

# ‘Psychological Contract and Intentional Communities’

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## **Declaration**

I certify that this dissertation, submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Management: Community and Voluntary Services, All Hallows College, is entirely my own work, has not been taken from the work of others, and has not been submitted in any other university. The work of others, to an extent, has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my own work.

Student

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Dublin

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## **Abstract**

### **‘Psychological Contract and Intentional Community’ by Brigitta O’Connor**

This dissertation examines initial values and expectations of members of intentional communities and their changing needs and values over a period of time (average 30 years). The focus is on communicating and negotiating these changing needs and values through the psychological contract, bearing in mind the motivation that has led to the formation of intentional communities and the motivation for an individual to join such a community and continue to be a member of same. The research was based on academic research and in-depth interviews on the theme. The research covers intentional communities involved in the social sector. Analysing the data leads to the conclusion that members perceive a need for formulating their personal and community’s values to deal with changes and that the psychological contract would be a suitable ‘tool’ to negotiate and clarify changing needs and values between the community and its members. Changes are brought about due to ageing members as well as through the effect of increased governance on the community by government bodies, which lead to a loss of the community’s autonomy. Raising awareness of the psychological contract can alleviate the ambiguity of expectations and obligations between community and members in times of internal and external changes.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This research was inspired by my own personal experiences and the experiences of people I have shared life with in intentional communities since 1982. At that time, many young people like me, who had grown up just at the end of the hippy era, were idealistic and looked for a way of life that would allow us to search for meaning in life and at the same time contribute to a social and spiritual impulse for the greater good. I joined Camphill Community Glencraig, near Belfast, a community with and for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. When I joined it was set up like a village of 200 people living in a community made up of 16 households, including age groups from baby to a 93-year-old Dutch lady; people from different countries and with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. I met many of Camphill's founder members, who were inspirational role models for us. The community was vibrant, encompassing all aspects of life – social, spiritual and economic. We worked very hard and experienced community as a place where we could achieve more together than we could individually. We were needed, we could take on responsibility, work out of personal initiative within a group of other young volunteers, and then move into positions such as house parents, teachers and work masters, where we developed professional skills. Many people left in their late 20s to train professionally, have families or live a more private way of life; I thought little about the future or pensions. When my Dad raised the subject, with parental concern, I reassured him that I was going to be looked after, and anyway, why would I need money if I had 'human capital': a community to look after me? Now in 2013 I am still a member of a small Camphill community near Kilkenny. I have recently moved into a house (belonging to the community) with my family outside the community boundaries, I am involved with the community on a daily basis and I enjoy a more private family life. How did I get from then to now? Did I give up on my ideal of community living? And for all the others who are and were community members with me throughout all these years, how did they experience their journey, how did they negotiate whether or how to stay or leave the community?

A good start for research in the voluntary sector is Handy's *Understanding Voluntary Organisations* (1990), in which he looks at what motivates people, and asks how are we ourselves motivated? He describes the motivating factors as "things that get us excited,

energetic and enthusiastic” (p. 27) and links them to the psychological contract as follows:

Unless we know what it is that releases all the ‘E’ forces in an individual (where ‘E’ stands for excitement, energy, enthusiasm and effort) we cannot know how to create an environment where that person will work at his or her best and we cannot know how to reward them suitably for their contribution. Should it be money, or more money, or is the cause enough? Perhaps responsibility is what they want or maybe more autonomy. It is this balance of energy contributed and expectations met that makes up what is called the psychological contract .... Motivation happens when the contract is balanced. When it is unbalanced, one side or the other feels cheated. (ibid.)

This led me to look at the psychological contract in intentional communities from the point of view of a member of an intentional community. I interviewed members from L’Arche, Camphill and Sisters of Mercy for this minor dissertation as I wanted to find out how they aligned or negotiated their personal needs and expectations, over a long period of time (minimum 10 years) with the community. Most of the community members I interviewed have spent 30 years and more in community, they have shared the larger part of their adult life with other community members, and their personal development was heavily influenced by the community and its culture. The community they joined 30 years ago has also undergone changes during that time. I would like to briefly touch on community development as it gives a brief background to processes that interrelate with members’ lived experiences.

### **1.1 Stages of Community Life**

The communities have experienced changes during the last 30 years. Plant (2008) describes trends of change in communities being caused by the interplay of three inseparable factors working at the same time: change in society, change in community members and changes brought about by state regulation.

Kanter (1972) researched American communities and found that over time most communities moved their emphasis from ‘community building’ to becoming an organisation that produced, traded and provided services. She concludes her work by saying that all communities have to operate in a changing environment and as they do so they become less ideological and more pragmatic; they become less of a community and more of an organisation. Yet through this process they ensure survival (as quoted in Plant 2008, p. 75).

Another model for religious community development described by O'Shea (2003) proposes five phases of growth and decline in the live cycle of a religious community: foundation, expansion, breakdown, succeeded by a period of transitioning during which the community could die out, survive at a minimum level or enter a new phase of growth. The small percentage that manage to renew themselves based their success on "transforming qualities of an inward religious experience rather than an attempt of the community to 'organise itself out of trouble' by introducing organisational change" (cited in Plant 2008, p. 75).

I am giving a brief outline of the life of the individual and community to indicate the complexity of the relationship between member and community and show some of the differences between the traditional volunteering model and that of a member of intentional communities, also called career volunteer, or long-term volunteer.

In Chapter 2 I will look at the literature that highlights the impulses behind intentional communities and the expectations that members have of the community, followed by an outline of the psychological contract and the breach thereof, specifically for older people.

Chapter 3 will explain the methodology which was used in the research to collect and analyse the data, as well as sharing my personal view on social interaction.

In Chapter 4 I will present my data and findings in conjunction with the literature review from Chapter 2.

Chapter 5 will conclude the discussion from the previous chapter and indicate further areas to be explored.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Following my outline in Chapter 1 on my theme I have chosen literature that will give background information and insight into intentional communities and their functioning. As this is an inductive research, not following a definite theory, I decided to include a large section on psychological contracts and the breach of same, as it seemed the closest ‘tool’ to gain a clearer understanding of forming and negotiating an unwritten contract. Acceptance to a community is mostly not by formal contract, but by mutual agreement, often after a trial period, during which the individual and organisation feel satisfied that both are able to establish an understanding to act in a mutually supportive way to each other. Similar agreements not based on a formal written contract are reached in employment situations and have been termed psychological contracts. Considering the age of my interview participants, I thought it relevant to pay some attention to the influence of age on negotiations within the psychological contract.

### **2.2 What is an Intentional Community?**

#### ***2.2.1 Background***

At all times throughout history people have chosen to live in communities that reflect their beliefs and answer their needs, as an alternative to what society at the time had to offer or could not offer. Most of these communities had an average life span of less than 25 years; some have survived a hundred and more years, such as religious monasteries. Many communities were short lived, but nevertheless they reflected social, economic and spiritual movements of society in their time. The length of the existence of a communal society is not an issue of success, as success is self-defining. A community that existed may have achieved its goals in 10 years, hence was successful. For some communities that have existed over a longer period of time persistence and growth become an end in themselves, albeit not the only one (Schenker 1986).

### **2.3 Community and Society**

We are born into family, a place where we are formed by people and society around us, naturally grown communities. Allen Butcher (1994) describes different communities, where people live in close proximity by chance, like neighbourhoods or villages, and may or may not have actively chosen to be part of agreements and community actions in

their local community, also called a circumstantial community. A circumstantial community may commonly agree to call itself intentional, to follow common agreements and systems of governance, which may in some ways, differ from society at large, thus membership is not accidental. Schenker (1986, p. 7) states, “Intentional Communities are a human construct for a specific purpose, an ideological creation.”

For the purpose of this assignment I focus on intentional communities in the social care sector. Intentional communities, also sometimes referred to as communal societies, throughout history have been in the continuous process of negotiating compromises with a wide range of bodies and agencies that claim to have some degree of authority over their activities (Plant 2003).

Intentional communities providing care are often largely sponsored by their local authorities and therefore are in a position of dependency towards their funder. Research in the UK has shown that changing government policies have eroded third-sector trust. Trust which formerly underpinned varied relationships between public and third-sector agencies has been widely displaced by formalised arrangements which control and manage meanings, reshaping and normalising an asymmetry of relationships between state and third sector (Milbourne and Cushman 2012). Schenker (1986) describes the communities’ way of managing the discrepancies; discrete, unique and non-conformist as communal societies may be, they too need to survive and do all the things that any society is required to do if it is to function efficiently.

#### **2.4 What Defines Intentional Communities?**

Intentional communities can be defined as a group of people who have chosen to live together with a common purpose, working co-operatively to create a lifestyle that reflects their shared core values. The people may live together on a piece of rural land, in a suburban home or in an urban neighbourhood and they may share a single residence or live in a cluster of dwellings. Internal and external governance rules are central to the communities. Intentional communities are characterised by rigid rules governing members’ lives. For some communities the rules stem from decades or centuries of tradition, for others from constant deliberations and collective introspection and for yet others from claims regarding divine intervention (Kozeny 1961, p. 1).

A more recent statement, not academically proven, but telling:

One of the few things that can be said about most intentional communities across the board is that they are built on a stronger sense of community than is common in a conventional setting. People know each other better, work and/or play together, and in most cases share some values, goals, or beliefs. There are real advantages to living in a place of this kind for people who are open to being an integral part of their communities. (Reid 1999, n.p.)

