelings from the beginning – indicating the difficulty of trying to do this, the confusion it risks creating, and the wrath it risks invoking from those who are more firmly located in one tradition or the other. My experience of Fred’s anger and sense of being deceived, perhaps his feeling that his wish to connect deeply with others was utterly denied – together with my own painful feelings of bewilderment, sense of incompetence, and hurt – bring me in touch with what may be comparable feelings on each side of the epistemological divide that climate communicators straddle. These may include the strong desire to eliminate the other side that is reflected in Fred’s expulsion, and the anxiety provoked by the wish to eliminate. Tim’s continuation in the group for several more months, even while he expressed some similar epistemological objections to our approach, can be seen as in part anxiety-fuelled at both group and individual levels – as if another departure would destroy the group, and as if following in Fred’s footsteps would destroy Tim.

The ‘ordinary’ epistemological and ontological tensions – especially that between urgency, damage and relationality, and between the scale of what feels to be needed and what the individual feels capable of – take on a new significance in the light of the experience of Fred and Tim, and I suggest that these ‘ordinary’ tensions should be thought of as freighted with the emotional load described above.

5.5 The climate psychology literature

This section builds on section 5.4 and addresses the research study's first sub-question: How, if at all, do the conscious and unconscious dynamics thought to exist in relation to climate change play out in these organisations and shape emotional experience within the organisations?

5.5.1 Summary of the dynamics proposed in climate psychology

The conscious and unconscious dynamics proposed in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 can be summarised as follows. (In this section the concepts of Terror Management Theory and some aspects of trauma scholarship are explored in more depth than they were in Chapter 2, because their salience became clearer to me while analysing the data.)

5.5.1.1 Climate emotions and defences

Strong anxiety, guilt, shame, loss and grief are present but mostly disavowed because they are both unmanageable (Randall, 2009) and socially unacceptable (Norgaard, 2011; Hoggett and Randall, 2016; 2017). Other feelings such as rage may also be present, and also suppressed (Hickman, 2020; Stanley et al., 2021). The disavowal of these strong feelings may manifest as apathy (Lertzman, 2015), an insistence on optimism (le Goff, 2017), or obsession with small personal steps. At the root of the defensive response is the knowledge that we are dependent on each other and on the planetary systems of which we are part (Rust, 2007; Randall, 2013). This knowledge and the reality that it represents evoke early feelings of helplessness and activate early defences such as splitting and projection (Randall, 2013), leading to dependence on phantasy saviours (technology,

individual leaders) and perverse dynamics: omnipotence and certainty, violent attacks on the object of dependence, and abusive behaviour (Long, 2015).

5.5.1.2 Systemic influences

The structures of late capitalism promote the uncaring parts of ourselves at the expense of the caring parts (Weintrobe, 2021). This appeals to our unconscious infantile beliefs that we need take no responsibility for feeding and clearing up after ourselves (Keene, 2013). It also reinforces the perverse dynamics of privilege, entitlement, and 'extractivism' (Klein, 2015; Long, 2015), in which the world is seen only as a resource for (the wealthiest) humans.

5.5.1.3 Terror Management Theory

Terror Management Theory (TMT) proposes that the knowledge of our own death creates anxiety and defensive responses such as difficulties with identity and a raised concern for social status. One of the impacts of the increased salience and expansion of the theory's 'death accessibility' to encompass awareness of the potential for our own extinction and the deaths of other species is that we are seeing increasing polarisation in society in the global north, as part of which extreme positions on the climate are becoming more evident. It is argued that in a self-reinforcing dynamic, forced migration and displacement of human and animal communities (which is both an immediate impact of fossil fuel extraction and one of the consequences of climate change) create anxiety which leads to forms of defence such as barriers to free movement, the creation of billionaires' bunkers in New Zealand, and further denial of responsibility (Bettini, 2019; Whyte, 2020).

Climate denial is becoming less widespread but more extreme (Hollway, 2020) and is also borrowing (Lamb et al., 2020) from its opposite, climate apocalypticism (Hoggett, 2011), so that 'it's too late' has replaced 'it's not happening' as a reason to keep the status quo; and grand targets and public statements of the severity of the crisis appear alongside risibly tiny practical commitments (Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2020; 2021).

5.5.1.4 Epistemological shock and trauma

In this context, aspects of trauma scholarship have recently (Woodbury, 2019; Bednarek, 2021) been deployed to suggest that the experience of the climate crisis constitutes a collective trauma. The scholarship is centred in ecopsychology and the subject has also been explored from the perspectives of philosophy, humanities, cultural studies, and sustainability (Kaplan, 2015; Doppelt, 2017; Richardson, 2018; Zimmerman, 2020). I propose a connection between trauma and the characteristics of climate change as a super-wicked problem and a hyper-object, and these characteristics are described in the next paragraph before returning to expand on trauma.

Chapter 2 introduced the concept of climate change as a super-wicked problem and listed the three aspects that define it as such: it will become more difficult to address the longer we leave it; the most power to act is held by those with the least immediate incentive to do so; and there is no authority with the global reach needed to act (Levin et al., 2012). This third aspect carries a significant emotional impact through reminding us of the global scale of the problem some humans have created, and the smallness of all humans

in relation to it. This emotional impact is also present in the philosophical concept of climate change as a hyper-object: “things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” (Morton, 2013, p 1). Morton in explaining the concept describes the “sense of asymmetry between the infinite powers of cognition and the infinite being of things...a crazy arms race between what we know and what is, in which the technology of what we know is turned against itself” (Morton, 2013, p 22). I argue below that this kind of epistemological shock can constitute trauma if it takes place without adequate support.

Returning to the relationship between trauma and climate change, I now introduce two strands that are part of this developing area of scholarly interest, emerged during and after my fieldwork, and are relevant to this study. The first is the concept of collective climate trauma. Gestalt therapist Steffi Bednarek (2021), building on ecopsychologist Zhiwa Woodbury’s (2019) taxonomy of climate trauma, paints a compelling picture of the traumatising impact of the extractivist activities of some groups of humans, over generations, on all species and the natural world including humans. (The inter-generational impact of climate trauma echoes Gerard Fromm’s (2017; 2018) work on inherited trauma in different human settings, and work on inherited racial trauma (Menakem, 2021).)

The second relevant strand is epistemological, and relates to the problem of why we do not act on what we know about human influence on the climate. Zimmerman explores how trauma concepts can help with “why it is that, in the face of all we “know,” ecocidal business as usual persists and escalates”

(Zimmerman, 2020, p xx). He thinks that a traumatic epistemological contradiction is at the heart of it: “If, as [Naomi] Klein writes, it is “blindingly obvious” that the climate crisis is “rooted” in “contemporary capitalism’s quest for perpetual growth,” then the modern subject, rooted in that same ideological ground, must be careful not to look, lest looking rupture vision itself” (Zimmerman, 2020, p 20).

5.5.2 This study’s findings and the dynamics proposed in the literature

In this section I discuss parallels and make tentative links between the experience of this study’s group and the dynamics proposed by climate psychology. This is an abductive process, in which possible preconditions to the data are considered.

Working on the communication of climate change requires people to interact with others in response to an experience described in the literature as suffused with feelings that are often too difficult to manage and are disavowed. They are unmanageable precisely because they bring us in touch with our dependence. The unconscious insistence in this study’s group – through splitting to create gender and epistemological differences and a Fight-Flight mentality – on keeping at a distance from each other both minimised the dependence that being in any group requires, and kept the group members away from a situation in which they may have feared the feelings would be amplified by the fact of being shared, and would become unmanageable. The ordinary ambivalence about taking part in the group may have intensified these feelings beyond how they would be experienced in day-to-day work, and the ‘ticking clock’ aspect of climate change

as a super-wicked problem may have activated states of mind and body in which these primitive responses are more likely.

