DPsych thesis

Unveiling a blind spot... a moment of truth. Psychotherapists' lived experience of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness: findings from a hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry

McGovern, M.

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Full bibliographic citation: McGovern, M. 2021. Unveiling a blind spot... a moment of truth. Psychotherapists' lived experience of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness: findings from a hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry. DPsych thesis Middlesex University / Metanoia Institute

Year: 2021

Publisher: Middlesex University Research Repository

Available online: https://repository.mdx.ac.uk/item/18v097

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Unveiling a Blind Spot...A Moment of Truth

Psychotherapists' Lived Experience of Psychological Blind Spots and Moments of Self-Awareness: Findings from a Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry

Melanie McGovern

M00655332

A Project submitted to Middlesex University and Metanoia Institute in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies.

2021

Academic Advisor: Dr. Stephen Goss

Academic Advisor: Dr. Nigel Copsey

Academic Consultant: Dr. Rupert King

Word count: 72,655 (excluding tables and footnotes)

Fig.1Eclipse of awareness ...A new reality dawns

Eclipse of Awareness

Ominous skies

Portentous clouds

Cast dark shadows

Obfuscate the light

Latent knowingness

Not ripe for harvest

Levels and layers

Depth and breadth

The herald of change

Auguries of potentiality

A ray of hope

Golden and glittering

Beautiful and kind

Fractured the falsehoods

Halted my gait

Forced a pause

Lighted the truth

Awareness made manifest

Open whats closed

Question the habitual

Seek deeper meaning

A privileged moment

The ultimate prize

The greatest gift

Worth more than wealth

To see the world through another lens

(Reflective musing Melanie McGovern, Jan 2020)

Abstract

Aims: This study investigated a cohort of seven experienced psychotherapists (from different clinical modalities) and sought a greater understanding of their lived experience of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots by means of an exploratory qualitative study. The primary aim was to provide evocative descriptions of the phenomena together with an understanding of its implications, for psychotherapy research, training and clinical practice.

Methodology and Design:This naturalistic study took a hermeneutic phenomenological epistemological stance to generate sufficiently rich lived experience descriptions through dialogic engagement with the participants and the transcribed text via analyses. Qualitative data was collected from a diverse range of sources including; philosophical texts, peer reviewed articles, participants' written descriptions, phenomenological interviews, exploration of metaphor and the researcher's anecdotal writings and reflections. Rigorous steps of analysis were followed, which included in-depth content analysis of both the interviews and reflexive material to help fully understand the research findings. Max van Manen's (2014) *Phenomenology of Practice* including his thematic approach was the central method of analysing the developing data (2014, 2002 &1990). Critical reflection of my own personal and professional experience of the phenomena strengthened the transparency of the study and aided interpretation and analysis (Etherington, 2016).

Findings and Discussion*:* The findings revealed that, for therapists, manifested moments of self-awareness encompassed five major themes: 'Spontaneous clarity -- A new reality dawns'; 'Cross the conscious threshold -- Makes the truth much bigger'; 'Inner knowingness manifests'; 'Tipping point'; and 'Vacillation'. These themes evidenced the participants felt sense of a moment of self-awareness as a cultivation of consciousness, that often emerged from within to engender a new perspective on reality. This occurred in an unexpected or an oscillatory manner and culminated at a certain point in time. From psychological blind spots five themes emerged: 'Eclipse of awareness'; 'Automaticity'; 'Safeguard self'; 'Polarised perspective' and 'Familial opacities'. Participants understood their experience of a psychological blind spot as an obstruction of awareness that presented as a means of protection or as a form of 'tunnel vision'. It often manifested automatically and in relation to another or within the context of the family unit.This study contributes a unique insight into

the therapist's lived experience of the phenomena. It adds to existing literature in eliciting its essence with a greater breadth and depth of clarity.

Clinical Implications and Products: The findings evidenced identifying particular moments of clarity in psychotherapy had the potential to liberate one's blind spot and assist the identification and promotion of distinct opportunities for client change and growth. This study was awarded a research bursary from IACP due to its potential clinical contribution. Knowledge reaped from the findings have been transferred into academic articles and disseminated in clinical workshops, posters and at national and international conferences.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I wish to express great gratitude to my best friend and husband, James. Thank you does not come close to the depth of appreciation I desire to convey. I believe anything is achievable with the right supports. James, thank you for your unwavering belief in me. Your ever present, indomitable support throughout my doctoral quest and the years preceding have made the impossible possible.

To my academic advisors; firstly to Dr. Stephen Goss, thank you for your patience. Thank you for the support you offered me from the embryonic stages of my research road and for gently challenging my own obstinate blind spots. Similarly, I wish to convey gratitude to Dr. Nigel Copsey for reviewing this thesis from a holistic perspective and recognising its real clinical implications. Thank you for your encouragement at the late stages of this project.

I wish to further articulate heartfelt gratitude to my brilliant academic consultant namely Dr. Rupert King. Thank you for showing me another way to view my reality; to experience the phenomenological world of depth, imagination and true expression. Thank you for evoking in me a sense of curiosity as to what the text might be trying to articulate. Thank you for stoking up the wonder of my inner child, to allow me see the world afresh and through another lens. But most of all thank you for your kindness and openness for taking me on as your student and giving of your precious time so generously.

I wish to thank each and every participant who not only gave their time freely but who also reflected and shared intimately in the interviews and their written reflections. The participants' ability to understand the phenomena and communicate its true essence is reflected in the depth and richness of the findings. The therapists' powerful insights and recollections have grounded this hermeneutic phenomenological study and brought the research to life by giving the phenomena new meaning. I am truly grateful to each of my eight participants. Thank you for your enthusiasm, effort and time.

Thank you to the academic support of Dr. Paula Seth, Dr. Deborah Kelly and Dr. Linda Finlay. Thank you all for taking a real interest in my chosen subject and offering important insight and great wisdom at critical stages of the project. The input and feedback from the aforementioned helped shape and influence the research significantly. The professional

academic support at various times throughout this study was crucial to enable me move forward with the research and ensured I did not get stuck in a vacuum ofsolipsism.

Thank you to my peer support group and soon to be doctors of psychotherapy; Gill Harvey, Joanne Griffin and Claire Mitchell. Your constant encouragement and support was the backbone to this research project. I value the honesty, kindness and humanity each one of you offered. We have weathered this doctoral storm together and therefore I can safely say I have friends for life in these women.

Thank you to my signatories, Dr. Annemarie Craven and Dr. Thomas Conway. Thank you for your support and critical eye at a decisive time in my research.

Thank you to the two greatest products of this doctoral journey, my toddler daughter, Florence Anne and the 39 week old unborn child in my womb. Thank you both for keeping me grounded, teaching me what really matters in life and encouraging daily reflections and more times distractions from all things doctoral related. Thank you for teaching me that the female fraternity of working mothers can break this ‘glass ceiling’ and experience life from a different perspective.

Last but by no means least; I wish to express sincere gratitude to my family, inlaws and good friends. A special thanks to my three sisters, who have always encouraged my dreams including my Mother and Father who have never doubted my ability. Thank you all for being important role models that led the way and exampled good choices. Thank you for being you.

Statement of Authorship

I hereby certify that I am solely responsible for the content and writing of the dissertation. I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work. This dissertation has ethical clearance from Metanoia Institue and Middlesex University. It is submittedin partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctorate of Psychotherapy and Counselling by Professional Studies (DProf).

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The broad aim of the present study was to shed light on psychotherapists' lived experiences of the phenomena of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness. The intention was to gain a further understanding of the meaning individuals attribute to each phenomenon and how they make sense of their experiences through the narratives they construct. Emerging out of this aim was the intention to describe how this knowledge may impact on clinical practice. Throughout this study, I will address each phenomenon independently, discussing the interconnected relationship between them.