## **2.5 How Do They Come About?**

To understand the motivation to form and maintain such communities gives an understanding of its functioning and the relationship of the individual member to the community:

- Desire to live according to spiritual values
- Desire to reform society
- Desire to promote the psychological growth of the individual by putting him in closer touch with his fellow man
- Possibility of perfection through restructuring social institutions
- Seeking to recreate lost unity between man and god, man and man or between man and himself (Kanter 1972)

I have largely drawn on Schenker's (1986) publication as it gave general information relating to the research topic; other publications dealt with specific communities and their specific values and structures. In his research of intentional communities he found that an intentional community exists, by and large, if the following conditions are met:

- It was founded as a conscious and purposive act, even if the founding members might have existed as an informal group initially, before declaring their 'intentionality'.
- Membership is voluntary and based on a conscious act (even if the member was born into the community).
- The group sees itself separate from and different to its environment and relates as a group to (or withdraws as a group from) its environment

- The community is relatively self-contained – most members can potentially live their entire lives in it (or for the period during which they are members).
- Sharing is part of the community’s ideology.
- The community has collective goals and needs and expects members to work towards their satisfaction.
- The ideology claims that the goals of the community, even if orientated towards the benefit of the individual, can only be obtained in a collective framework.
- Ultimately the community, or people appointed by the community, but not the individual, is the source of authority.
- The general way of life of the community is considered to be inherently good, i.e., is an end in itself over and above its instrumental value.
- The community’s existence has a moral value and purpose which transcends the time span of individual membership (Schenker 1986, pp. 10-11).

The qualities outlined above were drawn up in 1986 and as Schenker himself implies, aspects can not only exist to various degrees, but also in various ways and can be interpreted in different ways.

In my research I could not find an updated list of common qualities that are to be found in intentional communities. But many books and web sites on specific communities will reflect the list above to various degrees and interpreted in different ways.

## **2.6 Individual and Community**

Considering the above outline of what comprises an intentional community, it becomes apparent that the individual member is expected to identify with the communities to a substantial degree and uphold its values and governance structures, in private, family, social and working life. In order to put such a principle into expression it is not so much organisational arrangements that are called for in the first place, but the will to tackle one’s own egotism, for the benefit of one’s fellow members (Luxford 2003). I would question the term ‘egotism’ and rather consider it as a tension between the community’s culture and the individual’s personal need to develop their identity.

An important consideration is that many members of intentional communities join the community in early adulthood (early 20s), when they are about to develop their own identity. Naturally the organisation's identity has a substantial impact on how the individual makes meaning of the world and his environment, feels at home in the world, develops his own identity and is able to control his own life and have a sense of free choice regarding important decisions in life. Having said that, the choice may also be to give the community the responsibility to make decisions on behalf of the individual.

The ability of the individual and community to integrate individual and community needs is the basis for the individual to experience his life in the community as satisfying and fulfilling, which in turn will help him to overcome difficulties and maintain actively involved in fostering the well-being of the community, accepting personal sacrifices. Spirituality in the workplace is now a largely recognised aspect of the work environment that relates to the wish to unite the societal part of our personality (nature of public roles, values, social goals) with the private level, which is more concerned with daily interactions, personal reactions, one's ability to handle situations, and one's attitude to others. There seems to be an increasing awareness of the need for the individual to integrate their work and personal life. Levoy 1998 (cited in McGeachy 2001) says that people need to return to the idea of vocation in life when looking at work. It should be something they want to do or be. This gives greater meaning and purpose to people. Mitroff and Denton (1999) found that the number one thing that gives employees meaning was being able to reach their full potential. The second thing was a good and ethical company and the third thing was interesting work. (These three points cover the main aspects of what the employer looks for in a psychological contract).

Members of intentional communities are not volunteers in the traditional sense. The Department of Social Community and Family Affairs (2000, p. 83) in Ireland gives the following definition for volunteers:

Volunteering can be defined as the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment, except for reimbursement of out of pocket expenses.

Members of intentional communities may or may not receive payment to cover their needs including their family's needs, therefore, according to the above definition they are not volunteers. Many individuals have started off as volunteers and then become members of the organisation. Much of the literature on volunteering is focused on motivation and the degree to which volunteering is an altruistic or self-serving activity. O' Regan (2009, p. 185) arrives at the term 'voluntary actor', a term that combines the notion of freewill and of agency. The dialectical process at the heart of the formation of the voluntary actor requires both the notion of individual agency and a specific institutional environment that shapes the specific expression of this agency (O' Regan, 2009). He has explored the motivations of the voluntary actor in the Irish context and highlighted the following as representing the internalised, subjective, intent of individuals:

- the presence of early significant others in their lives;
- Early reflective experiences and a sense of difference;
- The experience of epiphany;
- The search for work that supports the expression of self;
- The rigorous and ongoing testing of values with experience;
- A willingness to undertake personal responsibility for making change happen;
- An ability to give organisational expression to a values enactment; and
- In their lives regularly reaching and recognising a time to move on. (O'Regan 2008a, p. 8)

He concluded that "for these individuals, voluntary activity is an expression and outcome of an overriding concern with the creation and maintenance of integrity between their personal held values and their action in the world" (ibid., p. 2).

How do members know what the expectations and obligations are and what they will receive in return from the community? Most intentional communities do not have a formal written contract (I did not research eco villages, which declare themselves as intentional communities and are a more recent development in the history of intentional community). There was no literature available to me that covered this particular aspect of the member and intentional community. A lot has been written in recent years on the psychological contract, which is not a written contract and is largely based on observation and relationships. Most of the literature deals with psychological contract in employment. As there are basic expectations towards our physical, emotional and

spiritual well-being in any way of life and where people direct their efforts towards a common purpose, the psychological contract came closest to what I perceive relevant for the process a member of an intentional community and the community are following to establish their relationship in terms of expectations and obligations towards each other.

## **2.7 Definition of Psychological Contract:**

The psychological contract is defined as an individual's beliefs about the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that person and another party (Rousseau 1989). Although the psychological contract was originally defined by Argyris (1960), Levinson (1962) and Schein (1980) to characterise the subjective nature of employment relationships, the present conceptualisation focuses on individuals' beliefs in and interpretation of a promissory contract. Unlike formal or implied contracts, the psychological contract is inherently perceptual, and thus one party's understanding of the contract may not be shared by the other (Robinson 1996). Literature by Fox (1974) illustrates the point that employment relationships are shaped as much by social as economic exchange or, as Blau (1964) formulates it, central to this theory is that social relationships have always comprised of unspecified obligations and the distribution of unequal power resources.

A key feature of the psychological contract is that the individual voluntarily assents to make and accept certain promises as he or she understands them. It is what the individual believes he or she has agreed to that makes the contract. There is a perception of agreement and mutuality. Even if all parties agree to deliver on their commitments, there can be no guarantee that what each understands is the same. In actual fact mutuality is seldom tested directly. People rely on their ability to predict what others will do as well as apparent good faith efforts and supportiveness and other nondirective indicators of the terms each understands and agrees to (Rousseau 1995). As we can see from the description, it leaves many grey areas where assumptions dependent on subjective perceptions can be made. As Guest (2004) points out, it is very difficult to pin down precisely at what point the psychological contract might be successfully negotiated. This problem is even more pertinent if the contract is viewed as some form of ongoing process (Herriot and Pemberton 1997).

Any contract, including a psychological contract, implies that the worker and the organisation are identifiable and a recognisable entity, which is in fact not always the case. Setton et al (1996) have given a variety of examples based on working groups within an organisation, the contract is then made with the person in the working group perceived to have the authority to make the contract. In relation to intentional communities this is a point to take note of in terms of defining the involved members of the contract. Cullinane and Dundon (2006) in their critical review question the role of psychological contract literature in “serving a more obvious role contributing to a refashioning of the employment relationship that manifestly ignores important structural, institutional and class-based dimensions of social relationships” (p. 19). Yet they find that

The very opacity and imprecision that we have examined means it might well be amendable to more pluralistic and critical approaches. For instance, the way Fox (1974) locates power and trust at the centre of his analysis might provide one way of utilising the social and psychological exchange dimensions beyond the current narrow and mostly managerialist frames of reference in much of the extant literature. (ibid)

### ***2.7.1 What does the Psychological Contract Contain?***

Kickul, Neuman and Parker (1999) catalogue 17 different groupings of workplace issues that are supported by previous work by Rousseau (1990). They structure these items into the following groups:

- Role characteristics – work load and clarity (dealing with aspects of role conflict or role ambiguity)
- Job characteristics – work variety, work importance and authority, control or autonomy
- Leader behaviours – status or recognition, feedback and support (work facilitation)
- Workgroup and social environment characteristics – social interaction, work conditions (affecting workgroup cooperation, friendliness, warmth)
- Organisational and subsystems – compensation, benefits, security, advancement, opportunity for development, fairness, interpersonal relations.

The above parts of a psychological contract are very much based on the employee's expectation. Employer's expectations concern performance, collaboration, flexibility, loyalty, employability and ethical behaviour.

Burchell and Nichols in their outline for researching psychological contracts of volunteers propose that:

- Volunteers will expect greater autonomy within their psychological contract than employees.
- Volunteers will expect a higher relational component in their psychological contract than employees.
- Volunteers may perceive their relationship with their manager or organisation as having elements of consensus or conflict.
- The ideological currency of the contract will be very important to volunteers as volunteering is propelled by personal values.
- The management of volunteers involves understanding the volunteer's psychological contract, the subjective meaning of their volunteering.
- The psychological contract will vary between different types of volunteer organisations.