The manifestations of shame in the group and in individual cases in this study echo that aspect of participants' climate work which is unwelcomely drawing attention to the unmentionable: the mess that humans have made of their home. As people aware of the impacts of fossil fuel extraction, members of the group are likely to have a pre-disposition to feel the shame. So as well as experiencing the shame and potential loss of relatedness with others that comes of mentioning the unmentionable, and their own shame for being part of the society that has made this mess, the participants are experiencing the shame and fear denied by others in UK society and beyond, about the original fact of the mess that has been made and its implications. Donna Orange's (2016) proposal of climate shame as a defence against action suggests the function of this projected shame as a social defence that reduces the capacity to work together.

Exclusion and separation are also systemic features of working in this field. Organisations engaging the public on climate change have complex positions within the social and political landscape of the UK: close to but outside the obvious home of political power (represented by Arthur's departure from a civil service team to work in a campaigning NGO), connected to the establishment but without a seat at the (imagined) decision-making table, in touch with the experience of ordinary citizens, climate activists and climate scientists but not feeling at home in any of these communities. Those in the best position to address climate change are those who caused it and have the least immediate incentive to act (the largely white nations of the global north which are also

responsible for colonialism): there may in fact be strong unconscious pressures to protect the fossil-fuel industries as experienced by Wasdell (2011). People working in the field may (as suggested in section 5.3) be unconsciously in touch through projection with the experience of damaged and destroyed communities and forced migration arising from the actions of the white-dominant nations, and experiencing the anxiety that may arise for white people as a result of the collective denial of that experience (Frazier, 2000; Straker, 2004; Davids, 2006; Davids, 2011; May, 2017; Grand, 2018).

It is argued in section 5.3 that the insistence on positive messaging is a defensive response and an outcome of splitting. As an aspect of the social technology used in the climate communications field, positive messaging can be seen as a manifestation of the tendency towards the creation of 'phantasy saviours'. If we are to be saved by our messaging, we will not need to grieve. And positive messaging represents an assertion of certainty in an emotional landscape of fragility, uncertainty and not-knowing, where – despite the global problem represented by climate change – there is no global authority in a position to address it. In this sense the insistence on positive messaging and the difficulties in grieving echo the perverse dynamics of the fossil-fuel companies described in Long (2015), and bring us to the other aspects of perverse dynamics in this field: trauma, the internal establishment and the unthought known.

'Trauma' originally means a wound, and in psychoanalytic tradition it is described as a wound to the mind's defences (Freud, 1920) such that it "overwhelms existing defences against anxiety in a form which also provides confirmation of

those deepest universal defences”, especially “the reality and imminence of death, or personal annihilation” (Garland, 1998, p 11). From this psychoanalytic perspective, defence is thus at the heart of trauma. The work of people engaging the public on climate change can be seen as traumatic in all three ways outlined by Wilke (2012, p 199): (1) awareness of natural catastrophes (Pihkala (2019) describes environmental researchers as experiencing secondary trauma as a result of their work), (2) being attacked by an external group (as Randall and Hoggett (2019) describe scientists’ and activists’ experience), and (3) repeatedly experiencing being overburdened by demands that lie beyond their capacity to cope. People engaging the public on climate change could also be argued to be particularly exposed to the collective trauma proposed by Bednarek (2021), and to the epistemological trauma explored by Zimmerman (2020). The experience of moral injury (Weintrobe, 2020a) is also argued to be traumatic (Currier et al., 2021). If one of the things such people have in common is exposure to a traumatic experience, they can be thought of as a traumatised group: a group can experience trauma if “the members of the group share a history of specific kinds of trauma” (Hopper, 2012, p xx).

The experience of trauma creates atomisation, failures of integration, and difficulties in thinking because it constitutes an attack that the mind and body cannot manage without help: the mostly likely resort is to denial and splitting. Trauma scholars report such difficulties even in response only to investigating or reporting on trauma (Tamas, 2008; Zimmerman, 2020), and Garland (1998) points to the likelihood of trauma therapists experiencing painful countertransference impacts. These manifestations of the power of trauma

suggest that my own splitting of roles and difficulties of integration could be trauma-linked via my relationship with the study's participants.

Given the nature of the experience of this study's participants of exclusion, separation, fight-flight mentality, the social defence of positivity, and other forms of splitting, and given their exposure to different forms of traumatising events, it is reasonable to consider whether the experience of trauma manifests at organisational level. What would an organisational trauma response look like?

A traumatised group is likely to be exposed to perverse dynamics, including the internal establishment. We have already seen the presence of an internal establishment in this study's group. Another way of thinking about the experience of the work is to look at it through the lens of Earl Hopper's (1997; 2009; 2012) trauma-influenced basic assumption mentality Incohesion (Aggregation/ Massification) (ba I: AM).

This basic assumption mentality in a group derives from shared trauma. Hopper relies on a relational model of the mind which focuses on "helplessness, shame, and traumatic experiences within the context of interpersonal relationships". In this model envy is a defensive response to the fear of annihilation arising from traumatic deprivation, and is directed at "spoiling the resources of people who are perceived as potentially helpful but who do not or will not actually help" (Hopper, 2012, p xxxiii).

Because of its roots in trauma, the fundamental character of this group mentality is the inability to cohere, to work together. The inability takes the form of an oscillation between the states of aggregation (separate entities in the same place but not connected, like pieces of gravel) and massification (sticking together

without differentiation, like a piece of faeces). Hopper has several other metaphors for the two conditions: aggregation is likened to a collection of crustaceans, with hard but vulnerable shells, a bowl of boiled potatoes, or a flock of birds, who fly alongside each other because it is useful for survival; massification is like a group of amoebae, a bowl of mashed potatoes, or a herd of walruses piling together (Hopper, 2012, pp xxxv, xlvi). (The potato metaphors arose during a discussion in Dublin: Hopper points out that the symbol of the potato is a powerful reference to Irish trauma.) He settles on the terms 'crustacean' and 'amoeboid' behaviours in groups experiencing the I: AM mentality.

We have seen versions of this oscillation taking place in the group in this study: expulsion dynamics followed by the defensive warmth of a smaller group, and my holding of multiple roles, in a sense splitting and merging simultaneously. My oscillation between the roles may have echoed the aggregation/massification oscillation in the group, and helped me to see this. We may notice echoes of the massification metaphors in Arthur's walruses falling down the cliff and my dream about faeces. The link to trauma and deprivation can be illustrated by a story of my own, from a climate café that I facilitated in the summer of 2021. Participants were involved in climate campaigning from different professional and activist backgrounds. Initially expressed as anger and frustration, deprivation, neglect and envy began to be named around the theme of 'there is so much money around and none of it is being used for reducing emissions.' It was as if we were as a group feeling collectively starving, excluded from a banquet. And for some of the participants there was a feeling of not daring to ask for what was felt to be

needed – just as I did not dare to ask for proper catering for the first meeting of this study's group.

If Hopper's basic-assumption mentality is the response to the 'unthought known' of the trauma, the job of the internal establishment is to keep people exposed to this mentality in a position of continuing oscillation between the crustacean and amoeboid poles. This enforcement role carries its own emotional flavour: for example, it prevents any escape from the polarities of similarity/difference, positivity/despair, love the values/hate the spreadsheets, and urgency/relationality. Switching between these polarities distracts attention from the fact of the trauma.

I am tentatively proposing that organisations communicating climate change may be affected by climate trauma. This does not mean that I think that the dysfunctions evident in the CI group I convened will be present in its members' organisations. It means that, as we have seen, the impacts of trauma may flavour the organisational experience, and may demand significant effort and energy to prevent dysfunctions emerging.