In the initial part of this study, I offer background information on my chosen topic. I subsequently present a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, including within a psychotherapeutic context. I offer an account of the methodological approach I have chosen and a complete description of the findings from the participants' experiences. This is followed by a discussion of how these outcomes relate to the current literature. Finally, I consider the clinical implications of the findings in relation to practice. The complete set of findings represented multiple perspectives on the topic which enabled useful products to develop such as workshops, articles and posters. This paper concludes with an account of the various products that have emerged from this project. Throughout each chapter and within the appendices, critical reflection supports the rigour, methodological integrity and transparency of the study.

1.1 Personal Reflection

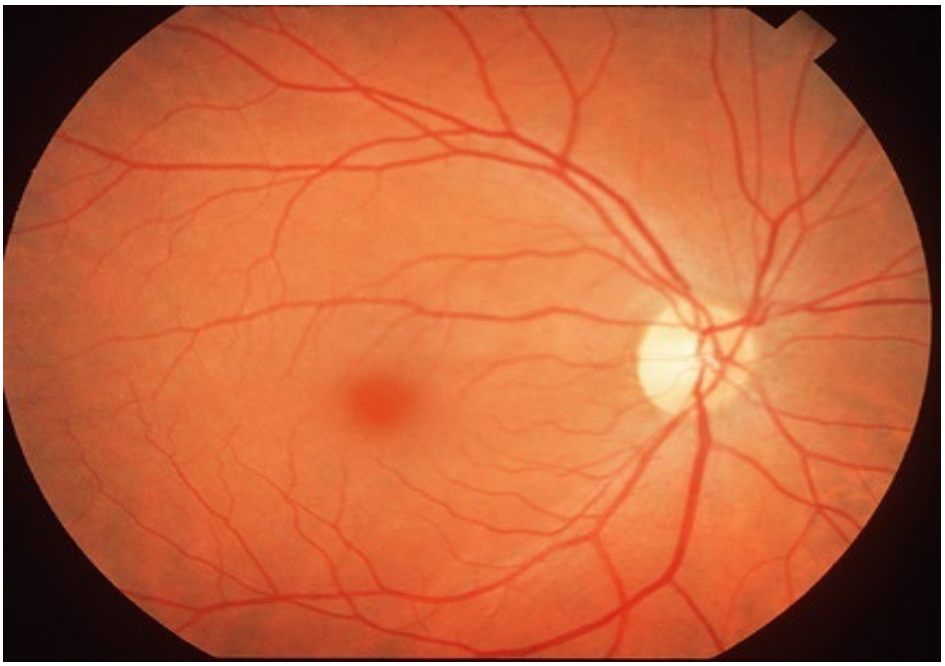

Fig.2Retinal image of a physiological blind spot

My chosen topic originated from my personal experience of unveiling a blind spot through a moment of clarity (see Appendix I a). Further to this, my interest in this topic was derived from my experience within a clinical context (see Appendix I c). A moment of truth presented unexpectedly to me after a period of years during which I had experienced dissatisfaction in my chosen profession. Ironically, I worked as an Optometrist for over a decade, where I measured anatomical blind spots daily (see Fig.2). At dawn one morning an internal truth was made manifest that revealed an inner knowingness encouraging my return to college. It illuminated the depth of the shadow that had once obscured my vision. I subsequently became aware of numerous blind spots such as implicit fears in relation to job safety; latent self-views in the form of failing to reach my potential and unconscious interpersonal styles of relating that had created an eclipse of awareness (McGovern, 2020, 2021). A part of my mental life was, up to that point, not obvious to me. Motivations, conflicting feelings, beliefs and interpersonal styles of relating were buried beyond my awareness at various stages in my life, and therefore I remained ignorant of the motives that fuelled my behaviours. I made countless choices in my life, many in unawareness. Furthermore an internal narrative formulated in my youth shaped the adult I was growing into. Choices in relation to my career, relationships and friendships were driven by implicit

motives that were integral to my being beyond what I explicitly understood. Questioning those blind spots demanded rigorous introspection, and an openness to examine myself honestly. The moment of awareness had a ripple effect, and my perspective on life completely altered, opening up into a world of possibilities and synchronicities. For the first time since childhood, life began to flow for me; I became autonomous. I became responsible for my life, and I made choices to nourish that felt sense of freedom. I no longer looked to others to validate me or encourage my dream.

However, awareness of my unconscious processes was not merely a way of understanding myself but was an important tool in therapy for implicit motives, and non-conscious ways of relating influenced the therapeutic alliance unwittingly. Furthermore, I have witnessed many moments of self-awareness in therapy that challenged a client's latent attitude. This revealed an alternative perspective on their situation and ultimately encouraged change in their cognitions, behaviours and interpersonal relations. I feel it is a large part of my integrative therapeutic role to engender moments of awareness and go beyond the explicit words of my clients to unveil implicit meaning.

Researching implicit motives and non-conscious processes presented many challenges for my research. MacMahon's (2020) acknowledged the methodological difficulties of exploring blind spots due to their implicit nature. However, Fink and Husserl (as cited in Hanna 1995) stated that the unconscious can be grasped and examined in a methodical way after the prior analysis of being conscious. Similarily, Timms (1987) affirmed such insights can be gained only belatedly. Therefore, a blind spot can only be understood retrospectively and through awareness. A moment of self-awareness offers potential insight into such blind spots. Therefore, upon reflection and with the support of academic advice, psychological blind spots and moments of awareness were investigated collectively. Genuine curiosity led me to pursue this topic. My enthusiasm to unearth new understanding on the phenomena would prove the bedrock to this research project (see Appendix I b). Throughout the research process, it was imperative for me to remain transparent, acknowledge my embedded assumptions (Kafle, 2011) and remain cognisant of how they may have influenced the research process, including interpretations of the data. I ensured that they fed into the research in a creative, imaginative and useful way (Kelly, 2019).

My interest in psychological blind spots has been hugely shaped by my own experiences. And while the major thrust of this research is founded on literature, empirical research and

my findings, I bring ample personal reflections into this study to supplement it. My personal reflections have been integral to every aspect of this research process. The reflections have helped to bring a level of truth and honesty that has supported the integrity of this study.

1.2 Overview and Background

1.2.1 Psychological Blind Spots

> The inherent opacity within consciousness is paradoxical when the ego's main feat is the triumph of consciousness over the unconscious. (Jung 1940, p. 167)

Brooke, (2015, p. 54) agrees with Jung's ideology stating that "there is no consciousness that is transparent to itself". Dawkins states that the psychological research evidence that has emerged has confirmed that the unconscious mind is the rule and not the exception (as cited in Bargh & Morsella 2008). Furthermore, conclusions from Galatzer-Levy's (2017) study challenge Freudian thinking; for example, Freud's implicit assumption that consciousness is an ordinary accompaniment of mental life is replaced with the idea that consciousness is a rare mental process occurring primarily in times of challenge. *Der Spiegel* talks of the renaissance of psychology of non-conscious processes 150 years after the birth of Freud (Leuzinger-Bohleber & Solms, 2017). Dr. Jones states that Freud's greatest contribution to science was the conception of the unconscious mind (as cited in MacIntyre, 2004). Of the many concepts theorised by psychologists, none have so impressed themselves upon the public mind as that of the unconscious (MacIntyre, 2004). Freud describes a lack of direct awareness of consciousness as non-conscious, deeper mental processes (1924). Both Jung and Freud had a common recognition of the unconscious as a fundamental, empirically demonstrable psychic reality (Von Franz, 1975).Freud's general theory states that there is an omnipresent causation exerted upon the consciousness that is unconscious in nature (MacIntyre, 2004). For Hillman, "the unconscious runs through everything, including psychology itself" (Drob, 1999, p. 67).The fundamental question is whether non-conscious processes akin to psychological blind spots are, as Freud knew them, "an epiphenomenon of consciousness, arising from repressions", or whether, as Jung thought, it is "the autonomous creative matrix of normal psychic life" (as cited in Von Franz, 1975, p. 6).