The psychological contract relies on mutual trust and engagement between the participants, a reliance on the assumption or unspoken promise that both partners intend to fulfil their part of the contract, even though it is based by and large on clues picked up by observing behaviour and relationships between work colleagues as well as organisation towards employee, and from stories of former events, overt statements, leaflets, literature. "People who make and keep their commitments can anticipate and plan because their actions are more readily specified and predictable both to others and to themselves, psychological contracts have the power of self-fulfilling prophecies: they can create the future" (Rousseau 1995, p. 9). As stated before, due to the ambiguous nature of psychological contracts I will look closer at breach of the psychological contract.

## **2.8 Breach of Contract**

Psychological contract breaches occur when employees perceive that their employers have failed to fulfil at least one obligation implied by their employers (Morrison and Robinson 1997). The breach can consist of non-fulfilment or delay of a promise. Empirical research over the last decade has found that psychological contract breaches are negatively related to employee job satisfaction, trust, organisational commitment, job performance and citizenship behaviour, while being positively related to cynicism, absenteeism and turnover (Bunderson 2001; Conway & Briner 2002; Deery, Iverson & Walsh 2006; Johnson & Leary-Kelly 2003). However, how employees will respond to breaches will also depend upon how much they can tolerate deviations from expectations and how readily they perceive they could find equal (or better) deals elsewhere (Ng & Feldman 2009).

Robinson (1996) in her research on trust and the psychological contract suggests that an employee's prior trust in his/her employer will guide or influence the employee's interpretation or understanding of breach of contract. An employee with high prior trust will tend to perceive the breach in ways consistent with that prior trust and thus interpret it in relatively neutral or positive terms (e.g., viewing it as an unintentional event, a misunderstanding, a temporary lapse, or outside the responsibility of the employer), therefore the employee will be able to maintain a relatively high level of trust in the employer, despite perceived transgression. In contrast, an employee with low prior trust will tend to perceive the breach in ways consistent with low prior trust and interpret it in a more negative light. This view is also supported by Fiske and Taylor (1984), who found that cognitive consistency is maintained through selective perception, by seeking out, attending to and interpreting one's environment in ways that reinforce one's prior knowledge, beliefs and attitudes.

There is an alternative way of viewing the breach of a psychological contract. Plant (2008) describes the need to recognise that the concept of progress is a personal, ideological and cultural construct. In other words, you see and believe what you want to see and believe, according to your belief system and worldview. You see things as conforming to and confirming your previously held beliefs and modify your beliefs to integrate new observations. And these beliefs are, to the extent that they are consciously formulated, based on assimilating the ideas and theories of other people and integrating

these with what one can learn from reflecting on one's personal experiences of life. The positive outcome of such integration is a sense of coherence; the feeling that life makes sense. Although we might differ on how we understand life, we need to believe that it somehow has a meaning and purpose, and in turn that the changes we experience also have meaning and significance. We attribute value to change – be it positive or negative – according to our worldview and out of our need to find a meaningful pattern in the events and changes in our environment (Plant 2008).

Since I interviewed people who have been members of an intentional community for 15 to 35 years and fall into the older age bracket I focus some more on research by Ng and Feldman (2009) on age, work experience and breach of contract. Using the U.S. Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 as a guide, Ng and Feldman's (2008) recent review defines older workers as those who are age 40 or older. Their research is based on the relationship between how much deviation from expectation can be tolerated by an employee without reacting negatively (contract malleability) and how readily they perceive they could find equal (or better) deals elsewhere (contract replicability).

## **2.9 Contract Malleability**

Chapman and Hayslip (2006) found that older adults (mean age 49), when compared to younger adults (mean age 20), were more likely to use optimism as a strategy to regulate their emotions. They conclude that older employees have a stronger ability to regulate their emotions and to process positive information more deeply; we expect that they will also be able to tolerate deviations from expectations better. They also found that as people age, they tend to become more altruistic, generous and better able to understand the perspective of others (Midlarsky & Hannah 1989). Hence, the evidence suggests that age will be positively related to contract malleability.

## **2.10 Contract Replicability**

As individuals gain more and more years of service, they become highly enmeshed in their current organisations (Crossley et al. 2007). Veteran employees develop stronger links to their colleagues, invest more deeply in their communities and feel like leaving would create greater financial and personal sacrifices (Mitchell et al. 2001). In their research, Brandtstatter and Rothermund (1994) observed that across five age groups (30-35; 36-41; 42-47; 48-53; 54-59) the oldest group being researched (54-59) reported

the lowest level of confidence about their ability to change their environment. They also found that there was a decline in the level of tenacious goal pursuit (called ‘assimilative coping’). Rather than holding on to ambitious goals, older workers are more likely to lower their goals downward to adjust to their circumstances. Because of weaker self-efficacy, older individuals will be more likely to believe that their psychological contracts cannot be easily replicated or negotiated in other organisations.

As job embeddedness increases and external mobility decreases, perception of contract replicability should weaken too. Mitchel et al.’s research looks at the relationship between loyalty to the organisation and age.

### **2.11 Loyalty**

Loyalty involves silent or passive forbearance of negative work conditions (Hirshmann 1970). Because older and experienced workers view their contracts as more malleable, they are more likely to accept contract breaches with silence or passivity, since they believe that the organisation will ultimately honour their commitments. Older adults were more likely to adopt a “loyalty” strategy in dealing with difficult relationships. Also, because older workers tend to be more altruistic and better able to understand the viewpoints of others (Midlarsky & Hannah 1989; Underwood & Moore 1982), they will be less inclined to deliberately hurt the well-being of the organisation unless necessary.

### **2.12 Conclusion**

The literature outlines the interdependence of social structure and relationships and that there is no clear contractual way to overcome misunderstandings, Relationships and trust and personal perception of self and others are the main carriers of upholding structures or social systems. Intentional communities are founded on ‘intentions’ and expectations, with a large amount of idealism and devotion to the aims of the community. The psychological contract deals with aspects of employee/employer relationships which are not clearly defined and often not openly voiced and therefore can lead to perceived breach of contract. The question arises whether the psychological contract could become an aid to clarify the needs of members and community.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology of research applied and a strategy that will provide me with information on my research question: How do members of intentional communities deal with changes of personal values in relationships with their community over a longer period of time? The research is based on an academic study of intentional communities and psychological contract and data collected through interviews. This is a qualitative research in the sociological field. Therefore I have given the interviews a dominant place in the findings and analysis, to allow the participants' experiences to be heard. "Interviewing is a paramount part of sociology because interviewing is interaction and sociology is the study of interaction" (Benny & Hughes 1956, p. 142).

A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. The choice of research design reflects decisions about the priority given to a range of dimensions of the research process. These include the importance attached to:

- Expressing causal connections between variables;
- Generalising to groups of individuals larger than those actually forming part of the investigation;
- Understanding behaviour and the meaning of that behaviour in its specific social context;
- Having a temporal (i.e., over time) appreciation of social phenomena and their interconnections (Bryman 2004, p 27).

### **3.2 Philosophical Background**

My interest in this specific research, in which I am trying to understand individuals' behaviour and the meaning of that behaviour in a specific social context over a period of time, is led by an interpretive worldview, trying to grasp the subjective meaning of social action, or how individuals themselves make sense of their world. There are a number of approaches under the umbrella of hermeneutics, "which is concerned with the theory and method of the interpretation and understanding of human action" (Bryman 2004, p. 13) As this research is about individuals acting in the context of

groups of other people (community), with a proportionally high level of relational interaction, covering all aspects of life, it seems that symbolic interactionism, largely based on the writings of Herbert Blumer, expresses my approach to the research. “Interaction takes place in such a way that the individual is continually interpreting the symbolic meaning of his or her environment (which includes the actions of others) and acts on the basis of this imputed meaning (Blumer 1962, p. 188; quoted in Bryman 2003, p. 14). Therefore social reality has a meaning for human beings and therefore human action is meaningful, hence social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but are in a constant state of revision (ontological position of constructionism). This includes the researcher, who also presents a specific version of social reality, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive (Bryman 2004).

I adopted a qualitative approach to my research that allowed me to develop an inductive relationship between literature and interviews, where my findings emerge from my data rather than a theory (inductive study). Blumer (1954) suggests that the aim is to generate rather than test theories, a process of ‘sensitising’ rather than arriving at definitive concepts. Iterative research strategy leads to data collection, analysis and findings being in close relationship.

### **3.3 Research Method**

The method I used was qualitative interviewing, which is the most widely used method in qualitative research. I chose in-depth interviews for this research as it is suitable for generating data consistent with the interpretative approach.

#### ***3.3.1 In-depth Interview***

For the interviews I prepared a list of questions that covered a specific theme, but I gave the participants leeway in how to reply. Questions did not follow on exactly in the way outlined in the schedule. I asked questions to verify or deepen what the participants had said and also broaden ‘the view’, but I always guided the interview back to my research topic. “Fetterman (1998) has noted the use of open-ended questions during exploratory phases of an enquiry and close ended questions during confirmatory phases” (O’Regan 2008, p. 61)

“Holstein and Gubrium (1997) distinguish between approaches that see the interviewee as the ‘passive vessel’ from which information is extracted and approaches which confer greater agency on the subject. In this latter case the method of interviewing is no longer concerned with the extraction of unbiased information but acknowledges the interview ‘as a dynamic meaning making occasion” ( O’Regan 2009, p. 63).