This study does not consider individuals' motivations for undertaking climate communications work, and therefore does not explore how the individual's early psychic wounds might interact with the present trauma in their work; but this could be the subject of further study and is discussed in Chapter 6.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter explores the phenomenology and social defences of working in the communication of climate change, and draws on systems-psychodynamic and

climate psychology literature to illustrate the possible links between the dynamics proposed by climate psychology and the social defences seen in the group and suggested in group members' organisations. I make a tentative proposal that working in this field may involve aspects of trauma epistemologically, socially, and emotionally. 'Epistemologically' because of the nature of climate change as a hyper-object: its reality is more complex than we are capable of apprehending, and this struggle with reality brings us face to face with the limitations of our minds. 'Socially' because the work of engaging and communicating calls for steps to be taken that are denied and unresourced within the social systems we have, and this brings participants face to face with the limitations of the social systems within which their work takes place. 'Emotionally' because the deprivation inherent in the failure to act evokes infantile terror of annihilation and because Western culture's refusal to acknowledge dependence has created a set of defences against the very process that could help to develop our thinking capacity: feeling and exploring dependence with others who are different from ourselves, including the non-human. This emotional experience makes us feel lonely and isolated. The fact of the traumatic attack, and the fear of annihilation that its elements carry, could be seen as the 'unthought known' in this work. Organisations that engage the public on climate change may unconsciously activate a version of the 'internal establishment' that exists to defend against the unthought known, with the establishment unleashing perverse dynamics and other defensive mechanisms such as shame, with a particular focus on maintaining the split polarities and thereby preventing genuine connection with others who are different.

The nature of the work as described here may evoke an organisational response to trauma: the basic-assumption mentality Incohesion (Aggregation/Massification), one

of whose features is oscillating between crustacean and amoeboid behaviours.

These two responses, the internal establishment and basic-assumption I:AM, may make organisations engaging with the public on climate change uniquely painful workplaces (Aggregation), even while they also offer the sense of shared purpose and values that the study's participants report (Massification). The strong intrinsic motivation that is a characteristic of people working in climate change communication is likely to keep their workplaces from being dysfunctional, but at significant cost to the individuals. The experience may help us to understand some of the difficulties in collaboration summarised in Chapter 2. The leadership skills and capacities outlined there seem both overwhelmingly important and nearly impossible in this setting.

Chapter Six discusses some ways in which those working in the field, and consultants supporting them, can respond to the unique nature of the pain, including some implications for the functions of leadership in such organisations.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, contributions, and implications

6.1 Summary

This phenomenological study uses an innovative combination of Co-operative Inquiry, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and a systems-psychodynamic lens to explore the experience of leaders in organisations that engage the UK public on climate change. The study found social defences – specifically, exclusion dynamics, shame, threat, splitting, fragility, and difficulties in mourning, that it proposes may be trauma-influenced and manifested in Basic Assumption Incohesion group mentality and the use of the internal establishment to prevent access to the unthought known of the trauma. The emotional flavour of these social defences resonates with the climate emotions proposed by the existing body of climate psychology literature.

In this chapter, I explore the implications of these experiences for those working in the field; for research and researchers; and for me personally.

6.2 Implications for those engaging the public on climate change

Probably the most important set of implications from this study is the need for support for those doing the work of communicating climate change. The work is boundary-spanning and potentially trauma-infused, and those involved must be offered the kinds of support given to people working in other jobs that bring them in touch with trauma, designed to be effective within this context and respond to its distinctive demands.

Climate trauma perhaps carries a particular kind of resistance to healing. As well as the mind-and-body feeling, common to traumatised individuals and groups, that the original trauma is being repeated, there is the fact that the originating attack is objectively still happening – all around us and in us as we live our unavoidably fossil-fuelled lives. Recovery and healing must necessarily then be a slow, hesitant, sometimes impossible process.

Nevertheless, psychoanalytically-informed trauma scholarship provides insights that could be built on. Individual therapeutic support from climate-aware therapists could be made more widely available. Access to this would enable climate communicators to understand how, as described in Chapter 5, their early internal experiences may be re-activated by the external trauma of the climate crisis, and to rebuild their connections with their internal good objects. Hamilton (2020), in her study of emotional methodologies for climate change engagement, argues that for people particularly affected by climate trauma, one-to-one support may be more appropriate than group-based interventions, though she proposes the latter as well.

For activists Hamilton (2020) recommends, among other group interventions, mindfulness-based interventions and regular opportunities to reflect in depth on the tensions and ambivalences in the work. I propose that these methods and others could be adapted for organisational settings based on the different needs of Garland's (1998) different types of traumatised groups. The first of these is the 'given group', who already know each other and work together on a common primary task, and whose shared trauma is linked to their shared task (Garland's example is a GP practice whose senior partner was murdered during a home call). The second is the 'adversity group', who are brought together only by the external trauma and would

not otherwise know each other (her example is people caught in a hotel fire). Both groups need to begin by putting their experience of the trauma into words in a contained space, in order to grieve. Grieving and mourning are essential, as Hopper points out: “In order for people to break these vicious circles and cycles of equivalence, adequate and authentic mourning and reparation are necessary. Yet, people rarely have or take opportunities for such work.” But “unauthentic, ritualized mourning can make matters worse” (Hopper, 2012, p xlili), and climate mourning can all too easily become a self-reinforcing, defensive, empty ritual of blame, guilt and despair. To be generative, mourning processes need to be intentional, relational, and adaptive for the particular situation.

Garland proposes that the ‘given group’ benefits from interventions that enable them to recreate the meaning of their primary task, because this is “their most powerful container” (Garland, 1998, p 188; see also Bell and Bugge, 2011), whereas the ‘adversity group’ needs help first to acknowledge that it is a group, and then to bring the group’s existence to an end - because it otherwise risks creating a perverse insistence on staying together and re-enacting the trauma (p 187).

What would recreating meaning look like for people working in climate communications, where the fundamental nature of the work is making meaning out of complexity and uncertainty, and when it may feel as though whole structures of meaning have been lost? For a ‘given’ group of climate communicators who work together within an organisation, the work of sharing experiences of trauma would need to build up to an exploration of how the shared experience can re-shape the organisational members’ approach to the primary task. A therapeutic group like this, its therapeutic task completed or at least ended, might morph into a group whose

task is an organisational learning one, supporting the wider organisation in carrying out its primary task. Would the group recommend changes in the language used, the feelings about the work, or perhaps what support for the work is seen to be needed? For climate communicators who do not work together, there is still the shared task, albeit within a broader system rather than an organisation. (In this sense they do not fit neatly into Garland's categories, and a third category of 'task-trauma group' might be a useful addition to the typology.) So the ending of a cross-organisation therapeutic group might usefully coincide with discussions in the climate communications field more broadly (as opposed to within a single organisation) about how the work is approached. With care and empathy, Hirschhorn and Horowitz's (2015) 'danger, excitement and protective frames' (see chapter 2 sections 2.4.1 and 2.5.3) might support refocussing social defences in the service of the task.

In addition to the general psychoanalytic trauma scholarship, the climate trauma scholarship cited in Chapter 5 contains helpful context-specific thinking about how the healing process can be supported. For example, Bednarek (2021) proposes the following steps: validate the coping mechanism, recognising that defences are a necessary if not sufficient aspect of responding to trauma; focus on the collective, including the non-human; re-indigenise the mind, helping a return to the knowledge of interdependence that has been denied; and be prepared for shame arising from the experience of beginning to be heard.

Paying attention to the body to heal the disconnect with our creaturely selves (Hoggett, 2020) may be an important aspect of support for collective climate trauma, as it is known to be for collective racial trauma (Menakem, 2021). Access to nature, as part of a conscious intention to build the knowledge of connection to and

dependence on the other-than-human, has been shown to have a healing effect (Capaldi et al., 2015; Bragg and Atkins, 2016; Andrews, 2017a) and when combined with an openness to sharing difficult feelings it can boost agency and ‘lively entitlement’ (Weintrobe, 2021) in people working on climate change: “making space to explore how emotions influence thoughts, mindsets and behaviours... acknowledging or expressing difficult or painful emotions can support active engagement” (Hamilton, 2020, p 112).