> Anything that is derived merely from rationality risks being profoundly inauthentic unless it bears witness to the destabilizing presence of the unconscious. (Jung, as cited in Rowland, 2005, p. 23)

According to Leuzinger-Bohleber and Solms (2017), we are driven by non-conscious impulses and motives that are out of our awareness. This information shapes and influence how we live (Craig, 2008). Broad (1968), meanwhile, states that unconscious processes such as psychological blind spots are often simply desires or emotions which we habitually ignore or misdirect, or which become dislocated. Every day, we live far beyond the bounds of our consciousness, without the knowledge that the life of non-conscious processes is also going on within us (Leuzinger-Bohleber& Solms, 2017). Jung avows that "below the threshold of consciousness, everything is seething with life" (1961/1995, p. 202). These experiences include all that one has lived through, regardless of the degree to which one is aware or not (Craig, 2008). Furthermore, everybody's experience within his or her own existential circumstances is organised and held within one's own existence, most of which is beyond our awareness (Jung, 1961/1995). Blind spots are therefore a separate area of mental life which provides background to conscious mental activity (Norman, 2010).

> Consciousness, no matter how extensive it may be, must always remain the smaller circle within the greater circle of the unconscious, an island surrounded by the sea; and, like the sea itself, the unconscious yields an endless and self –replenishing abundance of living creatures, a wealth beyond our fathoming (Jung, 1954, p. 178).

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* Joseph Campbell reminds us of the beauty and power of being in touch with the underworld of our mind (as cited in Kahn, 2002). There would be no philosophy, no search for wisdom, if we knew everything, with no vagueness, obscurity or error (Sokolowski, 2000). Romanyshyn considers creating awareness of non-conscious motives, ideas and fears not only an ethical imperative, but a productive one (2006). Jung's essays contain appeals for the recognition of psychic life that is not within awareness but which has the potential to become conscious (as cited in Brooke, 2015). Indeed, this study could be deemed a response to this request, whereby gaining a deeper understanding of one's experience of psychological blind spots may support learning and further knowledge of non-conscious processes.

1.2.2 Moments of Self-Awareness

> The more light we bring into awareness, the deeper the darkness of the unconscious becomes. The more we come to know, the more we come to know we do not know. (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 30)

Since ancient times, the importance of self-knowledge has been hailed by sages and philosophers (McConnell et al., 2011). We have enormous power added to the existence of self-awareness, through qualitative subjective conscious states (Searle, 2013). Vazire and Carlson (2011) states that much remains to be learned about how we can create increased self-awareness. We learn about ourselves through our acts, through the exteriorisation of our lives and the effects produced on others (Ricoeur, 1994). Our sense of self, which we assume to be relatively stable and enduring, is actually created anew with each moment, through a constant flux of thoughts, images and sensations (Palmer, 1998). Romanyshyn states that we have a responsibility to become aware of the part we play in bringing greater awareness to the psyche (2013). Hillman and Hegel state that the essence of psychological life is the deepening of the psyche's own experience, creating moments of self-awareness, which, for Jung, is tantamount to the process of individuation (as cited in Drob, 1999).

> The self never develops automatically; one becomes a self only to the extent that he can know it, affirm it, assert it. (May, 1975, p. 141)

A moment of self-awareness is a modern expression for an inner experience which is as old as humanity; "the experience which occurs when something alien and unknown over-whelms us from within, when dreams, inspirations or hunches which we know we have not made up push their way into consciousness" (Von Franz, 1975, p. 7). A moment of awareness emerges from the capacity to heighten one's level of consciousness; hence, one is "no longer immersed in the impersonal vicissitudes and passions of the still-unconscious self" (Brooke, 2015, p. 135). The attainment of consciousness would appear to be the result of acknowledgment and the retention of psychic experience, enabling the individual to combine it with what he or she has learned, to feel its significance emotionally and to sense its meaning for his or her life (Samuels et al., 1986). Jung wrote about "nascent psychic contents" which, although unconscious, have the potential to come into awareness at any time (Von Franz, 1975, p. 8). Therefore, if something emerges from the unconscious, it emerges as a fresh insight as much as an embodied, felt sense (Brooke, 2015).

> The phenomenon of darkness conditions the possibility of light, which reflect what light and darkness are (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 168).

Metaphorically, this study is interested in the moment, when light illuminates the darkness; 44when an eclipse of awareness is unveiled and consciousness is created (see Fig.1). There is increasing research to suggest that awareness of self-knowledge is poor (Carlson, 2013). In addition, research has demonstrated limits to self-knowledge in a wide range of areas (Duning et. al., 2004). Vazire and Carlson (2010) observe that self-knowledge concerning moments of awareness exists but is very under-developed. There are many people who lag behind their own potential level of self-awareness and behind the knowledge which has been brought to consciousness by other human beings throughout their life (Jung, 1961/1995). Hence, they demand to attain at the end of their lives more self-awareness which they failed to win throughout life. Unfortunately, a large number of people never espouse to anything but a conventional view of the world, and remain blind in this unreflective attitude (Jung, 1961/1995).

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The following aims and objectives were formulated to direct and guide this research study.

a) An aim of this doctoral dissertation is to explore a cohort of experienced psychotherapists and to seek a greater understanding of their lived experience of the psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of self-awareness (MSA), through the use of semi-structured interviews and transcribed text via analyses (van Manen, 2014, 1990).

b) The objective of the current study is grounded in therapist's phenomenological understanding (perception of human experiences) and centred on the voices of men and women from various psychotherapeutic modalities.

c) This naturalistic exploratory study will take a hermeneutic phenomenological stance to generate descriptive knowledge and analytical concepts. I will aid the credibility of this research by adhering to a recognised methodology from influential phenomenologist (van Manen, 2014, 1990).

d) Another aim of this study is to own my personal assumptions, which will shape the interpretations of the findings. I will endeavour to remain transparent in relation to all aspects of this study (Seth, 2017).

e) An additional objective is to conduct a dialogue with the participants and academic colleagues in terms of data collection (interview transcripts), analysis and discussions to support further rigour of this study.

f) A further aim is to disseminate relevant findings that have clinical implications, are practical and are therapeutically applicable.

g) The final aim is to formulate products that are therapeutically supportive and which increase knowledge of this topic.

1.4 Semantic Challenges of Search Terms

> To see something in a new imaginative way is to see it other than it has been seen before and to integrate it into a new semantic context. (Madison, 1988, p. 30)

I choose the words psychological blind spot to represent an area of unawareness, while respecting other synonyms as this presents my integrative approach to such a phenomenon

The terms "moments of self-awareness" and "psychological blind spots" are intrinsically ambiguous, as they are both revealing and concealing (Brooke, 2015). *Moreover, the etymology of the terms is vague.* They do not possess single, unambiguous meanings, but rather a spectrum of meanings (Leuzinger-Bohleber et al., 2017). I learned that the choice of these terms for this research involved many semantic challenges. No one word is misunderstood more than the word "unconscious" (Craig, 2008). Synonyms of the terms were explored with critical friends, academic colleagues and my supervisor. I found this a very arduous process that demanded much reading from various academic sources and theorists, including months of critical reflection.

I considered various synonyms of psychological blind spots including the following: "cognitive blind spots", "cognitive biases", "areas of unawareness", "unconscious blind spot" "non-conscious influence". Therefore, throughout this document I have included various terms and synonyms to represent psychological blind spots. These include; "implicit", "latent", "unconscious" ,"unaware", "non-conscious", "blindness in a particular area", "blind to a feeling or emotion", "non-conscious behaviour" and "unconscious motives", "beyond one's awareness", "areas of unawareness". I use the terms interchangeably, referring to those areas that exist without our conscious knowledge, the ones that manifest themselves in our actions and reactions often without us realising it. Synonyms and terms of a moment of awareness used throughout this document included; "development of self-awareness", "epiphanies", "privileged moments", "moments of being", "creation of awareness", "attainment of consciousness", "interpretation of latencies", "manifesting new self-knowledge". Furthermore, moments of awareness and the creation of awareness are uses interchangeably, as both meaning respect the same process of growing into awareness or gaining new insights

1.5 Definitions

This research demanded an operational definition of both phenomena.