Considering the interactive process of the interviews, where I had ‘picked the field’, but the interaction on the playing field requiring two parties that were committed to taking part, I chose to call the people I interviewed participants. This also describes the relationship that developed during the interviews, with people I had never met before. We were on mutual ground, as we all experienced living in and being part of intentional communities, we were on equal footing, everybody’s contribution was equally important, including myself and my questioning.

The openness that must characterise such interviews is openness to the humanity of the other. Understanding another’s meaning demands a capacity to relate to that other’s experience as a subjective rather than an objective reality. The act of interviewing is experienced as being “about self as well as others” (O’Regan 2009, pp. 63-64).

My deep personal interest and engagement with the research topic and the relationship that developed with the participants influenced the responses of the participants. Whittaker (2011) outlines a number of criticisms of in-depth interviews such as the difficulty to replicate, problems of representing and generalising findings, problems of objectivity and detachment, and problems of ethics (entering the personal sphere of participants (Whitaker 2011). In preparation for the interviews I took note of Kvale’s (1996) list of qualification criteria of an interviewer. A successful interviewer should be: knowledgeable, structuring, clear, gentle, sensitive, open, steering, critical, and should be good at remembering, and interpreting (Kvale (1996) as cited in Bryman 2004, p. 325).

### **3.4 Interview Method**

I contacted the potential participants and introduced myself (where necessary) and send an outline of my research topic as well as the questions I had prepared as a guideline for the interview. This gave participants a chance to read the questions first, before deciding

to take part in the interview. I informed participants at this stage that I would tape the interviews and contact them after the interview for clarifications, if necessary, and I would maintain their anonymity. I had a second contact with most people before the interview to confirm their participation. I visited one participant for a chat over a cup of tea to get to know each other before the interview. This created a sense of mutual trust and a sense that we were on a common exploration.

Four interviews were conducted in person, in a calm and relaxed atmosphere without disturbance. One interview was conducted via Skype and one by phone, as participants are not resident in Ireland. A consent form (see Appendix 1) was signed by all participants. Interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes, with 10 to 20 minutes to both 'warm up' and round off informally.

### **Questions**

The questions were arranged in three thematic groups but allowed participants to move freely between groups and questions (see questions in Appendix 2).

- The first four questions are concerned with why and how the participant chose the community and why this specific community.

These questions provide a background to the values that participants held or were searching for at that time. It also gives some information on previous experience that informed the values they held at the time of joining a community.

- Questions 5 to 8 deal with the participant's personal values, their importance and changes or development of their values.

The questions concern the lived experience of their personal values in relation to the community and its enactment of values. Considering the length of time of community membership, participants lived through a number of personal transitions that impact on personal values, like significant relationships, forming of family, maturing, professional and spiritual development and ageing. The community's relationship with society also has an impact on the relationship between member and community.

- Question 8 asked how participants dealt with discrepancies between their own and community values. This led to the last set of questions, which concerned the participant's current experience in the community and how they envisage future enactment of their values.

These questions left open whether the future would be in or outside the community, but questioned the decision taken. The questions also prompted participants to look at their present values and their relationship to the community's present values, as well as future possibilities to negotiate any discrepancies with the community.

Questions were open ended, looking for processes interviewees had experienced, related in the interview through answers that had a narrative quality to them. This gave me a deeper understanding of the participants or, as Geertz (1973) calls it, 'thick description', which included, apart from the spoken word, expressions of anger, joy, and sadness, amongst others.

### **3.5 Participants**

I chose six participants, three of which were not known to me before and had been suggested by mutual acquaintances. All participants lived in intentional communities for more than 10 years. All communities are part of an international organisation and the three organisations have been in existence between 55 and 120 years. As there are large variances in intentional communities, I decide to narrow my choice down to three communities involved in the social and care sector. Communities involved in this research were L'Arche, Camphill and Sisters of Mercy. I felt it was important to achieve a gender balance (three women and three men) and as it happened the age range was between 45 and 55 years. One participant had recently left a community; all others lived in community. All participants were in a role of responsibility, some locally, some nationally or internationally. All participants expressed a strong personal interest in the research questions. I did not introduce participants individually and in a particular role as the membership of intentional community is not 'a job', rather a way of life.

### **3.6 Analysing the Data**

The analysis of the data was an iterative process. I conducted a first and second-order analysis of the interviews. In the first-order analysis it is the story as the participant tells it and in the second-order analysis I relate my understanding of the meaning of the

interview. Bryman (2004) suggests that as well as analysing the data using first and second-order narrative, the data should also be interpreted in terms of concepts, theories and literature in its discipline.

For this purpose I listened to the interviews, read notes of the interviews a number of times, initially without thinking of my specific research question, to create an 'openness' towards the interviews rather than trying to fit responses into categories.

Many themes emerged that could be researched further. When I focused specifically on my research question four themes emerged that I related to my literature review. Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p.145) describe this process as working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The above outlined methods and methodology provided me with a wide vista of participants' experience from the interviews. Therefore I had to choose, due to time and space constraints, which data I would include or omit. By doing this the data lost some of its richness and depth as I followed processes related to my research, rather than personal biographies where the individual story can shine through more strongly.

My approach taken is reflected in Denzin and Lincoln's (1998) description of qualitative research, implying processes and meaning that cannot be measured in terms of quantifiable amounts. Throughout the research I was aware that I was the one with the question who was searching for an answer and meaning and tried to be aware of the previously mentioned challenges to qualitative research.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined my approach to the following research findings, which I will present in first-order narrative, which allows the participant to be heard in their own voice. The second-order narrative is my interpretation of the participant's 'meaning making' of his experiences. I ordered the responses in groups, relating to the main areas around which the interview was structured. I conducted the interviews at the same time as I was doing my literature review, with the result that my literature review was informed by what participants were telling me. This process led me to look at the psychological contract in connection with intentional communities and to explore whether the psychological contract could be a tool to negotiate personal values and needs with the community. Further research could change the focus from the member to the community negotiating values with its member.

The headings are as follows:

- Searching for community
- Choice of community,
- Personal development
- Growing awareness of gaps between community and member
  - Personal changes
  - Changes within community caused externally and internally
- Future of community's values and a language to express these values
- Personal future and commitment

I will relate my data to the academic research presented in Chapter 2 and present my findings thereof. As this research is based on participants' experiences, I felt the need to represent my findings extensively to give expression to the richness of the interviews; hence my first-order narrative is comprehensive.

## **4.2 Findings Related to People I Interviewed**

When I approached individuals for interviews everyone I asked was keen to take part and felt that the question of personal values in relationship to the community was a pertinent topic to which they had all given much thought, and most were emotionally very engaged in the interview. My first finding was that participants were keen to talk about their personal journey from this angle and the meaning it has for them in a very personal way. Another finding was the fact that I could not easily find participants who had been members for less than 25 years except for one, who has left recently. Most participants preferred to stay anonymous and some participants asked me to not include parts of the interview, as the interview was also an exploration of personal and community values that were very close to participants' hearts and they felt that in order to include it, they would need to give it more time and thought to formulate their thoughts.

## **4.3 First-order Narrative**

I included a first-order narrative as I wanted the story of each participant to shine through as much as possible. As the interviews covered up to 35 years the stories entailed many personal and community experiences participants lived through. As the interviews relate to past and ongoing processes in participants' lives, I have aimed to choose parts of the narrative that convey the 'milestones' in people's experiences and personal insights developed over time.

### ***4.3.1 Searching for Community***

Most participants were in their early 20s and had finished their studies with good career prospects; some had worked already for a number of years. Four out of six participants had actively searched for the right community and visited other places before deciding to join their present organisation. All participants have lived in more than one community within the organisation.

A. tells it the following way: "At 22 I knew I did not want a 9 to 5 job and my own little house. I wanted to have a sense of purpose, a common task of working with people with special needs, people wanting to work together."

T.” I studied English and philosophy, I loved the campus life. I felt part of me was not fulfilled, an empty space.” T. had studied Yeats thoroughly and described his own searching with Yeats’ words, a search for ‘unity of being’. “In my first year at college almost by accident I came to listen to Vanier. It was an inspiring encounter, here was a man who was not only very inspiring in what he said, but he was actually living what he said.” “Something about him really touched me and his vision of a world where everybody could be included and has a sense of belonging, in particular people with disabilities.”

N. “Existential striving: when you realise that you are nothing in the world on your own, how do you find significance? You wouldn’t without other people.” He had visited different communes and found that there was “too much talk, no personal striving, no common purpose.”

M. heard an interview with the founder of the community on TV when she was 11 years old and was very inspired by him. Her career guidance teacher advised her to get a sensible job like teaching. She was determined to work with people with special needs and trained as a teacher. She worked for 11 years in a special needs school, 7 years as headmistress, and organised many activities outside of school, which she enjoyed. When she joined the community she describes how “at that point I was not choosing community, I was choosing change.”

K. had been taught by Sisters and had observed Sisters as part of the life in the village where she grew up. This inspired her to become a Sister herself. She searched for three years and visited nine orders. At the same time she was making the decision not to continue in her job and a long-term relationship; she said, “I had to get it out of my system – hoped to get it out of my system – the religious life.

Five out of six participants decided to join for 6 to 12 months initially before joining the community as a member. One left recently after 15 years. In retrospect, all participants believe that their choice of community was not accidental, but “we look for the things we need, whether we know it or not” as N. says.

In the above contributions participants describe searching for meaning, for a sense of purpose, for a change. They also describe being inspired by specific people from the community, through their activity or a talk and the authenticity between both.

#### **4.3.2 *Choice of Community***

The interviews – by and large – describe the values of the communities when they joined, mostly in terms how it felt to them. Many can only in hindsight clearly describe the values that attracted them at the time.