Organisations in this field may need to be open to people needing regular time out – both to access support for healing, and because every so often people may need to experience the temporary derangement that Bednarek (British Gestalt Journal, 2020) argues is necessary as part of our collective recovery from the permanent collective derangement we are living in. Such time out might support the development of the new capacities seen by some as necessary for climate change leadership: thinking outside the human frame and collaborating across species boundaries (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.3). It might also encourage mutual dependence and sharing of leadership tasks.

Beyond the organisational level, the legal and political ‘frameworks of care’ proposed by Sally Weintrobe (such as recognising the beyond-human as possessing rights - see Chapter 2) are just as important as support focused on the individual and group; indeed they may be essential to that individual support.

6.3 Research contributions, limitations, and proposed next steps

The study has brought systems-psychodynamics and depth climate psychology together through a detailed analysis of organisational experience. Both fields are thereby enriched, with climate trauma theory offering a distinctive new field in which

the Incohesion basic-assumption mentality is illuminated, and the basic-assumption concept showing how climate trauma can play out in organisations.

This study's experience of CI confirms several of the difficulties with the method that were identified in Chapter 3 (paragraph 3.3.10 and Table 3.1): the methodological tensions between New Paradigm participative action research and a systems-psychodynamic approach; and the known challenges to CI such as participants' different motivations, the lack of an organisational 'holding', power differentials as between the originating researcher and the other participants, and role dilemmas arising from multiple roles. These were potentially resolvable individually but – echoing the nonlinear behaviour of complex adaptive systems in nature and in humans – they turned out to work together with each other and with the unconscious climate dynamics identified by the data analysis to create a situation in which it was impossible for a single doctoral researcher to hold the group together as an effectively working entity. This did not invalidate the study, because data was generated by the difficulties; but it meant that the experience of CI in and of itself was unsatisfactory. The study's contribution to the field of CI is the conclusion that one or perhaps two of the challenges above could be in place and a CI approach still be seen as feasible; more than two should rule it out unless there is a team of researchers.

This study illustrates the methodological tensions between IPA and the participative and systems-psychodynamic approaches, described in Table 3.3. The methodological adaptations and extensions to bring a systems-psychodynamic lens to IPA have contributed to the emerging use of these neighbouring paradigms together (Steyn and Cilliers, 2016) and with a group focus (Tomkins and Eatough,

2010; Gray, 2021). This approach could be refined and developed further, for example by developing more specific protocols for the different kinds of bracketing that are needed when analysing group dynamics within IPA. The tensions remain.

The study has identified aspects of the experience of being a leader in climate change communication as potentially trauma-influenced. It has not explored how motivation for the work may be influenced by individuals' early psychic wounds, and how these might be re-activated by the trauma of the work, as psychoanalytic trauma scholarship proposes (Garland, 1998). Further biographical research could be very helpful in illuminating how these processes might manifest clinically.

The study has not researched possible interventions to address the experience, but has made some suggestions in section 6.2 above. Future studies could provide a research basis for considering what organisational structures, contexts and working practices might enable an organisation to be able to handle climate trauma. The practices suggested in section 6.2 could be explored as part of such studies, which could usefully draw on the organisational observation methods that were not part of this study.

6.4 Personal implications

My concerns about colonialism and extractivism have been tested through the fieldwork and analysis for this study. I began with a relatively naïve wish to involve the research participants, which conversely may also have involved defensive omnipotent phantasy in my adoption of multiple roles; my psychoanalytic knowledge and my attempts to manage the group were then felt as an exercise of exclusivity and power, and I was unable fully to repair the damage of this rupture. Through the experience of the data analysis, I have developed the ability to work with these

feelings and take up my authority in making sense of the material, and I hope to bring that clearer authority to my work with groups in the future.

This thesis identifies the difficulties of working with climate-related epistemological challenges and uncertainty for the study's participants: not knowing or not being able to apprehend, and the epistemophilic aggression and perverse dynamics that may ensue. Working with uncertainty and one's epistemological 'edges' is also a common feature of doctoral research. For me the two combined in a particularly confusing way, so that I often struggled to distinguish the uncertainties of doctoral work (my primary task) from the uncertainties of climate communication (my participants' primary task), and my responses to both sets of uncertainty.

This confusion was intensified by the study design, which gave me the multiple roles of convenor, group facilitator (*de facto* leader) and researcher. The multiple roles brought me in touch at a very personal level with several aspects of the experience of working in the field of climate change communication, and can therefore be said to have helped significantly with the findings. The intensity of the research experience has been greater than any other in my working life. I have learned about my own envy and defences against creativity, and some circumstances that evoke them; and about the significant impacts of the developing climate crisis on people and organisations even in relatively protected countries. This learning has been profoundly important for me.

But the study design placed an excessive amount of responsibility on me as researcher, convenor, facilitator, interviewer, coach, and group member. Supervision is helpful but in any future research activities, I hope to work as part of a team, so

that collective sense-making and mutual support is possible among those with direct access to the data.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has proposed interventions to support climate communicators; made claims for the contribution of this study to the fields of depth climate psychology, systems-psychodynamics, CI, and IPA, with indications of the study's limitations and proposals for how its contributions could be built on; and reflected on the impact of the study on me personally and professionally.

The thesis ends by revisiting briefly the complexity and paradox inherent in climate communications work, suggested in Chapter 1 and illustrated here via an image and quotation from meeting 7 of the CI group.

Figure 6.1



Rebecca's choice of picture for meeting 7 (Luce, 1899)

I just think it's the most fabulous picture, and all this...all this energy, the human energy and the...and the fossil fuel energy that's in there, and the sweat and the...and the ingenuity, you know, that... How did...how did people work out that you could do this? And also, what a massive destruction and ... em... death it's causing... But I love the...I love that sense of the collective and the work, and that's really important as well.
(Rebecca, Meeting 7)

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Chapter 7: Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: systematic literature search on leadership in environmental organisations

Search	Outcome
<i>Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust library catalogue, advanced search and manual scan 1-5 below. The library focuses on systems-psychodynamic material so would be a good place to start in looking for mainstream scholarship</i>	
1. Keyword search on environment* OR climate change AND leaders*:	12 results, of which only one is relevant. The rest use environment or climate change in their organisational senses
2. Keyword search on leader* and NGO	No results
3. Keyword search on leader* and campaign*	No results
4. Keyword search on leader*	211 results
5. A manual scan of 4 above	47 selected
<i>Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust library Discovery tool</i>	
6. Advanced search on leadership.	200k results. No option for searching by organisation type
<i>Google Scholar</i>	
7. Search on leadership in NGOs to identify literature reviews and other overviews	A small number of articles identified and their references scanned for relevant material
<i>Psychinfo</i>	

Search	Outcome
8. Linked AND search using environment, climate change, leaders*	40 results
9. Manual scan of the above	Seven focus on leadership of climate change, or more broadly sustainability and CSR leadership, in mainstream industry or the corporate world
10. Linked search on leaders* AND climate change	115 results
11. Manual scan of the above	Two additions to the list of sources on leadership of climate change, or more broadly sustainability and CSR leadership, in mainstream industry or the corporate world
12. Following up references in list of sources to try and reach saturation	Authors who have been influential conceptually

7.2 Appendix 2: recruitment and consent material

7.2.1 Sampling criteria

The first key criterion for joining the group was being in a suitable role in a suitable organisation. No other aspects of representativeness were included (e.g. gender, race, class). Because joining a CI group is a significant commitment, a second key criterion for participation was an informed willingness. Participants would need to be curious and open to learning and to being changed by the learning, and prepared to put in the time to attend the meetings and to do some exploration, experimentation and thinking in between the meetings. They would need to be clear that they were taking part in a research project and not (consciously, at least) expect instant answers.

In terms of the research strategy, ideally a range of organisations would be involved so that participants could explore differences and similarities in organisational culture. To enable thinking about organisational dynamics, those participating would need to be a member of an organisation, however loose (i.e. they should not be individual campaigners or consultants).