1.5.1 Psychological Blind Spots

The foremost challenge I encountered in this research was defining a phenomenon akin to a psychological blind spot. As an Optometrist I assessed physiological blind spots daily. This refers to a zone of functional blindness all normally sighted people have in each eye, due to an absence of photoreceptors where the optic nerve passes through the surface of the retina. (Miller et al., 2015). Encarta (2019) affirms that a blind spot is an area of ignorance or direction in which somebody's vision is obscured. However, there is no clear concept of a psychological blind spot; Freud, Jung and neo-Freudians all have slightly different ideas regarding it (MacIntyre, 2004). Jung warns of intellectuals who seek exact definitions, as the concept of the unconscious, or a lack of awareness, is an elusive one (Von Franz, 1975). Bargh and Morsella (2008) propose an alternative perspective, in which non-conscious processes are defined in terms of their unintentional nature and inherent lack of awareness.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines unawareness as a state of being oblivious, unknowing, unconscious, incognisant and unmindful (Urdang, 1991). In addition, a blind spot may be defined as a prejudice, or a subject area, of which one is often unaware (Webster, 2010; Cambridge, 2017). Moreover, blind spots may refer to the characteristics that others consensually attribute to a person, which the person is not aware in relation to her/himself (self-perception) or his/her reputation (metaperceptions) (Galrein, 2013). In addition, psychological blind spots may consist of hidden weaknesses or hidden strengths that are beyond awareness (Gallrein, 2016).

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), a psychological blind spot is a lack of insight or awareness, which is often persistent, about a specific area of one's behaviour or personality, typically because recognition of one's true feelings and motives would be painful (APA, 2021). The APA further acknowledge that in traditional psychoanalysis, it is regarded as an defence against recognition of repressed impulses or memories that would threaten the patient's ego (APA, 2021). Repressed memories are unconscious, which is the part of the mind which is inaccessible to the conscious mind but which affects behaviour and emotions (Oxford, 2021). "Unconscious" can mean without conscious intention or without awareness (MacIntyre, 2004). Recent literature confirmed the difficulty I encountered in defining an elusive phenomenon such as a blind spot. In 2016, Wellington Kunaka defined a blind spot as an issue that presents a form of challenge by falling outside of the individual's immediate awareness and can present in many forms e.g. lack of knowledge. However, some years later, MacMahon's (2020) definition of the word blind spot differed in that it included many psychoanalytical concepts such as; transference-countertransference enactment, empathic failures, and misunderstandings. Therefore, it was obvious that psychological blind spots have several meanings. However, while respecting the various interpretations of the meaning blind spot, it was imperative that I formulated a clear working definition for the purpose of my research. The definition I chose differs slightly from MacMahon's (2020) as it is not solely conceptualised around psychoanalytical theory. However, it includes a more integrative approach than that of Wellington Kunaka (2016). Therefore, an operational definition of a psychological blind spot is; a part of our mental life of which we are unaware, including a lack of insight relating to one's personality, behaviour, thoughts or beliefs. It potentially includes impulses, motives, emotions and prejudices that operate unwittingly and that may influence one's everyday activities and conscious experience (Norman, 2010). Blind spots may include informational barriers such as implicit

attitudes, latent self-views, unconscious bias or motivational barriers (Vazire, 2010), such as coping mechanisms or ego defences (Clemens, 2012). Psychological blind spots may emerge via a deliberate process which is itself misdirected and, at other times, habitually ignored (Broad, 1968). They can include life-defining relationships or core beliefs that are integral to a person's being beyond what a person explicitly understands or expresses (Tratter, 2015).

I have chosen the above definition of a psychological blind spot while respecting criticism of it. It was formulated over a lengthy process of reading broadly on the topic to include both empirical research and philosophical literature. I further critically reflected and graciously took on board academic advice which guided me towards a more integrative definition. This aligned with my clinical outlook and philosophical disposition. Furthermore, I have chosen an eclectic mix of theorists to help define this phenomenon. The theorists emanate from miscellaneous paradigms of thought, adding to this integrative definition. I have further conceptualised this phenomenon within the various clinical modalities in chapter two.

1.5.2 Moments of Self-Awareness

This research sought to explore the lived experience of moments of self-awareness from the perspective of practising psychotherapists. In the psychotherapy field, the term has been used to denote positive change that is both sudden and profound. The term refers to any type of "deep understanding, especially of oneself that often yields a different way of looking at things" (Kounios & Beeman, 2015, p. 70). A moment of self-awareness is regularly interpreted as being similar to an epiphany. Synonyms of epiphany include revelation, moment of awareness, knowledge of thought without a reason, immediate cognition, and intuitive understanding (Fletcher, 2008). Epiphany originates from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, which means 'manifestation'. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2011, p. 480) defines an epiphany as "a moment of sudden and great revelation". Neville and Cross (2016) describe this moment as a sudden insight spurred by an event or experience that leads to personal and enduring transformation with respect to one's core understanding. These experiences create an emphatic response which often leads to a more informed way of thinking about oneself (Neville & Cross, 2016). Jarvis (1997, p. 605), meanwhile, defines an epiphany as a "sudden discontinuous change, leading to profound, positive and enduring

transformation through reconfiguration of an individual's most deeply held beliefs about self and world". Jauregui (2003, p. 3) conveys the mystery and familiarity of the concept:

> A revelation usually brought on by some simple, homely, or commonplace experience out of conventional time and space and language. At such times, it can strike one that the universe is bigger than it was a minute ago and so are you.

Such a synthesis follows from the assumption that while individual authors have used somewhat inconsistent conceptual frameworks, they all refer to a common process involving a sudden, brief, vivid inner experience of heightened awareness (McGovern, 2021). For the purpose of this study, a moment of self-awareness is defined as a sudden insight that results in deeper understanding and a heightened level of consciousness (McGovern, 2021),one which may inform an alternative way of viewing one's perspective (Kounios & Beeman, 2015) or reveal a blind spot.

1.6 Framing the Research Question

Attaining worthy knowledge via research requires an appropriate research question. Reflecting on this, I sought to understand psychotherapists' lived experience of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness, with the intention of revealing the essential nature or essence of the phenomena and the implications for clinical practice. The research question resulted from the process of refining the layers of the research topic (Breakwell, 2012).The comprehensive literature review allowed the research question to evolve. In an attempt to address the aims and objectives of this study, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are psychotherapists' interpretations of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots?
2. What are psychotherapists' lived experiences or felt senses of the phenomena, both implicitly and explicitly?
3. What are the characteristics of blind spots and moments of self-awareness that are identified by the participants within a clinical context?

4. What is the psychotherapeutic significance, including clinical implications, of creating knowledge on this topic?

1.7 Reflexivity

> Reflexivity invites us to think about how our own reactions to the research context, and the data actually make possible certain sights and understandings. (Willig, 2008, p. 18)

Qualitative studies, by their very nature, acknowledge the researcher as "part of the research" (Krefting, 1991, p. 218). The observer influences what is observed (Yalom, 2008), and therefore, I rejected the possibility of functioning as a neutral investigator (Du Plock, 2016). On the topic of objectivity, it is recognised that when exploring subjective experiences, the researcher's own attitude and values cannot be excluded. For that reason, I have used the first-person pronoun and taken responsibility for my views, thus lessening the distance from subject to object (Crotty, 1998). My own interpretations were invariably included in this study, including at the interview process stage, when transcribing the data and when presenting the findings. The reflexive use of the term "self" is widely recognised as a key component of successful outcomes in therapy and research (Bager-Charleson, 2014; Wosket, 1999).This was a useful learning to incorporate throughout my study, from conception and planning through to completion. It was a pro-active process of retrospective reflection (Patton, 1999; McFadyen &Rankin, 2016), which enabled me to consider how moments of self-awareness and blind spots may have shaped my suppositions and consequently informed the research.