C. grew up with the ethos that you work when you are needed, not 9 to 5. She remembers, “I was thrown into the deep end when I arrived [in the community]. I could just do it; I didn’t question, I fell right into it and got on with it. Creating a life for each other made so much sense, I was trusted, lived Christianity.”

A. “I was not interested in the philosophy, I was inspired by the people I met, if they can live a life like that, then that is the lifestyle I want, they lived what they said.” He also describes the aspect of care for everything around him as very meaningful as he says, “You don’t just do your thing, you care to care.” The fact I wasn’t working for money was very important for me, no bosses”.

K. was attracted to the mission statement: ‘who needs help today – not next week’, helping people in need directly, with mercy and compassion: “I wanted to do something – could not wait to save the world. I thought I needed community to support me to do what I wanted to do. To be vowed for life, as well as the spirituality and prayers attracted me to become a sister”.

M. The organisation’s “values were same as my values. What I really value in my own life in general, that everybody gets to be who they are, we do not have to be a certain shape to exist.”

T. describes: “I found a place where I could just be myself; I had found a place where I could grow humanly and spiritually as a person ... discovery of community, that we can only grow and discover who we are through other people ... discovery of prayer as a wonderful gift ... a sense of homecoming, to myself primarily.”

Participants describe values they aspired to and which they experienced in the community of their choice. Being trusted, being accepted for who they are, being able to contribute and care, and getting to know people with intellectual disability within a community setting, lack of competitiveness are part of the experiences participants discovered during their initial 6 to 12 months in the community.

### ***4.3.3 Personal Development***

Personal development was mentioned in all interviews, often not defined as spiritual, professional or humanly, sometimes also referred to as wholesome development. There seems to be an expectation of the individual as much as from the community for personal development, where personal development includes learning to be flexible and open to new challenges, personal, social and professional.

Both T. and N. describe part of their personal development as developing heart forces and warmth, ‘a school for the heart’ or as T. says, “It felt like coming down from the head to the heart and they say that it is the longest journey that human beings can ever make ... and it was there that I discovered unity of being.”

A.”I worked on the land and learned what I needed to learn, from other people. You did not have to go and do a training, you could afford to make mistakes and no one blamed you; it’s a fantastic feeling.... You become open and honest with other people, willing to sort out your problems instead of walking away. No one really told us what we have to do, we had the choice to take initiative ... being able to choose what you have to do, you work among peers. Of course there was a hierarchy, but not a fixed hierarchy; a wonderful experience to work like this for so long.”

In C.’s second year she joined an internal training seminar, she described how “there was a strong bond between people on the course and how they fired each other on to work very hard with little time off – we felt good about giving, giving unconditional care. When I had family this changed. I felt I still have to live up to expectation of having to be always available to everybody – lots of feeling guilty.” With the arrival of C.’s first child things changed a lot, but she did not question the “merciless grind of community life.” She describes feeling guilty for spending time with her children, which then turned into bitterness. “It changed then; in hindsight when I got a bit more

liberated from how we live in community – I have to fit in, I have to struggle ... I was so indoctrinated. I think breathing is seriously neglected. We thought, we share our lives and do it all, isn't it great. I think it is a mistake to neglect your own family, your own life, your own development outside of community.”

According to M., “in the end community is a way of organising ourselves, community is not in now, community is a verb, it's a way of organising to bring ownership, to bring in commitment and to bring in people's sense of belonging.”

K. trained as a social worker and works with an organisation during weekdays. She feels that she lives two separate and parallel lives, with two separate groups of people. In one life she can make decisions and is professionally respected, in the other she follows the vow of obedience and often feels “like a child being told what to do. You are a sister you must dress in a certain way, you must be to the world in a certain way and you must behave in a certain way. I found this difficult until I grew into myself a bit more. I found it really hard, now I don't. I experienced obedience at its best and at its worst.”

Early on in T.'s marriage, after living for some time in a life-sharing situation with disabled people, they moved into their own house as a family. He is financially independent but shares human resources, time and energy with the community; he feels he has close contact with the community. He feels life in the community “has been a place of growth, humanly, spiritually and professionally. Today my values are gospel values; the most important thing is to love God, your neighbours and yourself. Learning to try to live in an authentic loving way with the people God has given you to love. My values haven't changed, they rather deepened”.

Personal development encompasses all areas of life. Participants talk of professional development, learning how to relate to other members, taking on responsibilities, discovering personal values as being separate from community values, learning to live an authentic way of life and to accept decisions they don't agree with, but uphold for the benefit of the community.

#### ***4.3.4 Growing Awareness of Gaps Between Community and Members***

In the last five to ten years participants experienced increased struggle with their personal expectation of themselves as community members and the community's expectation of its members, a struggle to maintain their integrity.

While some of the difficulties are between the community and its members, or from 'inside', other difficulties arise out of the community's efforts to adapt to 'external' demands from government bodies. It is interesting to note that governing bodies for communities are also sometimes seen to be 'outside' of the community.

#### **Personal Changes**

A. "Whereas before I wanted to work hard to do everything I could for the community obviously now I am older, I am more tired now and really value this time spent alone. I believe passionately in community, but I am so tired of it." He observes himself and his organisation as "being a lot more accepting of deviance and accepting of change than they used to be, I am not so dogmatic as I used to be. What's happening between people and what effect does it have locally" is important to him now.

N. did not like work/life separation, but now he says it is more destructive to have no separation. "I did want community, did not want to be on my own, now I need more space and time on my own. I can't keep going to everything festivals, parties, etc, I am expected to go to. I feel guilty; I am made to feel guilty when I decide not to go – you haven't upheld your obligation," N. "I am more realistic now, what is possible, more balanced, not trying to do it all at once. Do locally and individually, most important place and realistic place to make change.

K. "I really believe community is a good thing; my lived experience is very different. Community is not where you live; it's friends with the same values." K. talks about struggle and tension throughout her years in community, but she feels struggle is an essential part of life: "I think everybody struggles to find something – to find God, acceptance, love; I struggle to marry contemplative, active and reflective life; struggle to find unity with God." She has struggled with not being able to have children, family." She cites St. Augustine: "Our hearts are restless until they rest with you."

Participant's contributions are more self-reflective, describing changes due to ageing such as tiredness, becoming more realistic and accepting of personal limitations. Adherence to personal values becomes more pronounced, prioritising what is really important and possible now.

### **Changes within the community caused externally and internally**

When K. joined the community there were many members of her own age, many of whom left when they got to the age of 30 and many more left in the last five years. "Institutional scandals had a huge effect. Institutional apologies – I found that very difficult to take, I got very angry; I was not part of that system at that time. It is a struggle to stay or leave. Nobody is going to be left in five years to carry on the values, what we were founded for."

N. "Care activity needed to become a more professional thing. I got started on the bottom rung of the ladder – learned by doing. Now there is no time to allow people to climb the ladder of experience by hands-on learning, little room for mistakes. I did not feel it had to go the way of a professional care organisation, I got very involved in groups working on alternative options; it was part of my personal commitment and responsibility to take it there. There is a value conflict in the organisation. Intentional community striving can't sit alongside professional expectations any more".

C. describes her changing role over the years from direct care to managerial work: "When we came, that was the work we wanted to do; you got a great kick out of it. What does it mean now? That I can write more reports? In the last year or two the climate has changed, it's a climate of fear. New orders coming from council, more spreadsheets telling us how many gaps are here and there." [This is in relation to preparing for external inspections]. We are numbers in a spreadsheet; we are owed more than that, not in value but in respect." On the ground in her own community she still experiences brotherliness .... "In the past you had a great sense of ownership for your own community, it was very direct what you did – cause and effect. Now the control from outside is quite undermining, you just don't have the same sense of ownership."

M. observes that her organisation "has become very hierarchical, job descriptions – all the paperwork, not in a way that consulted anybody and not in a way that makes a

difference between a community in Ireland and a community in India.” In our communities the shadow side is that we are not able to take up our leadership in a way that empowers people, so how can we be part of creating communities? But community is an essential component of society, it’s a human need, we are born into community. Part of what we are about today is spreading what was essential to the community originally. And what was essential to the community originally wasn’t a social care responsibility; it was a spiritual impulse to reveal the gifts of people. These are people with the same possibility to reveal love in the world and to reveal something of God. I come from a Christian background and it matters to me.”

T. says that he can see the gaps between ‘what we say and do’ all the time. “The organisation went through a three-year process “to honestly name all the challenges, where we don’t live up to our values, like honest conversation, time for spirituality, we named about seven or eight, looking at our reality and the shadow side of the organisation and named a number of challenges that we had to work on together”.

Changes within the community are recognised by participants, the decline of new members joining the community and the development of professionalism and formal management structures is questioned. Participants struggle with the gaps they perceive between essential values of the community and the values that are enacted in the community, this leads to a sense of loss of ownership of the community, and a loss of community values. (We have to believe what we do is good )

#### ***4.3.5 Future of Community’s Values and the Need for a Language to Express These Values***

Participants’ belief in the need for community as an optional way of life was repeatedly voiced, not just for them, but also for the benefit of society at large. A number of participants also voiced the need for ‘a language’ to communicate the essential meanings of their community to wider society, for the community’s and society’s benefit.

T. “As small and as messy as our communities are they are actually a big a sign of hope, obviously for parents, whose children are in community, but it is wider than that, it is a sign of hope for society, because it gives a vision of the human person which we don’t

hear on the television or on the radio, which is about political correctness, where you can't talk about God or love or spirituality unless you are very politically correct about it".