The research strategy involves using leadership as a lens through which to explore organisational dynamics. 'Leadership' in this context can include any kind of leadership, but it was decided that specifying formal leadership roles would ensure that all participants would be exercising leadership routinely as part of their day-to-day work.

The upper limit for numbers in the CI group was set at nine. This was because a small group would be necessary within the time available: practically speaking the activities planned for the meetings would not work with a larger group unless

the meetings ran for more than the planned two hours, and members of a large group would not easily be able to build trust and get to know each other in the timescale available.

7.2.2 Identifying organisations and roles for invitation

During the two years before the fieldwork began I kept a rolling, expanding list of organisations that engage the public on climate change in the UK, and held informal conversations with people in different organisations to expand contacts and ideas. Following this process I identified the following roles/organisations to guide the recruitment:

- Leaders in small national climate change organisations
- Heads or deputy heads of public-facing climate change units in national and international campaigning organisations
- Chairs of community low-carbon groups
- Managers in government and quasi-government bodies, or local authority energy-reduction teams
- Principal investigators or translational staff in university climate change research/public engagement groups
- Chairs and office-holders in looser alliances and coalitions campaigning on climate change

Participation by those with whom I had an existing close working or personal relationship was avoided. But the field of climate communication is a small one, and avoiding everyone I already knew would skew the membership of the group. This dilemma is a familiar one in CI. Existing relationships between the

researcher and group members are common and the researcher is required to work with the dynamics this creates.

7.2.3 Invitations and interviews

In summer 2018 the project was advertised using the channels given below:

- My LinkedIn and Twitter connections (a total of 3,000 people plus members of LinkedIn groups and Twitter retweets) and my professional website (number of visits unknown)
- The Climate Psychology Alliance Google discussion group (200 members) and its annual members' day (60 attendees)
- Fellow-students' networks
- A leadership programme which I co-directed for people in the voluntary sector
- Direct emails to people I knew who had contacts in the target groups

Following the advertisements, I held phone or face-to-face conversations with almost everyone who expressed interest, a total of eleven people. (The exception was an individual based outside the UK who would not have been able to travel to meetings.) The purpose of these conversations was to clarify what participation would involve, to establish that the individual met the criteria, and to enable them to decide whether they would like to proceed. Once ethics clearance had been received, I confirmed the invitation to join the group to these people. Further discussions were held with individuals if they had questions or were uncertain, or if I felt they had said yes without fully understanding what was being offered. In November 2018 all eleven invitees were asked to confirm their intentions, provided with the formal project description and consent forms, and

invited to a taster session at which they could raise any last questions, meet the others interested in the group and make their decisions. Five of the eleven did not take the invitation further, leaving a group of six plus myself.

7.2.4 Participant information sheet (incorporates text from earlier fliers)

Are you in a leadership role within an organisation or network that engages with the public on climate change?

Might you be interested in joining a co-operative inquiry group to explore leadership in this context?

Consent to participate in a research study

The purpose of this sheet is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

The researcher

Rebecca Nestor
[personal contact details redacted]

Rebecca is Director of Learning for Good Ltd, a leadership development and facilitation consultancy based in Oxford and focusing on charities and education. She is also a part-time doctoral student on the Integrated Professional Doctorate, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust/University of Essex (2016-2020).

The organisation with oversight of this research

The research is being conducted as part of the Integrated Professional Doctorate and is overseen by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, from whose Research Ethics Committee approval has been granted.

What is the project called?

‘The experience of leaders in organisations or networks that engage with the public on climate change’

What does the project involve?

This project involves a co-operative inquiry group to explore leadership in organisations that engage with the public on climate change. The aim is to improve the participants’ and researcher’s understandings of what characterises leadership in

organisations of this kind.

What kinds of people will be in the group?

The group will consist of 6-8 people in leadership roles, from different organisations, meeting regularly for about two hours at a time, probably six times over a nine-month period. Members might be in an NGO, a community low-carbon group, a government or quasi-government agency, a campaigning or public engagement charity or coalition, or an academic climate science department with a public engagement strand to its work.

You will need to be interested in exploring your own leadership, open to reaching new understandings, willing to share your experiences with others in a setting of mutual trust and confidentiality, and able to put the time into taking part between January and September 2019.

What will the group aim to do?

The group's task will be to explore a collective question – which will be determined through dialogue but which will be in the general area of members' experiences of their organisations and of leadership. The purpose is to reach a better understanding of the experience of leadership in organisations where engaging with the public on climate change is part of the work. We would negotiate the specifics of the focus between us at the first meeting of the group (which is why we call it a 'co-operative inquiry group').

How will the group approach its task?

Again, we will negotiate the specific activities between us at our first meeting. I envisage that we will use creative methods – such as using drawings or photos – to explore the question, as well as working together to share experiences and offer mutual support with leadership challenges. We may use some of the experiences of the group in its meetings to help with this better understanding, and members will also be invited to keep the question 'alive' in between meetings, for example by keeping a journal.

What will the group be like?

I hope that the group will be a useful, enjoyable, supportive experience for its members as well as contributing to new knowledge. The idea is that we learn about leadership together. It might sometimes be difficult, and there might sometimes be conflict. We would use those less positive experiences as well as the positive ones to help develop our understanding.

How much time would participation take?

The meetings themselves will take about two hours. In addition, you will need to do perhaps an hour's reflection or exploration in between the meetings, and allow time to travel to and from the meetings (which will probably take place in central London).

Will any money change hands?

Participants in the group will not be asked to make any payment for the benefits of taking part in the group; nor will they receive any payment. If travel costs present a barrier to participation, please speak to the researcher who may be able to help with sources of funding for travel grants or subsidies.

Are there any risks involved in taking part? Might I find the process uncomfortable or distressing?

There are no risks involved beyond those incurred in taking time out of your usual working day in order to travel to and take part in the meetings.

The conceptual framework will be a systems-psychodynamic one: psychoanalytically informed, with an interest in how groups and organisations may be influenced by unconscious processes. We will also be exploring leadership by looking at our own experiences of being leaders. Because of this, participation may sometimes involve looking critically at our own behaviour and its impact on others, and you may on occasion find this uncomfortable.

The researcher will be available to discuss, confidentially and privately, any feelings you may be having during the life of the group, and up to two years after it concludes. She is not a qualified counsellor. Alternatively, if for any reason you do not wish to discuss your feelings with the researcher, or if she herself feels it would not be appropriate, she can put you in touch with Maggie Turp, who is a psychotherapist specialising in working with people around environmental and climate change issues.

Will my identity and participation in the group be kept confidentially?

The researcher will take some notes of the meetings and will also take photographs of any work we do together (e.g. on flipcharts or post-it notes). She will also make audio recordings of two of the meetings and transcribe the recordings. These materials will be stored in a password-protected drive within the cloud storage system Dropbox, which itself is protected by username and password and only accessible by the researcher.

The researcher will create a reflective note on the key themes she believes to be arising in the group's work, and will share this with the group towards the end of the process for discussion and further input from the group. This note will be stored with the other confidential materials in the same Dropbox folder.

All these materials will be stored in the confidential folder for up to ten years after the group has finished meeting, and will be destroyed permanently after that time. They will be kept in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection Policy and the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation.

In writing up the group's work for the purposes of the Professional Doctorate, the researcher will aim to ensure that participants' organisational and personal identities are disguised. She will do this by creating 'alternate identities' for each participant and will provide drafts of these alternate identities for approval by individual participants. However, as the group is small and the field of public engagement in climate change is also small, complete anonymity may not be possible. Participants should be aware that the confidentiality of the information they provide is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality (e.g. the data may be subject to a subpoena or a freedom of information request).

Do I have to take part? Do I have to continue once I have started?

You are not obliged to take part in this study, and are free to withdraw at any time.

Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. However if you withdraw after the group's meetings have started or after the end of the group, it may not be possible to remove from the records the data representing your participation in the group.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the researcher or any other aspect of this research project, you should contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk).

7.3 Appendix 3: information provided before the first meeting

Climate change leadership inquiry group: some preparation and background to help us start our work

This note describes the preparation I'm inviting us all to do for our first meeting; provides location, timing and agenda for the first meeting; and offers some of my thinking about how the group will go about its task.

Preparation for the first meeting

Please could you prepare for our first meeting by thinking about your motivations for taking part in the group, and preparing to share these with the rest of the group? You may like to consider any or all of the following questions:

- What is the purpose of my leadership in relation to the organisation's task and its people?
- What beliefs about leadership are important to me?
- What do I find enjoyable or motivating about leadership?
- What do I find difficult or painful about leadership?
- What about leadership do I particularly want to understand better, and/or improve, during my membership of this group?
- What strengths do I bring to the group?
- What do I hope others will offer me?

Practical details of the first meeting

Monday 14 January 2019, 15.00 – 17.00. Seminar Room 4, Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, 120 Belsize Lane, London NW3 5BA. Swiss Cottage and Finchley Road tube stations are the nearest.

Seminar Room 4 is on the ground floor: turn left in front of reception and walk to the end of the corridor, then follow the signs to SR4. I will text everyone if there are any last-minute changes to the room allocation. This does happen, so please make sure I have your mobile number if you haven't already provided it.

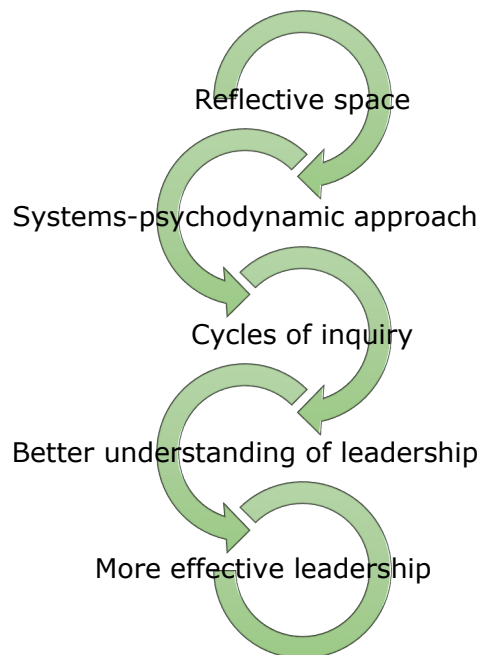
Agenda for the first meeting

1. Signing consent forms
2. Sharing something about ourselves and our motivations for joining the group
3. Identifying the overarching research question, and individuals' personal research questions within the overarching question
4. Agreeing ways of working – ground rules, mutual commitments
5. Agreeing practical arrangements: communication, hosting, scheduling

Some of my thinking about the group

I want the group to be a reflective, supportive space: a crucial basis for enabling us all to think well and thereby reach a better understanding of leadership in the context of climate change. (Other factors include the systems-psychodynamic approach and the use of cycles of inquiry, about which I say more below.) This better

understanding may in turn help us to exercise our leadership more effectively, as illustrated in the visual overleaf.



What do I mean by systems-psychodynamic?

This is an approach that draws on the ‘Tavistock tradition’ of thinking about organisations: psychoanalytically informed, with an interest in how groups and organisations may be influenced by unconscious processes. Evidence of these influences might be found not just in the way people behave, but also in how the work is organised and what leaders are called on to do.

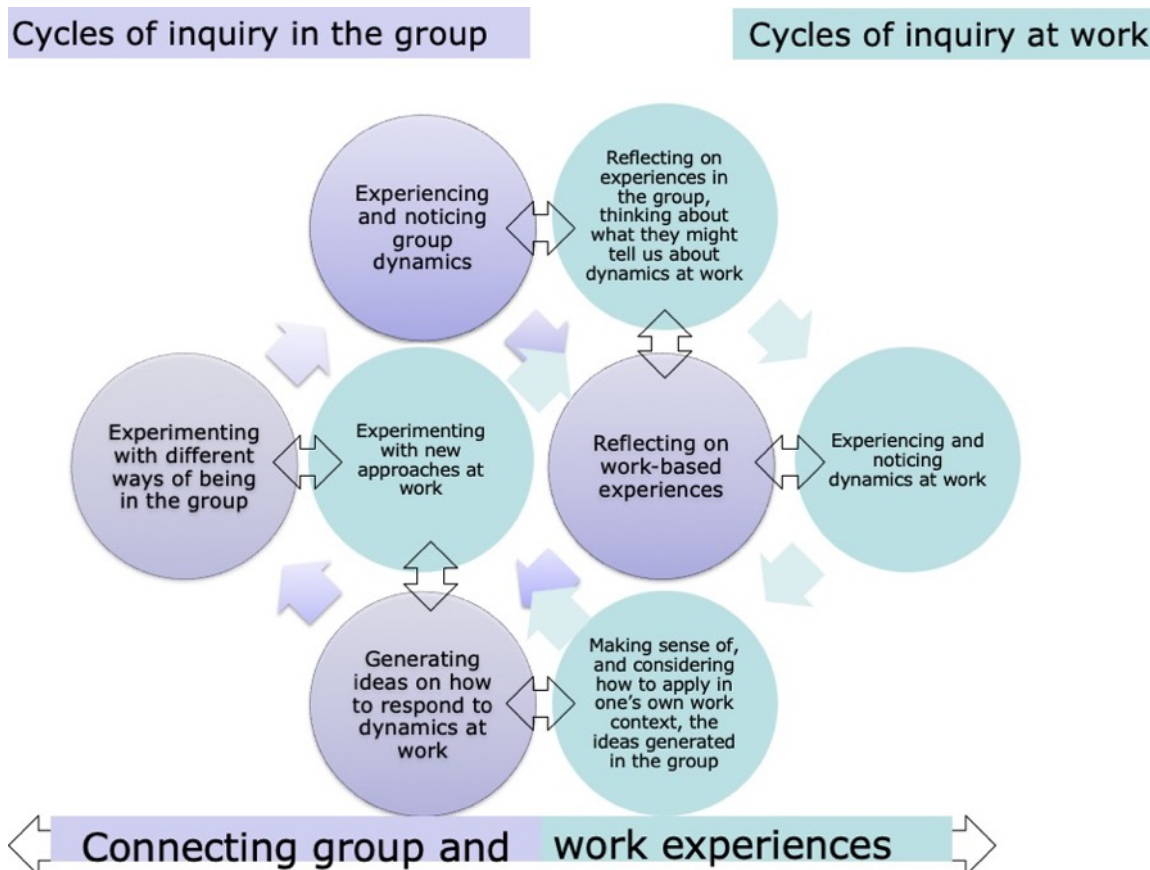
In this tradition the focus of interest is the group/organisation, not the individual – except insofar as individual behaviour may reflect unconscious processes in the group. Within this focus I will encourage us all to treat our own meetings as sources of evidence for our work. For example, to the extent that my role in the group is a leadership role, I will try to be open to discussion about my leadership and thereby make it available to us for thinking about leadership more widely.

There is a good introductory description of systems-psychodynamics on the Tavistock Consulting website at <https://tavistockconsulting.co.uk/approach-systems-psychodynamic-thinking/> and if you are interested in further reading, please let me know.

What do I mean by cycles of inquiry?

This approach comes from action research, and by it I mean that we follow a process of action and reflection in our meetings and in our work, treating our meetings and our work settings as equal parts of the process of thinking and trying out ideas.

I've tried to represent how I imagine the process will work in the visual overleaf – representing cycles of inquiry in the group (purple), at work (blue), and between the two (the double-headed arrows).



Provisional outline of the group's activities

NB – this outline is based on six meetings of two hours each. We may want to discuss whether six is enough, or whether the meetings should be longer than two hours. I could, if the group wishes, continue meeting until the end of 2019.