Romanyshyn (2013) affirms that psychology must go deeper and make a place for the researcher's unconscious dynamics in the research. Furthermore, Finlay (2002) suggests that a secondary level of self-awareness may be required when practising reflexivity, in order to critically evaluate the reflexive process itself. Bager-Charleson (as cited in Goss & Stevens, 2016, p. 65) states the importance of "relational supervision to facilitate the exploration of blind spots, defensive mechanisms and unprocessed data". Therefore, supervision (Schön, 1983), critical reflexivity (Etherington, 2004) and a functional reflexive stance (Langdridge, 2007) were vital for me to create awareness of any personal biases or partiality that may have affected the analysis and subsequent interpretation of the data. I further included reflective strategies to strengthen fidelity and add to the truth value of this research by allowing the reader to note how I obtained an understanding of the phenomenon while remaining aware of the influence of my own perspective (Levitt et al., 2017). Critical friends, professional academic input,

maintaining a reflective journal and ample self-care have all continued to support me as I have learned how best to transform theory into practice and critically reflect. The reflective journal containing my assumptions supported the interpretative process of the research (Laverty, 2003) and helped to secure transparency by mapping my fore-conceptions (Heidegger, 1927/1962) throughout the analysis, identifying more abstract concepts from the data as part of the meaning-making process (Smith et al., 2009). I have declared my interest on the subject of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness from the outset and have maintained a high level of reflexivity through this study (see Appendix I, II, III & IV).

1.8 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of and background to my chosen topic, including my reflexive positioning in relation to the phenomena. It succinctly outlined the aims and objectives of the study and critically evaluated the semantic challenges involved, offering an operational definition of each phenomenon. It concluded with the research question that has shaped the research, along with a brief critique of my reflexive stance.

1.9 Overview of Chapters

The remainder of this paper is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 2: Literature Review: The literature review chapter will pay due respect to the relevant literature and reports. It includes both empirical and philosophical literature.

Chapter 3: Research Methods: This chapter will outline and justify the methods adopted throughout the primary research phase.

Chapter 4: Research Findings: This chapter will present the findings that were revealed throughout the research process.

Chapter 5: Discussion: The findings will then be synthesised with the relevant literature by way of a critical discussion. This will lead to the central results of this research dissertation.

Chapter 6: Clinical Implications and Products. The last chapter will put forward recommendations and suggestions for clinical practice. I will conclude with a discussion of the products that manifested from this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

My intention for this chapter is to provide a comprehensive review of the literature. However, due to the enormity of the phenomena under investigation, an indicative rather than an inclusive review of the literature is provided. The understandings and practices relating to the phenomena of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots in the context of psychotherapy literature are in part shaped by historically specific philosophical understandings. This literature review is further supported by a significant critique of recent and relevant empirical research.

I have divided the literature into two main sections, concerning analysis and synthesis. In the first section, my initial focus was to gain an understanding of the background and conceptualisation of psychological blind spots within different psychotherapy modalities. Within this section, I further discuss psychological blind spots (PBS) within the context of self-awareness avoidance, including motives for psychological blind spots. In the final part of the first section, I critically engage with scholarly articles that explore the nature and function of psychological blind spots in specific contexts. This evaluates the contribution of both qualitative and quantitative research while highlighting the methodological difficulties involved in researching implicit processes that exist at the periphery of consciousness (Merleau-Ponty, 2003). In the second section of this review, I explore background information on moments of self-awareness and offer insight within a therapeutic context. Given that my study is an enquiry into the experience of the phenomenon in an area of human experience and practice, my secondary focus involves critically evaluating empirical research and considering research developments. Of particular relevance to my study are the few texts which offer a psychological/psychotherapeutic perspective. In the final section of this chapter, I offer my rationale for the current study by identifying the research gap this study hopes to fill.

2.1 Search strategy

I conducted an extensive, critical literature review of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots as discussed in psychotherapeutic, psychological and medical texts. Studies were primarily identified through searching the online electronic databases such as, Scopus, Psychinfo, Psycharticles, Pubmed EBSCOHOST, PsychINFO, science direct, APA and Cinahl, including the websites of Middlesex University library and the Metanoia Institute. Additional searches were carried out using Web of Knowledge and Web of Science. The search terms included key words "blind spots", "psychological blind spots", "moments of self-awareness", "epiphanies", "moments of awareness in psychotherapy": Both quantitative and qualitative studies were included. Peer-reviewed articles in reputable journals such as *Psychotherapy Research* and *Frontiers in Psychology* were reviewed. I further explored the academic journals listed by Taylor and Francis and Routledge. Priority was given to articles written in the past decade. However, philosophical literature pertaining to the context, history, and evolution of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots was utilized. Bibliographies of articles were also reviewed to source additional points of reference for the study. I have thus focussed on aspects of the phenomena that are relevant to this study.[1] (see Appendix V Search Strategy; Appendix VI Additional Literature; Appendix VII Book Reviews and Relevant Learning; Appendix XXXIII Key Studies Analysis).

[1]In phenomenology of practice as described by Max van Manen (1990, 2014); phenomenological research is both a form of inquiry and a writing practice. Researchers are encouraged to orient to and read examples from primary (rather than only secondary) sources (van Manen, & Adams, 2017). Hand searching and on-line searching engendered a snowball effect where more literature, including grey literature, was sourced. I sought out contemporary examples of phenomenological writing, especially those pertaining to my own subject (van Manen, & Adams, 2017). I also read original philosophical works, this allowed me to grapple with the unique methods of philosophical phenomenology where I learnt its unfamiliar vocabulary and appreciated its poetic linguistic sensibilities (Van Manen, & Adams, 2017). It is important to note that there was a significant amount of time spent "reading and reflecting upon primary source texts" of phenomenological origin (Churchill as cited in King 2021, p. 42).

2.2 Overview of the Current Literature

2.2.1 Conceptualisation of Non-conscious Processes within Various Clinical Modalities

> Most people identify themselves almost exclusively with their consciousness, and imagine that they are only what they know about themselves. Yet anyone with even a smattering of psychology can see how limited this knowledge is. (Jung, 1961/1995, p. 330)

The objective of the current study is to deepen the understanding of this limited knowledge. According to Kahn (2002), therapists need a working understanding and knowledge of blind spots to allow their clients to gain awareness. Furthermore, Easthope (1999) states that nobody is free from the many forms of non-conscious processes. Cognitive psychologists have rediscovered the existence of unconscious mental processes such as blind spots (Cramer, 2000). In addition, Freud's model of the unconscious is found in both social and cognitive psychology (Bargh & Morsella, 2008). In the past century, different schools of thought and practice, including, depth psychology, along with humanistic-existential thinkers (Perls, 1947; Rogers, 1961) and radical epistemological developments such as existential analysis (Binswanger, 1963/1974; Boss, 1963) have become concerned with deeper, hidden dimensions of human experience. Each of these psychologies is not merely concerned with visible behaviours and cognitions, but with what is hidden from view. However, earlier research refused to acknowledge unconscious cognition (Lazarus, 1998). There is no clear concept of non-conscious processes. Freud, Jung and neo-Freudians all have slightly different conceptions (MacIntyre, 2004). Nevertheless, each school of psychology developed its own individualistic approach to unawareness or non-conscious processes (Murray et al., 2000). Counsellors and social psychologists are finding it increasingly necessary to value interdisciplinary discussion in order to prevent cognitive blind spots in understandings of the self (Moore et al., 1997). Although conceptual and empirical inquiries into the self are somewhat less conspicuous within counselling psychology, the self maintains a central role in many theoretical perspectives, therapeutic strategies and research interests (Moore et al., 1997). Nowadays, counselling has made significant progress towards bridging theory and practice in attempts to understand the hidden dimensions of the self (Cramer, 2000). Psychologists are engaging in research and developing comprehensive theories on non-conscious processes such as blind spots across the broad field of psychology (MacIntyre,

2004; Cramer, 2000). Virtually every leading cognitive psychologist has rediscovered the existence of unconscious mental processes or mental processes that exist outside of awareness (Greenwald, 1992; Jacoby, 1991; Roediger, 1990). Scepticism in academic psychology regarding the existence of unconscious phenomena has dissipated due to further research (Greenwald, 1992). I will further discuss the various conceptulizations of non-conscious processes within different clinical modalities.