M. "Was I tired after 30 years of leadership? I am so excited about leadership. But it calls us to a whole new way of speaking, a whole new language which 'the organisation' definitely have no handle on. I am committed to collaboration for transformation; I am committed to grow the organisation in relationship with others that it is a community not only for us ... but with other organisations who are ultimately on the same journey as we are."

N. describes the situation of another member of the community: "He was a very idealistic person, he found himself in conflict with the organisation in a way that was irresolvable because there was no vocabulary for this conflict. For the future it is needed that somebody professional needs to look strategically, who has the vocabulary to label [and] define the things they find. We can look at it ourselves, but we are part of the problem, we can't answer it." He also expresses the need for the organisation to recognise the 'important bits' of the organisation and develop a vocabulary to communicate with other organisations that's in line with vocabulary used by other organisations.

C. "We have learned a lot, the values and the beauty of community in many good aspects, and now how to transfer it to community where you don't share your whole space. Maybe community is a broader thing, where you are with people in community, but retaining your individuality and needs a bit more."

Participants expressed a wish to develop a language which can express the community's values to wider society and other organisations in the field and also help to express the community's values within the organisation.

Participants struggle with changes they experience and question their integrity regarding their values and commitment in relation to the future of the community they live in.

As N. expresses it: “We were trying to set up something that could survive the value conflict in the organisation, free from the ‘care organisation’, an area where there would be more freedom to be intentional; we were trying to look out for ourselves, what was important for us [in the organisation’s values]. We felt we were not free to leave, like a marriage, and had limited freedom. Around us was enough similar striving. The organisation did not handle the situation well; it was a huge disappointment .... You have a commitment to bring the organisation where it has to go, even if that is not where you want to go. It is a responsibility to take it over the line. And then at some point you need to take your hands off it and pass it on as best as you can.”

T., looking at his future in the organisation: “At 60 would I have the same ability, strength interest? There is a certain insecurity – no job for life. See what life calls me to do; what’s the way, how I can serve the organisation? I worried a lot when I was younger. Now I try to live with the attitude of trust in the bigger picture that there is a loving hand at work in our life and in the universe, if we are open to what providence, what life gives well then in some way a path will open up and we will be OK. If we are willing to give of ourselves and be open, I try to be a man of hope and a man of trust. The gift of community is that you are not alone, that there are other people trying to live the same thing and there is a support in that and that there is God, the other transcended, mysterious other.”

M. “I spend my life putting in procedures and policies, watching people like hawks in case I be accused of something I couldn’t prevent anyway? I can stand with people’s best selves, so that they are less inclined going to their worst selves. For everybody who comes into our community, to trust them into life, to trust them into their greater selves and that is a very different stance than protecting ourselves.” At another point, M. said, “We need to work out what do we say community is? What are we willing to say community is and I would say that we need to work on that, and once we know what that is ourselves we have a lot more authority to speak.”

C. “In the long run it will be a community impulse, where lives and friendships are shared, where you are brotherly with people; and that makes a difference in the world.”

C. quotes another member of the community: “maybe the community has fulfilled its mission in its present form.”

K. “There is something because I am still here. A sense of community at prayer, a sense of togetherness, in all our differences we are committed to one thing.”

A. “I am so amazingly grateful that I found Community. It’s been all consuming, you give more to the community than to your own family and I still feel there are things I can do. I am not walking away frustrated. But I feel I have done the very best I could, I worked really hard and been very committed, upheld the values, and if it doesn’t carry on, it doesn’t carry on, I am not particularly distressed about that. People think you need to hold on tight not to lose it. I think if you do your very best, it will happen the way it will happen anyway. As long as you know you did your best. I don’t think I need to fight about that, get upset about that. The community is bigger than any person and at the end of the day, to avoid either the community or the individual getting stuck the community has to find its own way forward and also the individual has to find their own way forward”.

Participants describe a past for which they are grateful. They are open to a future in which their community might operate in a different form, yet they express a commitment to the community’s values. The commitment to aspects of the community is in itself a community experience; the physical sharing of space is not felt to be necessarily the community experience.

#### **4.4 Second-order Narrative**

##### ***4.4.1 Searching for Community and What They Found***

When the participants searched for the community, they were searching for a way of life that would allow them to find meaning, purpose and themselves in their way of life. All participants had finished a study or training that would have enabled them to find a job and to live a more traditional lifestyle; they were looking for something more or different. They were inspired by the authenticity and integrity of the people they met, including the people with special needs. They joined communities where they felt they could find what they were searching for. Some were clear about their values when they joined; others discovered their values on hand of living in the community and through relationships within the community.

#### ***4.4.2 Personal Development, Family***

Development is an important part of participants' experience in the community spiritually, humanly and professionally. For most, all three aspects were catered for in or through the community. One member made a personal choice of professional development, but for most it developed out of the needs of the community. The spiritual striving of the participants was very much in line with the spiritual values of the community. A sense of responsibility and ownership increases, with rising awareness of different structures of authority within the community. This time is also termed as 'growing into yourself', this also describes the participants' growing awareness of their own needs and an ability to either negotiate their needs or having to adapt their needs to the community needs.

Family is mentioned in different connections throughout interviews; there is an element of tension between answering the community's and family's needs. Some participants are grateful for having been able to raise their family within community. In my view family and community is a theme in itself that could be researched. The experience of family and community might be very different if you are a mother or father, if you are a single person by choice or through other circumstances. As I felt I could not do it justice within this research, I only touch on it briefly.

#### ***4.4.3 Growing Awareness of Gaps Between Community and Member***

##### **Personal changes**

Participants describe getting older and their needs changing, having less energy and more need for personal time and space, as well as becoming more philosophical about one's own position within community. There is a realisation that a realistic balance needs to be achieved for the member in their personal life to cope with social demands. The stance is more reacting to these changes.

##### **Changes in the community**

This was the point where some participants expressed a lot of emotion in the interview. There is a growing sense of alienation between community and its governing body, which is answerable to society and government bodies and the member. Members feel they are carrying responsibility for the community's essence or values, the values they joined the community for initially. What would have been more relational processes

have become more formal processes. Members feel measured by professional standards and not recognised as individual members of the community, who have invested a lot of personal, human capital in the organisation. The communities participants joined are based on values of care, recognising and fostering the uniqueness of each person, compassion, mercy, love, hope, sharing. My interpretation is that participants do not feel these values are applied to members of the community, by governing bodies and management, Again the relationships between government bodies and communities is a research field with many different aspects in its own right, which I cannot do justice to in this dissertation.

#### ***4.4.4 Commitment to a Future for Community and the Need for a Language to Express the Community's Values***

Participants feel strongly about community and its need to exist as a way of life for themselves, others and society at large. Participants are open or looking for changes in the way community manifests itself to answer changing needs of members, including members with special needs. They feel that a language needs to be developed for internal and external use that can express its values in a way that is acceptable and understandable to all. What I read between the lines is the desire to find an alternative language to negotiate personal and community values internally and externally, an existential concern about applying 'business' language to what participants hold very dear and is a large part of their identity and life.

Could the psychological contract be adapted as a tool for a 'formal' language, as a tool of communication?

#### ***4.4.5 Future and Commitment***

In the interviews I encountered a struggle between commitment to the community and to other members of the community and commitment to personal values and the tension concerning which is more important to serve first. My impression is that once the personal need comes before what the community recognises as its need an unspoken line gets crossed and a breach of mutual trust from community to the member is experienced and the member does not feel that his personal needs are recognised and supported.

Participants express an acceptance of the fact that we cannot determine the future, but that one's own spiritual and human striving will lead to a positive outcome – ‘ if we give our best’ or ‘if we are open to the needs of the community.’

## **4.5 Findings**

The first and second-order analysis highlights a journey from arriving at a community with expectations, hopes and aspirations, as well as illusions. Participants have gone through many transitions during 15 to 35 years in community, in terms of personal biography, community development and changes in society at large. My aim was to understand how participants negotiated their personal values with the community throughout this time that included many personal and community changes, by relating my findings and literature review, in particular the psychological contract and breach of the same.

### ***4.5.1 Intentional Community and Psychological Contract***

A key feature of the psychological contract is that the individual voluntarily agrees to make and accept certain promises as she understands them.

All participants acted voluntarily in joining a community, they spend an initial 6 to 12 month in the community, they observed how others related to each other and to them, they got a feeling for the tasks they were to do and a sense for the possibility of self-development, including taking on roles of responsibility and sense of ownership and autonomy. All this including their personal expectations informed their psychological contract there was a perception of agreement and mutuality between community and member of community.

I draw attention back to the initial impulse for the formation of intentional community and the participants' expectations in relation to community expectations, as well as the elements mentioned by Schenker that are found to be present in intentional communities. In the last column of the following table I try to match the four main areas of the psychological contract as structured by Kickul et al (1999) (see also literature review, Chapter 2)

<b>Intentional Communities come about through</b>	<b>Members' expectations when joining community</b>	<b>Community expectations (based on Schenker's research)</b>	<b>Areas of psychological contract as seen in employment model</b>
Desire to live according to spiritual values for personal and community benefit	Authentic way of life, everybody gets to be who they are	Maintain values of community	- authority, and - autonomy
Desire for personal development through relationships (from man to man; from man to God; from man to himself)	To be able to grow humanly and spiritually as a person through other people and through prayer  Creating life for each other, helping others, caring, trusting each other	Willingness to learn and develop for the benefit of the community, personally and professionally	social interaction, work conditions cooperation,  Opportunity for development, i.e. achieving personal or career goals
Desire to work collectively towards common goals; Forming a group that sees itself different and/or separate from its environment	Need for community to achieve personal goals; to fire each other on, a sense of homecoming, to be with likeminded people, purposeful work  Integrate work and life	Flexibility to answer community's needs and willingness to adapt to changes that need to be made for the benefit of the community	-Feedback and support work facilitation  - Work-life balance - Clarity of organisational strategy and goals.
Desire to reform society; living an alternative way of life.	To do something significant, to make a difference to the world, working with volunteers	Integrate work and life within community; willingness to share time and space-physical and emotional. - accept authority of the community	-Status or - Recognition

The above table aims to show the interconnection of expectations and obligations in key areas in the psychological contract for members of intentional communities.