Meeting	In the meeting	After the meeting
One	Everyone has time to talk about their experience of leadership, and we use this to agree the overall research question and individual areas of interest We map out ways of working and practical arrangements, including hosting and scheduling	Each member sends Rebecca a photo representing an aspect of their organisation that interests them Members reflect on the first meeting using journals
Two	Social photo matrix with photos representing experiences of participants' organisations	Members reflect on their experience of leadership and prepare to bring an issue,

Meeting	In the meeting	After the meeting
		<p>problem or challenge for exploration to one of the next two meetings</p> <p>Journals</p>
Three	Action learning approaches to leadership challenges	Experimentation with the ideas generated in the meeting; journals
Four	Action learning approaches to leadership challenges	<p>Experimentation with the ideas generated in the meeting</p> <p>Each member sends Rebecca a photo representing an aspect of their leadership that interests them</p> <p>Journals</p>
Five	Social photo matrix with photos representing participants' leadership roles or activity	Members (including Rebecca) write up thoughts and insights what they have learned about their leadership, and circulate to the group
Six	Unstructured discussion of thoughts about leadership, including the written materials	Rebecca will conduct one-to-one conversations with group members to reflect on the experience

7.4 Annexe 4: confirmed participants November 2018

Name	Description	Organisation
Arthur	[redacted]	[redacted]
Fred	[redacted]	[redacted]
Lesley	[redacted]	[redacted]
Louisa	[redacted]	[redacted]
Rachel	[redacted]	[redacted]
Tim	[redacted]	[redacted]

7.5 Appendix 5: data list

1. Notes, correspondence and reflections on recruitment process and taster session
2. Correspondence, notes, dream, reflections and materials from meeting 1 (January 2019)
3. Correspondence, notes, dream and reflections, recording and transcript from meeting 2 (February 2019), photos and summary of responses to photos, email and Google Doc exchanges afterwards including two departures (Fred and Rachel)
4. Correspondence, transcripts, notes and reflections from 1-1 with Tim, April 2019
5. Correspondence, transcripts, notes and reflections from 1-1 with Arthur, April 2019
6. Correspondence, transcripts, notes and reflections from 1-1 with Lesley, April 2019
7. Correspondence, recording, notes, reflections, dream and transcript from meeting 3 (April 2019)
8. Correspondence, recording, notes, reflections, dream and transcript from meeting 4, May 2019
9. Proposed themes before meeting 5, correspondence, notes, reflections from meeting 5, July 2019
10. Notes of meeting with Louisa following meeting 5
11. Correspondence, recording, notes, reflections and transcript of meeting with Tim, August 2019
12. Correspondence, recording, notes, reflections and transcript of meeting 6, September 2019
13. Correspondence, notes and reflections of 'focus finding' meeting with Louisa, September 2019
14. Correspondence, recording, notes, reflections and transcript of coaching session with Lesley, October 2019
15. Correspondence, recording, notes, reflections and transcript of coaching session with Louisa, November 2019
16. Correspondence, recording, notes, reflections and transcript of coaching session with Arthur, November 2019
17. Transcript of meeting 7, November 2019

7.6 Appendix 6: samples of data analysis using tabular format and colour-coding

7.6.1 The beginning of Meeting 3 (April 2019)

[redacted]

7.6.2 Meeting 3 (April 2019), lines 20-30

[redacted]

7.6.3 Meeting 4 (May 2019), line 81

[redacted]

7.6.4 Meeting 4 (May 2019), lines 182-191

[redacted]

7.6.5 Meeting 6 (September 2019), line 67

[redacted]

7.6.6 Meeting 7, lines 158-170

[redacted]

7.7 Appendix 7: dreams

Date	Dream (as recorded on waking)	Reflections arising from therapy	Responses from focus group	The dream as data
8 November 2018	The dream last night: wearing the new blue and orange skirt that I haven't actually worn in waking life because it's too tailored, doing a poo in it, holding onto the poo through the skirt, looking for a toilet in a building like St Katharine's or perhaps the Tavi. Finding a toilet after a while and it's a public one, a bit tatty. Looking at the poo and feeling it being sticky. Kind of not too terrible, something about it being distinct from me.	Early memories of toilet training and sibling rivalry. Getting in touch with shitty feelings now. Feeling the reality. My ageing tatty body.	Not clearing up after the poo. Not making yourself clean again. Poo on skirt – staying with the waste, as part of oneself, not getting rid of parts of the self Ruining something beautiful Clothes as covering up something Poo Loo Pulo = jump in Portuguese Poo and aggression – association with a child smearing in bedroom communicating that the world is shit Archers episode: someone giving birth in the back of a car, messy and shitty – embarrassment.	Looking for a place in the institution – of the co-operative inquiry group, and of the institution of the Tavistock – and carrying shame, shittiness and aggression with me.
26 January 2019	Noted at the time as 'Climate café dream' People sitting separately all over the café and not talking (note this is common for my anxiety dreams) Forgot that [friend] Judith S wanted to join by Zoom and when she reminded me I spent a long time panickedly looking for a link to send her. Couldn't get the staff to organise cake. Asked for big jugs of standard tea and coffee. [Other friends] Wendy and Sharon came.	The parts of the self that I cannot bring together, that I forget. Exhaustion of keeping them all apart and also exhaustion of trying to bring them together. The part of me that is excluded altogether. Failure of nourishment.	Also concerned with evacuating yourself Dream of zoom – fear of being exposed Risk, danger, paranoia Strongest reaction was to the second dream, the café, the sense that this should be a place of comfort, union, conversation, but it has become uncanny, homely but not homely, threatening in some way leaving you depleted.	The group will not be brought together. There are parts of the group that must be kept separate. We are not cared for or looked after. Our private activities are under scrutiny.

Date	Dream (as recorded on waking)	Reflections arising from therapy	Responses from focus group	The dream as data
	<p>Went to the loo but was warned I would be filmed.</p> <p>The feeling of the dream – exhausted and drained and frightened.</p>		<p>Judith is the name of my supervisor.</p>	
<p>26 February 2019</p>	<p>I'm at a party where there are clothes to try on and buy if you want to. I have a collection of small change in careful order (all the 10p pieces together and so on). I try on what I think is a dress and jacket but when I have it on it turns out that it is it a large cape, warm and bulky. It's hard to get it in position, I watch in the mirror and pull the sleeves down. It's like an academic gown but made of something felted.</p> <p>Then I begin to hear shouting and argument from the next room. There are a few of us in this room. I say, oh it's starting. I can't now remember what I mean by this but I think it is something to do with the money. People are angry about the money.</p> <p>Then I think I'm outside with somebody, a man. I think we're</p>	<p>Envy, money and aspiration in relation to therapy and the doctorate.</p>	<p>Sense of poor hero 10p for a cape, then the cape doesn't work</p> <p>Hero cape</p> <p>Trying on academic identity.</p> <p>Anger about money</p> <p>Cheap clothes – a sense of deprivation and being under-privileged but actually contain strong potency (even omnipotence)</p> <p>Cloak of climate change hard to wear – where's the comfort in taking on the mantle.</p>	<p>There is anger in the group but it has to be kept out, what is in here has to be kept in order. We feel deprived, we are losing. We want to be heroes but it's hard to get into position.</p>