i) Depth Psychology

Both Freud and Jung introduced a certain epistemological construct called the unconscious (Iurato, 2015), which was nevertheless differently defined by these two authors. The realm named the unconscious was used to name all the material, including hidden emotions, of which a person is not aware of at a given time i.e not conscious. Freud's theory was centred on the unconscious, which included repression, drives, and free-association. Furthermore, the notion of transference, counter transference and the Oedipus complex, were elementary to Freud's psychodynamic framework (Iurato, 2015). The primary hypothesis of the Freudian framework is that of psychic repression, according to which anxious object representations linked to a given motive are removed from the conscious field because they are disparate with internal and external needs (Iurato, 2015). Repression is a fundamental psychic defence mechanism through which consciousness separates from the unconscious. However, Jung's notion of the unconscious differs from that of Freud's. Although Jung was a great supporter of Freudian thought, he nevertheless believed that the entire Freudian framework was not very open towards the possible applicative perspective such as, for instance, those related to anthropological and ethnological thought, in particular towards mythological thought. Jung's psychoanalysis is the name given to the method developed for reaching down into the hidden depths of the individual to bring to light the underlying motives and determinants of his symptoms and attitudes, and to reveal the unconscious tendencies which lie behind actions and reactions and which influence development and determine the relations of life itself (Jung, 1916). They can present as certain opinions, prejudices, or attitude of conduct (Jung, 1916). Furthermore, the Jungian notion of the libido differs from that of Freud's in that it is the general psychic energy, which is present in all that tends toward appetites (Laplanche and Potalis, 1973). In addition, Jung was the first psychoanalyst who gave attention to distinguishing between a personal unconscious and a collective one.

However, from an epistemological and historical standpoint, the Freudian hypothesis has always been the primary basis from which to start laying the foundations of any other unconscious idea (Iurato, 2015). In this study my philosophical outlook aligns more with Jungian theory, which, starting from Freudian ideas, reaches a wider construct of the unconscious. Therefore, a psychological blind spot merely means to indicate that the individual is unaware at that time of ideas, feelings, beliefs or behaviours.

Psychoanalysis has been defined as pure psychology of the unconscious (Leuzinger-Bohleber & Solms, 2017). All depth psychology aims to reveal implicit meaning, such as unconscious programmes, buried aspects of the self and relational templates (Tratter, 2015). Psychoanalysis practitioners state that unconscious motives and desires of which a person is unaware affect their conscious experience (Tratter, 2015). Attention has been given to understanding the client's blind self within a psychodynamic framework of past relationships and relational schemas (Gelso & Fassinger, 1992). Psychoanalytical therapist Robert Stolorow states that the crucial aspect of therapy is making the invisible visible (Kahn, 2002). Fisher and Tarquinio distinguish between two orientations used to understand defence mechanisms; the psychoanalytic, which considers these mechanisms to be unconscious, and the cognitive processes required for positive adaptation to external reality (as cited in Timmermann et al., 2009).

ii) Psychiatry

Hidden desires did not originate with Freud, as both Ellenberger and Hacking (1876/1970) had written about this phenomenon. French psychiatrist Charcot stated that unconscious areas can affect conscious behaviour in a way that the person does not understand (Murray et al., 2000). Terms such as "unconscious motivations", "defence mechanisms" and "transference", traditionally used only within the context of psychoanalytic treatments (Freud, 1912) have found new meaning within forensic psychiatry (Kapoor & Willams, 2012). Although several of its tenets have fallen out of favour, many others remain just as relevant today as they were in Freud's era. It is important that we progress our knowledge by translating non-conscious

motivations for a non-psychiatric audience and tolerate the anxiety that comes with doing so (Kapoor & Willams, 2012).[2]

ii) Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Psychology

Purely psychological conceptualisations of non-conscious mental processes in fields such as cognitive psychology, social psychology and behavioural economics have sought to explain human behaviour based on information processing that occurs outside of awareness (Galatzer-Levy, 2017). Cognitive psychology equates the unconscious with subliminal awareness whereas social psychology states that it involves processes of which an individual is unaware (Bargh & Morsella, 2008). Behaviourist Watson states that some habits could be associated with emotional events that have not been verbalised (Watson, 1928) or unverbalised habits based on emotional associations (Watson, 1913). However, he insists on calling such habits the unverbalised, instead of referring to the non-conscious (Watson, 1928, pp. 93-115). There are many aspects of a lack of awareness in behaviourism and neobehaviourism, such as the following; classic conditioning, operant conditioning, habituation and imitation (Murray et al., 2000). The social and cognitive psychologies support Freud's hypothesis of non-conscious mentation and its impact on judgment and behaviour (Bargh & Morsella, 2008). Research in social psychology provides evidence for the use of defence mechanisms in situations where there is a threat to self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 1998). The field of social psychology has continued to rediscover the existence of processes by which humans deceive themselves, enhance self-esteem and foster unrealistic self-illusions (Cramer, 2000). Although the blind spot in the social domain has been researched, much less is known about the blind spot in the cognitive domain (Pronin, 2007; Wilson et al., 1996). However, cognitive and social psychologists have documented a number

[2]A new intellectual framework for psychiatry has created a large interest in initiating internationally broad discussion of fascinating interdisciplinary research perspectives between psychoanalysis and neuroscience (Leuzinger-Bohleber&Solms, 2017). The relationship between neuroscience and psychoanalysis is promising for both parties (Leuzinger-Bohleber& Solms, 2017). While the former has obtained objective and exact methods to verify complex hypotheses concerning human behaviour, psychoanalysis can contribute rich knowledge concerning the meaning and motivations of psychic processes, and it can therefore direct interesting questions at the neuroscience (Leuzinger-Bohleber& Solms, 2017). The task of neuroscience is to understand the neural connections of such mechanisms (Vaillant, 2011).

of cognitive blind spots that compromise inference and judgement (Nisbett & Ross, as cited in Pronin et al., 2002).

iii) Gestalt Psychology

The goal of most psychotherapy is to make one whole again (Yalom, 1980). The etymological root meaning of Gestalt therapy is wholeness (Yalom, 1980). Poljac et al., (2012) investigated the perceptual whole or Gestalt and how it reduces the awareness of the parts. Poljac et al., (2012) explores how this might compare to our conscious perception of the world. In Gestalt psychology, the whole can look very different to the sum of its parts, and the perception of a whole can silence those parts from conscious awareness (Koffka, 1935). Gestalt psychologists state that conscious experiences only reflect the end result of brain processing of which the person was unaware up to that point (Murray et al., 2000).[3]However, Gestalt psychologists state that we can interpret almost any type of object, situation or event in more than one way (Kounios & Beeman, 2015). According to Gestalt psychologists, when one struggles to solve a problem, it is often because he or she is thinking about the problem in the wrong way and needs to create awareness to see things from a different perspective (Kounios &Beeman,2015).

iv) Existential and Humanistic Psychology

In existential terms, consciousness is always finite, situated and based on perspective (Brooke, 2015). Existential psychotherapist Dr. Craig, states that the conditions that constitute our existence shape our lives, including much of what is hidden from our everyday view (Craig, 2008). Yalom's therapeutic approach focuses on interpersonal and existential issues however assuming the existence of non-conscious processes (though it differs from traditional analytic views) is important to him (2008). Daseinanalytic psychologists are particular existential thinkers who follow Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenological thought with respect to the analysis of human existence (Craig, 2008). They are concerned with the whole existence of their client, not just their inner subjective reality (Craig, 2008).

Furthermore, humanistic psychologists Rogers (1961) and Gendlin (1978) acknowledge the importance of experience that is not available to immediate awareness but that has the potential to become so. Epistemological counselling psychology tends to be humanistic, growth-oriented and advocacy-driven (Gelso & Fassinger, 1992) and it therefore approaches the self in terms of how to maximise self-awareness (Moore et al., 1997). Furthermore, Husserl (1970), despite being a radical phenomenologist, acknowledges the validity of unconscious emotions, motivations and intentionalities. In addition, Boss (1957), although sceptical about the existence of the unconscious, states that concealment is part of our being.[4]

However, Binswanger remarks, that for the time being, existential therapists will not be able to dispense with the concept of the unconscious. In principle most existential analysts deny the concept. They point out all the logical as well as psychological difficulties with the doctrine of the unconscious and they stand against splitting the being into parts. They state the unconscious is part of a person's being and at its core is indivisible. However, amid a plethora of voices in "new existentialism", May continues to inspire a deeper exploration on the creation of awareness (as cited in Peng, 2011). A torch-bearer of American existential psychology, Rollo May challenged American consciousness to be mindful of a psychology based on conscious awareness alone (as cited in Peng, 2011). My integrative approach agrees with May's proposal that states, the being is indivisible, and therefore the unconscious is part of any given being. May further affirms that the "cellar theory of the unconscious is practically unconstructive", however the meaning of discovery- namely the "radical enlargement of being, is one of the greatest contributions of our day and must be retained" (May, 1983, p.176). He concluded that objections to the unconscious should not be permitted to cancel out the great contribution that the historical meaning of the unconscious had in Freud's terms (May,1983).