- In the desire to live according to spiritual values for personal and community benefit, the member invests himself completely in the community or as O'Regan describes it, "...the dialectic process at the heart of the formation of the voluntary actor requires both the notion of individual agency and a specific institutional environment that shapes the specific expression of this agency" (Chapter 2 lit. rev. p. 16). It is the member's free choice to join and therefore there will be an expectation from the member and the community that he is given autonomy by the community to have the decision-making authority to manage himself, as long as the values of the community are maintained.
- The interviews highlighted the importance of personal development for members of the communities; they are seen as an integral part of life. Communities are dependent on the relational capacity of their members as a foundation for community building and, as in the case of the researched communities, professional development was important to carry out the work in the social sector. In order to achieve this members need support from each other and governing bodies of the community, humanly and financial. Achieving personal and career goals could in the case of an intentional community have a common area of interest, as it should answer the members' and the community's needs.
- Collective goals often form the centre around which individuals and the community operate. Yet they are often not clearly defined and many communities find it particularly difficult to develop strategies. Feedback and support allow the member to assess himself in regard to the goals and strategies of the community. In the interviews, work-life balance was an area for members where their needs changed most throughout their community membership. In an intentional community setting work facilitation can be connected to work-life balance and feedback and support.
- Intentional communities come about through the desire to reform society by living an alternative way of life. The community expects its members to integrate their work and private life within the community and accept the authority of the community. It is important to recognise individual members'

contributions to the community in terms of members' personal efforts and in their achievements towards the community's goal.

There is a fifth group in the psychological contract that covers compensation, benefits security, and (career) advancement.

This group has elements covering all areas, including financial agreements. I have not included the economic and financial elements of intentional communities as it was not possible for me within the given time and space of this dissertation. But I am highly aware of the importance of the way finances are handled for all areas of adult life and that for some participants an alternative way of managing personal finances within the community would have informed their choice of community.

A psychological contract for members in intentional communities could entail the following aspects from a member's point of view:

- To live according to spiritual values for personal and community benefit;
- Willingness and possibility for personal, spiritual and professional growth; meaningful work;
- Mutual loyalty to fellow members and community; flexibility to answer community's and individual's needs;
- Integrate work and life within the community; willingness to share time, space-physical and emotional; and
- Accept authority of community, to enable an alternative way of life
- Regular (annual) possibility to review and change, if necessary, psychological contract

To make a contract there need to be at least two parties that can negotiate the contract. In some intentional communities it is not clear who these parties are, as members feel themselves to be 'the community'. If the community has agreed on a structure that gives certain people the authority to act on behalf of the community, then these people will officially be the ones to negotiate and agree the contract. Handy (1990) suggests that for voluntary organisations a co-operative contract may be suitable; this operates from the understanding

that you are there because you agree with the goals of the organisation and the people who work there, in which case you can't be told what to do but only be asked, because if you disagree you are quite entitled to refuse to do it (Handy 2009, p. 32).

This point raises questions about power and authority in communities, which causes difficulties for members and management groups. As mentioned in my first-order narrative, management groups are often seen as an external part of the community.

My data from the interviews contained many examples where participants struggled with priorities concerning the community's and their own need to maintain their values. Particular difficulties were experienced when the personal values and the community's expression of its values did not fit. According to Rousseau (1995), in actual fact mutuality of the agreement is seldom tested directly; people rely on their ability to predict what others will do as well as apparent good faith efforts and supportiveness and other nondirective indicators each understands and agrees to. Breach of the psychological contract tests the mutuality of the agreement. A breach occurs if a member of the community perceives that the community has failed to fulfil or delays a perceived promise. I will follow this train of thought from the point of view of the member perceiving a breach of contract, often also experienced as a breach of trust. It would be a very valuable and worthwhile research to explore breach of contract from the community's perspective towards the member.

#### ***4.5.2 Breach of Contract***

Participants experienced breach of contract in the areas of

- Personal autonomy to adjust their 'work-life balance' to their changing personal needs due to age, family needs
- Values, essential to the community, which are not upheld. By introducing governance structures as used in traditional business organisations without wider consultation of the community
- Loss of ownership of local communities, loss of authority and control

Burchel and Nichols (see Chapter 2) point out that for volunteers the ideological currency of their contract will be very important as volunteering is propelled by personal values. In other words, the dialectic process at the heart of the formation of the

voluntary actor requires both the notion of individual agency and a specific institutional environment that shapes the specific expression of his agency (O'Regan 2009) in my understanding this also applies to members of intentional communities. Participants struggled for cohesion or an ability to express their individual agency (values) and those of the specific institutional environment or community they had chosen. Participants are continuously testing their own and the community's values with their lived experience of the same. The most notable changes come through change in society, change in community members and changes brought about by state regulation.

#### ***4.5.3 Contract Malleability and Replicability***

Participants who took part in this research all have reached late middle age. Ng and Feldman (see Chapter 2) in their research found that older adults (mean age 50) were more able to tolerate deviations from expectations by adopting a strategy of optimism to regulate their emotions; they also have a greater understanding of others' perspectives and process positive information more deeply.

They also found that as individuals gained work experience, their perception of the work world would become more realistic and change in two ways:

First, greater work experience helps individuals develop more realistic standards of what 'good' and 'bad' job situations look like. Second, greater work experience inoculates employees from over-reacting to inevitable disappointment (Ng & Feldman 2009, pp.1062-3).

This is reflected in the interviews in participants' reflection of becoming more realistic and the organisation and themselves accepting more deviance than they did in earlier times.

An attitude of more acceptance and adjustment of goals as participants get older is, according to Ng and Feldman (2009), due to the belief that as an older adult it would be difficult to find another work situation in another organisation and they feel that leaving would create greater personal and financial sacrifices. While my data does not specifically prove this point, I can support this finding from my personal experiences, where older community members, after they left, struggled to achieve the same living standards, personally and financially, that they had in the community.

#### ***4.5.4 Commitment and Loyalty***

In the interviews participants showed commitment and loyalty to the community and its future, as well as to their fellow community members. Over the years the participants' lives became enmeshed with the other member's lives and the common task in the community.

Plant's observation on beliefs (Chapter 2) voice a similar view that beliefs are an ideological, personal and cultural construct, based on assimilating the ideas and theories of other people and integrating these with what one can learn from reflecting on one's personal experience in life. The positive outcome of such integration is a sense of coherence; the feeling that life makes sense. He says that value is attribute to changes – be it positive or negative – according to worldview and out of a need to find meaningful pattern in the events and changes in the personal environment.

The reason for taking a closer look at how individuals integrate experiences is to try to understand how they adapt to changes in values in their lives and what keeps participants who struggle with the dissonance of their personal values and the community's values in the community.

#### ***4.5.5 A possible future for Intentional Community***

The interviews show participants belief in community, in working co-operatively to create a lifestyle that reflects their shared core values, but it does not have to include sharing houses or finances.

The relational aspect was very important to participants and the increasing formalisation of relations was experienced as a loss of community values. Kanter (1972) found in her research of intentional communities “relations among community members are more important than are relations of members or the community outside the world” (p. 3). But despite community relationships being very important to participants, there is a wish to work with other organisations and to share and communicate communities' values. A need for an appropriate language to communicate and clarify values held by members and the community is felt to be a necessity for the continuance of the community. While the psychological contract developed for employment situations can be a guideline it

does not encompass all aspects of intentional communities and needs to be negotiated in a co-operative way.

The balance between individual and communal needs is highly delicate and sensitive. To find this balance is a fundamental need if the community is to persist. Whether it does or does not find this balance depends on the experience, insight, personalities and private values of the individual members (particularly the leaders) and how these are reflected in the overall functioning of their community and in the day to day interactions of members Schenker (1986 p. 183).

Considering the above findings I came to the conclusion that participants over the years of their membership have deepened and defined their values more clearly. They are still committed to their values and full of all the 'E's (energy, enthusiasm, excitement and effort) when talking about their values and a future for communities. They still feel that community is a good way of life to enact these values for their own and society's benefit. Participants showed tiredness with regards to external demands that add more of the kind of managerial work to their lives that many had chosen not to do. It allowed less time and energy for aspects of community and personal life that were important to them, like spirituality, social activities and nurturing personal interests. Loyalty to the organisation is maintained due to the personal relationships that have been built over years with members of the community and familiarity with a way of life that covers many years of personal history and personal beliefs. Taking into account the age of the members, loyalty towards the organisation might also be maintained in the hope that the present situation might improve or change and that they might not find another better or more secure situation, also bearing in mind family responsibilities that have accumulated over the years.