Date	Dream (as recorded on waking)	Reflections arising from therapy	Responses from focus group	The dream as data
	lost. We're on a big road. We're going to lose our jobs.			
8 April 2019	<p>I'm by the water's edge and there is a large baby bird on a boat or jetty across the water from me, perhaps twenty yards from where I'm standing. It is about the size of an owl or puffin, but fluffy, with black and white wavy stripes.</p> <p>The bird jumps into the water and plummets downwards. It struggles back up to the surface but then cannot get out of the water. It's under the water quite close to me, wriggling, and I look at it, trying to pluck up the courage to dive in and rescue it. I am frightened of the cold of the water but also of drowning. I imagine jumping in but then I realise I don't have the courage. I am going to leave it to drown. The bird dives down again. The rest of the dream is faint but I think the bird does get rescued or rescues itself.</p>	<p>The small vulnerable part of me is at risk. It is trying to explore and get into the flow (of the water), but this is too much. I do not think I can care for this part of myself.</p>	<p>Water = power. No control. Also connected to not knowing what is underneath (= unconscious) but it feels aggressive and harmful. Failed hero, the steps needed to save the bird just couldn't be taken.</p> <p>Can't quite bring yourself to save the little bird. You leave it to save itself or someone else to save it.</p> <p>The bird is the paper. Leaving it to die as an expression of own aggression? Association of own feelings about sometimes not wanting to know what I know about the unconscious. To not see is freeing. Ignorance is bliss? Bird – unbearable sense of guilt – bearing witness of annihilation, but realising it will survive without me.</p> <p>Lack of courage but still hope. Extreme stress of going through the dreams – 'it is not necessary to do it so stressfully' – very fast and pressurised – urgency re climate change crisis. More and more – will it ever end?</p>	<p>Vulnerability, caring and responsibility, failure to care. The need for courage in leadership. Aggression is turned into neglect. Guilt and shame.</p>

Date	Dream (as recorded on waking)	Reflections arising from therapy	Responses from focus group	The dream as data
16 April 2019	<p>I'm holding a very small child, maybe two or three years old. It is very beautiful, very delicate, tiny little feet. It's bright and cheerful and intelligent but it is terribly burnt, its head in particular. It is sitting on my right arm. I feel an almost overwhelming grief. Someone comes along and talks to me. She or he says: "Will he be able to have children?" The question is addressed to me, not to the child: a kind of "does he take sugar?" question. The child and I look at each other, meaning "what an idiot". There is also terrible pain in this moment. I put the child down and it patters off on its beautiful little feet. In a second scene I am in a lecture theatre and the child is sitting opposite me surrounded by adults who are contributing to the conference. The child is also contributing: he or she is talking like an adult but there is the delight and energy that feels like a child.</p> <p>Full of strong emotion</p>	<p>This dream's central meaning for me is of my own use of a performative, attractive intelligence to defend against the awful pain and grief of those parts of me that have been 'burnt', damaged, lost, and the fear about whether I have lost generative capacity as a result of the damage.</p> <p>The dream took place just after the fire at Notre Dame cathedral and I think it also carries a sense that a part of me has been neglected and allowed to become damaged (as the fire may have started as a result of neglect)</p>	<p>There is hope, it's fragile represented by the burnt child, but speaks to the exhaustion of the grownups.</p> <p>Rendered speechless by this dream.</p> <p>This dream puts me in mind of the famous Vietnam war photo which shocked the world to the reality of what was going on, but denied.</p> <p>Grief of child = loss of future.</p> <p>Song lyrics came into my head, something like: we all want the children to save us, but we aren't giving them enough role models to learn how to do so.</p> <p>Feel myself wanting to escape from dream.</p> <p>The child might be the academic you.</p> <p>Greta T. Child triggering more awareness but it also takes the power away as she can be diminished for being just a child (or for having ASD).</p> <p>Child is potent – is not a child – it is a part of the self or an idea that is at a fragile stage but very powerful, it can survive the attacks.</p> <p>Sugar as a source of sweetness, but through which so much slavery was involved.</p> <p>Powerlessness – childlike state – more social awareness has come from a child. Aggression around this.</p>	<p>Obvious links between the damage of the child and the damage done to the planet and future generations, who may not be able to reproduce due to our idiocy. But also, the child in the dream could represent the group: the group 'know' that they are a group but fear to acknowledge it – the group is both wanted and destroyed simultaneously. The child could also represent creativity, being in touch with feeling, and emerging from denial: the wish to come out of denial and be creative, and the simultaneous wish not to.</p>

Date	Dream (as recorded on waking)	Reflections arising from therapy	Responses from focus group	The dream as data
			Cognitively disabled – relating to emotion. Got away from the sense there's something there. Vietnam pic of burning child – could no longer deny.	
5 May 2019	<p>Long and rather boring dream about being at a big gathering: XR or Climate Psychology Alliance or something like it, lots of hippy-like people who seemed to have knowledge I don't have, and I felt confused about my role and what to do.</p> <p>There was another strand to it. In the dream I was also part of a small family group. I had some responsibility and was anxious about this. Someone was lost. Later in the dream this came back into focus and it was clear that it was the father who was lost. He was invisible and it wasn't possible to find him. Then he was still invisible but I had found him. He was giant-sized, he picked me up with his invisible hands and I was swept into the air and held. I was not frightened by this, it felt as if I had some new knowledge.</p>	<p>The loss and absence of my father; the knowledge that he is there holding me even though invisible. The denied aggression towards him, the need for him to be invisible and denigrated.</p>	<p>Hippy: link to not having a grasp on reality (high). Hippies leading the climate revolution but undermined here in some way, tone of irritation they knew more. Are they in the way?</p> <p>Invisibility of the ways in which we impact climate (i.e. we can't see our carbon footprint). What was the profession of your father?</p> <p>Is the solution to this invisible right now, there is potential but impossible to hold.</p> <p>Inter-generational dynamics – father is lost, losing its position in the hierarchy, but he is still omnipotent.</p> <p>Disintegration.</p> <p>The invisible father which we hope can rescue us.</p> <p>Question about omnipotence and whether the findings of your research save us?</p> <p>Omnipotence re new knowledge.</p> <p>Association to Ishiguro Buried Giant – old couple go on a journey to find a son.</p>	<p>Knowledge about a higher consciousness has to be denigrated. We cannot know what is coming, it is invisible. We have lost the father-figures in the group.</p>

7.8 Appendix 8: detail of individual cases

[redacted]

7.9 Appendix 9: table indicating presence of superordinate themes

Super-ordinate themes	Arthur	Lesley	Louisa	Tim	Group	Present in over half sample (individuals)⁴?
Theme 1: exclusion, displacement and loneliness, and guilt about excluding and being excluded; anxiety about power	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Theme 2: shame and fear – making a mess with food and bodily functions, and transgression. A strong wish to escape; a sense of a strong pressure trying to break through	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Theme 3: sexualised excitement and threat, including abuse of power, inappropriate relationships and creativity resisted; the pain, threat, overwhelm and hope associated with childbirth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Theme 4: splitting, tensions and contradiction, linked with feelings of inauthenticity: urgency vs relationality and patience; positivity and energy vs despair and tiredness	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

⁴ Rebecca is not included in this analysis because of the risk of double-counting, since her subjectivity also informs the group analysis

Super-ordinate themes	Arthur	Lesley	Louisa	Tim	Group	Present in over half sample (individuals)⁴?
Theme 5: a sense of being fragile, on the edge, or in a dangerous position nearing a tipping point or approaching collapse; unsure what can be trusted, what is known and what is not known	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Theme 6: authority, status, the establishment	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes
Theme 7: loss and grief, mourning	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes

7.10 Appendix 10: slides showing the process adopted for the social photo matrix

Social photo matrix

Task: 'take any number of photographs representing an element of your personal and emotional experience of your work. Select a single image from these, and email it to me before we meet'

Concept and outline

- Aim is to experience, through collective viewing, the hidden meaning of what in our work usually remains unseen, unnoticed, unthought
- These photographs are not mere replicas of 'reality', but means for opening up the transitional space between the known and the not-yet-thought
- We will look at each photo in turn. We'll free-associate to the photo and amplify it. The person who took the photo sits quietly, and responds at the end
- When the matrix is over, we will have a short break and then convene for the reflection session, to focus on the meaning of the photographs in relation to the theme of our personal and emotional experience of our work
- I am both host and member of the matrix