The concept of non-conscious processes such as blind spots is too valuable to be discarded because of its implicit nature, which is challenging to evaluate. It is obvious, regardless of

[4]Poets and artists have known for a long time that there is a powerful non-conscious component in human experience (Easthope, 1999). Freud acknowledged that poets and philosophers before him were aware of the unconscious, but what Freud did was bring it into the scientific realm for further discussion and exploration (MacIntyre, 2004).

one's theoretical orientation, that increasing the body of evidence for psychological functioning outside of awareness, including an understanding of blind spots such as defences and coping mechanisms, has important implications for psychotherapists. As an integrative therapist I can appreciate that I cannot understand my clients without an understanding of the non-conscious forces that shape their behaviour. I have witnessed and observed how many clients' lack of awareness has hindered their personal development and growth (see Appendix I c). Often, other disciplines use different language to describe similar concepts. Therefore, much determination, tolerance and patience were paramount to fracture former understandings and remain open to the concept of a psychological blind spot.

2.3 Psychological Blind Spots (PBS)

> The unconscious is a dynamic presence in all aspects of life [...]we cannot nor should not ignore it. (Romanyshyn, 2006, p.139)

An area of unawareness or psychological blind spots is part of one's mental life which existentially is but remains unseen or unknown (Craig, 2008). Both Jung and Merleau-Ponty consider the term "unconscious" indefinite, and they regard an area of unawareness as a "latent, unreflective intentionality" (Merleau-Ponty 1960a, p. 71). Bargh and Morsella (2008) propose an alternative perspective, in which non-consciousprocesses are defined in terms of their unintentional nature and inherent lack of awareness. Being unconscious, one can become unaware or ignorant of his/her purpose or intention (MacIntyre, 2004). Furthermore, Craig (2008) states that a lack of conscious awareness concerns that which remains hidden from our senses or thought, which one does not see or know and which does not show itself readily. In addition, Hillman affirms that an area of unawareness generally lies hidden behind one's routine, dogmas, fixed beliefs and values (Drob, 1999). Rivers, in his book *Instinct and the Unconscious*, asserts that the content of non-conscious processes is suppressed experiences (as cited in Broad, 1968). The personal unconscious is that part of the psyche which contains the personal thoughts, experiences, memories and psychological material that have been forgotten, or as Freud has stated, the area of unawareness of mental life including the process whereby unacceptable motives and emotions are repressed into the unconscious domain (Kahn, 2002). Unconscious mental processes could include repression, over-

determination, identification, projection, splitting and repetition-compulsion (Clemens, 2012).

Previous research studies asked successful clients to rank 60 factors in therapy according to the degree of helpfulness. The research concluded that the single most frequently chosen item was, by far, "discovering and accepting previously unknown or unacceptable parts of myself" (Yalom, 1968, p. 354; Lese & McNair, 2000). These studies used the Therapeutic Factors Inventory (TFI) which has demonstrated empirically acceptable levels of internal consistency and test-retest reliability as a research tool. Furthermore, Cramer's (2015) empirical study confirmed that a lack of self-awareness is one of the reasons why blind spots are thriving; that is, we are unaware that we are deceiving ourselves. Cramer further affirms that there are gaps in our self-knowledge and that some blind spots are due to a lack of information (Cramer, 2015). In addition, research by Vazire and Carlson (2011) reviewed evidence and empirical literature concerning the accuracy of self-awareness and other perceptions of personality. This demonstrated that "many aspects of oneself are hidden from conscious awareness" and that there is increasing evidence that blind spots are substantial (Vazire &Carlson, 2011, p. 107). Further research has focused on blind spots in the social domain (Ehrlinger et al., 2005; McPherson Frantz, 2006; Pronin, 2007; Pronin & Kruger, 2007). Studies by Pronin et al., (2002) suggest that individuals see the existence and operation of cognitive blind spots more in others than in themselves. Kahneman has demonstrated indications of a blind spot regarding many cognitive biases (as cited in West et al., 2012).[5]

Recent research has highlighted the fact that there are many blind spots in self-knowledge and that they can have negative consequences on the self and on others (Carlson, 2013; Dunning et al., 2004; Vazire & Carlson, 2011; Wilson, 2002, 2009). Furthermore, a lack of awareness of one's own behaviour causes much unintentional pain (MacIntyre, 2004). In addition, Wilson and Dunn (2004) have argued that psychological blind spots are harmful. Therefore, one's inability to access unconscious knowledge may lead to one's inability to

[5]Further studies have provided evidence for "erroneous non-conscious inferential processes and there is great support for the notion that unconscious inference or attribution processes underlies the subjective experience of perceiving and remembering" (Jacoby, 1992, p. 803).

select the right course of action (McConnell et al., 2011). Therefore, as Jung (1954) states, if we remain unconscious; we are likely to succumb to many challenges.

2.3.1 The Illusion of Objectivity

> Vision waits for us, ready to give itself; we use countless techniques to cut ourselves off from it. (Kennelly, as cited in Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 30)

Srivastava states that an explanation for the variability of blind spots is the amount and quality of interpersonal feedback that people receive (as cited in Gallrein et al., 2016). Pronin (2007) suggests that two reasons for biased blind spots are naïve realism and overreliance on introspection. The former involves the belief that one perceives and responds to the world objectively. This fosters the idea of an objective self in a world of biased others (Pronin et al., 2002). Pronin et al., (2002) conclude that people are less likely to perceive those with whom they disagree as unreasonable and unable to view things in an objective manner. The reason for this, they state, is that individuals have faith in the realism or objectivity of their own views, and are thus likely to assume bias on the part of those who fail to share those views. Furthermore, research shows that individuals maintain an illusion of objectivity (Bazerman & Banaji, 2005); that is, they incorrectly view themselves as more objective than others (Epley et al., 2006). Pronin and Kugler's (2007) study, meanwhile, found that only after being educated about the significance of unconscious processes in directing judgment and action, along with the fallibility of introspection, did participants cease denying their relative susceptibility to bias. The tendency to perceive bias in others while being blind to it ourselves has been shown across a range of cognitive and motivational biases (Pronin et al., 2004). A mixed methods research approach adopted by Pronin and Kugler, (2007) compared four studies and concluded that blind spots in people who are confident of their objectivity are common in everyday life. Moreover, West et al. (2012) state that there is a tendency to believe that biased thinking is more prevalent in others than in ourselves. Biases typically operate unconsciously, thereby leaving their influence hidden from introspection (Wilson & Brekke, 1994). Other blind spots are easy to detect in others' behaviour, but when people introspect, they largely fail to detect the unconscious processes that are the source of their own blind spots (Ehrlinger et al., 2005; Pronin et al., 2004; Wilson, 2002). Previous research has demonstrated the tendency for people to make inaccurate self-predictions and self-

assessments when introspective information is available but misleading (Gilbert et al., 1988). Pronin and Kugler's (2007) research supports the contention that the bias blind spot is rooted in part in one's introspection illusion, where individuals observe the existence and operation of cognitive and motivational biases much more in others than in themselves (Pronin et al., 2002). Furthermore, it appears that people rely on conscious introspections when seeking self-understanding, even though the processes they seek to understand occur outside their awareness (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977)**.**[6]In addition, Dunning et al. (1989) states that people are generally motivated to view themselves positively relative to their peers.Therefore, when one fails to see or understand his/herblind spots, he/she is apt to think that no bias has occurred and that "[his/her] decision was indeed objective and reasonable" (West et al., 2012, p. 515).[7]