While participants are open to changing forms of community living, participants experience the relational aspect of community life as essential to negotiate personal and community changes, as well as to communicate their values and community values. After an initial exploration of the psychological contract in connection with intentional communities, I think it would be worthwhile to formulate a psychological contract between community and member that can be used as a tool to negotiate the individual's and the community's values and needs. This can also provide an alternative to a language adapted from the business world which does not address the ideological

currency of the relationship between community and member. In the absence of a possibility to negotiate with the community, members leave or try and create 'niche situations' in which they have a sense of ownership and autonomy and become an entity in themselves. The question of benefit and commitment to the community will then be raised and needs to be clarified.

As living in an intentional community is 'a way of life', consideration needs to be given to the fact that no two communities and no two individuals are the same; while there are common areas to be covered in the psychological contract, it will need individual negotiation for each member to answer their personal needs and contributions to the community in conjunction with the community's needs and obligations.

#### **4.5.6 Summary**

The interviews provided me with rich data, which I analysed under six headings in first and second-order narrative:

The headings are as follows:

- Searching for community
- Choice of community
- Personal development
- Growing awareness of gaps between community and member
  - Personal changes
  - Changes within community caused externally and internally
- Future of community's values and a language to express these values
- Personal future and commitment

I then related the findings to aspects of the psychological contract, bearing in mind that participants are members of intentional communities, whose motivation is comparable to the motivation of volunteers as well as the age range of participants.

I related the findings from the interviews to expectations from the community member and the expectations of the community towards its members and followed aspects of the psychological contract as described in the literature review.

The above described approach showed that with time members' values at joining the community have deepened and become clearer. At the same time members have become more accepting of deviances in the community, also described as more realistic, in recognition of personal changes, such as age and family. Members also recognise the changes between government bodies and community as eroding the relational aspects of community life. Members experience the process and language applied by government bodies to communities and their members does not foster trust, ownership of community, brotherliness and autonomy within the community. Members desire to work collectively towards common goals, forming a group that sees itself different from society, is not fulfilled and causes distress as members find it hard to integrate their personal values with the work they have to do to answer the community's need for survival.

Members deal with this dilemma in various ways, such as holding on to their personal values, but accepting a change of structure of community and searching for individual possibilities to affect change outside of the community with likeminded people in a less defined setting. Participants are still enthusiastic about community, as it answers their personal need to express their values through the values of the community. Participants feel that intentional communities benefit community at large.

A psychological contract for intentional communities would need to be formulated more consciously and clearly, according to Rousseau (1995). In actual fact mutuality of the agreement is seldom tested directly; people rely on their ability to predict what others will do and other nondirective indicators each understands and agrees to. Breach of this contract tests the mutuality of the contract. Participants experienced breach of contract in the areas of :

- Personal autonomy, their need to adjust their work-life balance to their changing needs due to age or the family.
- Values essential to the community which are not upheld by the governing bodies.
- Organisational strategies and goals are not clear and not experienced as developed collectively within the community. A sense of loss of control and ownership of the community is experienced.

Participants experience a dilemma between their values and loyalty to the community and other members of the community. The psychological contract for intentional communities needs to be negotiated co-operatively with the members.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I will relate my findings and analysis to my research question and outline some areas that I perceive to be of particular importance to a psychological contract for intentional communities and its members, as well as point out areas that I have not been able to include in my research due to time and space limitations.

This research was conducted mainly in an Irish context (one participant lived in a community in Scotland). The age group of participants was limited (around the age of 50) due to the fact that I could not find younger participants; perhaps given more time I would have been more successful in widening the age group of participants. It is also important to highlight that all three communities involved are based on Christianity and involved in the care sector, two communities in particular rely heavily on government funding. In the present financial climate, where care services are viewed in terms of 'value for money' this causes changes and insecurities in these organisations. Changes in governance and perception of the organisation in society (in the case of abuse cases) are mentioned in all interviews; therefore the research data reflects a specific time, predominantly in Ireland. I have not included eco villages and other intentional communities that do not rely on government funding. While there was ample literature on the psychological contract for employment situations, and a small amount of literature on psychological contracts and volunteering, I only found a reference to it for intentional communities.

### **5.2 Intentional Communities and Psychological Contract**

As the name implies, intentional communities are based on intentions and expectations to live a way of life that expresses the values of its members. After many years in community members are committed to their values and feel deeply about them. Their personal development is based on these values. Members question the increasing governance and loss of authority and autonomy within the community, and with that feel that the essential values of their community are being diluted or eroded. There is loyalty to the community and fellow members, but when it comes to the physical manifestation of the community there is a greater flexibility than there is concerning the values. While communities traditionally were more all-encompassing and inward

looking, there is now an interest to link in locally with other organisations who are striving for the same values. The future of the community is seen as part of society. At the same time participants remember the time they joined the community with fondness and relate back to the values they met at the time and measure their experience now against the past. There is a perceived need for 'a language' to communicate personal and community values and goals in such a way that they can become part of internal and external discussions, as well as allow members to share their experiences (which were often hard won). Following my research in chapter 2 on the psychological contract, I think the strong relational and emphatic element of the psychological contract would provide a good framework for communities and its member to negotiate values as well as needs. This internal discussion in turn would help to gain clarity and a language to define the essential values and ways of the community and share them with wider society and increasing numbers of employees in the communities. Maybe forming a community of members, who strive for the same values in a different physical community structure?

For the purpose of this research I focused on the question as to whether the psychological contract, even though it is mainly researched for employment situations, could be developed as a 'tool' to negotiate expectations in terms of values and needs for members of intentional communities. By looking at breach of contract in relation to the age of the member I gained a clearer focus on the aspects more specific to intentional communities and their members, who were part of this research. To formulate a psychological contract for members of intentional communities, I found that the following areas needed to be recognised as needing special attention:

The person who negotiates the contract with the member needs to have an understanding of the member's values and needs, personally, socially and professionally. In practical terms this might involve different groups for areas involving pay, insurance, and pensions, for example, and areas more concerned with the relational and spiritual aspect of the community as well as personal development. Family and community is an area that would benefit from further research, as it plays a big role for both member and community.

The person or persons negotiating the psychological contract also need to have the authority of the community to make decisions. This touches on areas such as power and control, including finances, within the community, which are often not transparent and could do with further investigation.

Attention needs to be given to the fact that members have a great need for authenticity concerning their values and actions. The community and its members' existence are closely intertwined; therefore changes in the community can lead to role conflicts and make the member question his authenticity.

Clarity is needed regarding personal and community responsibility for the community's goals and values, to maintain a sense of ownership of the community and its activity. Gaps between community and members' goals and values can be perceived as a breach of contract and lead to loss of trust.

Specific attention needs to be given to members regarding changes due to ageing, to foster open and honest discussion and avoid the member withdrawing from the concerns of the community, due to experiencing low contract replicability.

At least once a year, the psychological contract should be reviewed with the relevant group. (Keep personal notes, or ask another member or friend to do it for you, to remember what was said and not what you heard.)

Any discussion between member and community will involve trust that each party involved wants the contract to be mutually beneficial. As I mentioned in my literature review, levels of trust can differ according to a person's previous experiences. This needs to be taken into account when discussing a psychological contract; I believe no psychological contract can be successfully negotiated without trust.

My personal experience has shown me that, if dealt with successfully, a situation of breach of trust will strengthen the community and increase commitment to the community. It might be interesting to research how often breach of trust has been the main reason for intentional communities to cease or members to leave, in comparison to other reasons. This research was based on the member's part in the psychological

contract. To understand the community's part of the contract further research could be done to gain a clear understanding of the community's expectations and obligations towards community members in light of the community's values and tasks.

Conducting this research raised many new questions, but for me, and I hope for others too, opened up a pathway for communication and negotiation that is badly needed if we believe in the need for intentional community, whether for our personal or others' benefit, as an alternative choice of lifestyle where people can support each other in realising their values.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Consent Form



### Consent Form

Research Study Title: Personal Values and Intentional Communities

#### Clarification of the purpose of the research

With my research I intend to gain some insight into the role of personal values for members and past members of intentional communities.

A lot of changes from outside of the communities involved in social care are changing the internal landscape of the communities. How do members of intentional communities reconcile their personal values with these changes?

#### Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

You will be asked to take part in an interview, which I will tape.

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

Do you understand the information provided?	Yes/No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes/No
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	Yes/No
Are you aware that your interview will be audiotaped?	Yes/No

#### Confirmation that involvement in the research study is voluntary

Your participation in the interview is voluntary and you are free to end the interview at any time. You are not obliged to answer questions that cause you discomfort.

**Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations**

The interviews will only be available to me and you. If any unforeseen need arises for someone else to hear them I will let you know and look for your consent.

I will destroy the tapes and notes I made from the tapes after my dissertation has been marked.

**Any other relevant information**

If you have any queries or concerns about this research you can contact All Hallows College Postgraduate office: [postgrad@allhallows.ie](mailto:postgrad@allhallows.ie) or tel. 01 8520756

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Date:

## **Appendix 2: Questions**

The first four questions have more to do with finding the community:

1. Why did you join a community?
2. Did you search for the right community?
3. Did you try different communities?
4. What is the most important aspect for you of the community you joined?

The next questions focus more on your own values:

5. What is most important for you personally
6. Did your values ever change and if so why?
7. Have community values influenced your personal values and if so how?
8. How do you deal with discrepancies between your own and the community's values?

What is your current experience of living in /out of the community:

9. Why do/did you stay in/leave the community?
10. Would you like to make any changes to the present situation?
11. Why would you want to make changes or why would you not want to make changes?
12. Is there anything you would like to add or explain?