2.3.2 Self-Awareness Avoidance

> Since there can never be absolute freedom from prejudice, even the most objective and impartial investigator is liable to become the victim of some unconscious assumption upon entering a region where the darkness has never been illuminated and where he can recognize nothing. (Jung, 1954, p. 168)

In cases of poor self-awareness, avoidance and defensive attributions to external causes are clear (Silvia & Duval, 2001). Research conducted by Twenge et al., (2003) has demonstrated that decreased self-awareness among individuals in negative social situations is a defensive strategy designed to buffer the self from acute distress (and feelings of rejection). They continue to state that socially challenging situations can lead to the desire to avoid self-awareness because of the discrepancy generated between people's generally positive view of themselves and the experience of being rejected by others (Twenge et al., 2003). This response is thought to be a defensive reaction to what would otherwise be an acutely

[6]One has the impression that they see issues and events objectively as it is in reality (Pronin et al., 2002). However, bias blind spots are easy to recognise in others but often difficult to detect in one's own judgements (West et al., 2012). Pronin et al., (2002) state that one's peers and adversaries see events and issues through the distorted prism of their world view and often see themselves in a positive light.

[7]

distressing experience. Moreover, Duval and Lalwani's (2012) research concluded that when one's contemporaneous state of the self-to-standard comparison system is discrepant from its preferred state of self-standard identity this generates a negative effect. Therefore, when insufficient rates of awareness progress relative to self-standards discrepancy this yields avoidance (Duval et al., 1992). In addition, the objective self-awareness (OSA) theory states that one way of dealing with a discrepancy is selected from the many coping possibilities– people either reduce the discrepancy or avoid self-focus (Silvia & Duval, 2001). A person attempts to reduce the negative affect induced by self-standards and discrepancies either by changing oneself in the direction of standards or by avoiding the situation (Duval & Lalwani, 1999). Therefore, as the degree of discrepancy between the system and its preferred state increases, the negative effect increases (Duval & Lalwani, 1999). Reducing a discrepancy and avoiding self-focus are equally effective ways of reducing the negative affect resulting from a discrepancy (Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Silvia & Duval, 2001). When expectations regarding improvements are unfavourable, people will try to avoid self-focus (Silvia & Duval, 2001). If a discrepancy was found between oneself and ideal standards, a negative effect has been reported to arise (Silvia & Duval, 2001). Two behavioural routes to one's action exist, such as congruency or avoidance. Avoidance effectively terminates comparisons, and hence all self-evaluation (Silvia & Duval, 2001).[8]

Within a clinical context, Rousmaniere (2016) emphasises experiential avoidance as a significant blind spot that impedes therapists' ability to stay attuned to their clients while the therapist experiences discomfort. However, avoidance may be the therapist's way of shielding him/herself from the threat represented by the client's issues (Hayes, 2004). Experiential avoidance includes thoughts, emotions or physiological reactions that cause a person to divert or distance oneself from an experience at that time (Scherr et al., 2015). Countertransference can be experienced as "avoidance behaviour" in the form of disapproval, silence, ignoring, mislabelling and varying the topic (MacMahon, 2020). MacMahon's (2020) findings have identified maladaptive avoidant forms of coping engendered by the

[8]However, when the rate of progress is sufficient relative to the magnitude of the self-standard discrepancy, people will take action rather than avoid (Silvia& Duval, 2001). Research has found that high achievers promote defensive, external attributions regarding negative events (Cohan, 1985), presumably because people want to avoid the experience of failure (Ickes et al., 1973).

participant's defensive attitude against feelings of vulnerability and shame. In MacMahon's (2020) study, avoidance manifests itself in behaviours such as withdrawal, adopting a professional persona, compartmentalising feelings related to loss and blaming the client for problems in the therapeutic relationship. Participants in this study also described a variety of blind spots in the form of avoidant behaviours that were embedded in relational patterns such as compulsive care-giving and a self-sacrificing attitude (MacMahon, 2020). However, when participants face their vulnerabilities and acknowledge how avoidant behaviours, such as implicit shame, impact on their therapeutic work, it leads to new insights and an expanded sense of self-awareness that is enlivening (MacMahon, 2020).

2.3.3 Motivated Cognitive Barriers

> People's perceptions of their own personalities, while largely accurate, contain important omissions. Some of these blind spots are likely due to a simple lack of information and awareness, whereas others are due to motivated distortions in our self-perceptions. (Vazire & Carlson, 2011, p. 104)

Much of our mental life is not obvious to us; therefore, we remain ignorant of our motives (Kahn, 2002). Motivated cognition that distorts self-perception can create blind spots (Vazire & Carlson, 2011). One's implicit attitudes, motives and self-views resist conscious awareness (McConnell et al., 2011; Tratter, 2015). According to Carlson (2013), despite one's awareness of his/her feelings, thoughts and behaviours, informational and motivational barriers often prevent one from perceiving oneself accurately. Two major barriers to self-knowledge exist: informational barriers (i.e. the quantity and quality of information people have about themselves) and motivational barriers (i.e.ego-protective motives) (Carlson, 2013). The sense that one perceives reality without any distortion arises in part because we lack direct access to the cognitive or motivational processes that influence our perceptions (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). However, the theory of motivated avoidance of awareness is a laudable explanation of why things "outside awareness are important for the evolutionary value of being able to think fast enough to cope with and get through life" (Galatzer-Levy, 2017, p. 209).

Psychological blind spots are informed by a deep layer of unconscious desires, emotions and defences (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001). Moreover, in order to maintain mental homeostasis and protect the conscious mind from the effects of inner conflicts, the ego utilises miscellaneous defence mechanism (Wagas et al., 2015). Self-presentation has been described as comprising strategically controlled behaviours where people deliberately attempt to project a desired identity image to others (Tyler, 2012). Furthermore, self-presentation also consists of an automatic, non-conscious component (Baumeister, 1982). Psychoanalytical concepts such as defence mechanisms which are largely unconscious protect one from the insecurity and sense of loss that comes with change (Hoyer &Steyaert, 2015).[9]Freud labelled the mental operations that keep painful thoughts and effects out of awareness defence mechanisms in his early papers (1894/1962, 1896/1966). However, Freud never wrote a systematic account of them (Kahn, 2002).The idea of defences varied over the years, and his daughter Anna continued the work following Freud's death (Cramer, 2000). Core concepts, such as, cognitive dissonance were euphemisms used for defense mechanism (Paulhus et al., 1997). Developmental psychologists, personality psychologists and social psychologists have all found evidence for defence mechanisms that explain psychological function (Cramer, 2000). In addition, cognitive psychologists have confirmed the existence of unconscious psychological processes, a requisite for defences (Cramer, 2015). Defence mechanisms occur outside of awareness (Cramer, 2015) and work to control anxiety (Cramer, 2000).While classical psychoanalytical theory explained defences as forces counter to the expression of instinctual drives, contemporary psychoanalysis, self-psychology and object relations theory have widened the function of defence to include the maintenance of self-esteem and the protection of self-organisation (Cooper, 1998). Coping mechanisms or defenses are necessary for the adaptation to life rather than with Freud's psychoanalysis (Vaillant, 2011). However, the concept of the defence mechanism was rejected from academic psychology for a number of years. Nonetheless, empirical studies have shown renewed interest in defences (Cramer,

[9]Techniques were developed for distorting or rejecting from consciousness some features of reality, to avoid the unbearable psychological pain (anxiety) of consciousness (Erdelyi, 1985). We generally consider presencing to be good. However, it does not follow that the absence or hidden are bad (Sokolowski, 2000). It may be necessary and good that things go into obscurity (Sokolowski, 2000). Hiddenness is not just loss; it can also be preservation and protection (Sokolowski, 2000). Hermeneutics has taught us that "*Bergung* is also *Verbergung*, that concealment is also preservation" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 166). Sokolowski (2000) argues that things need their right time to be seen.

2000). The DSM IV stated that the concept of ego defences, as described by Freud, is a reflection of how an individual deals with conflict and stress (Perry et al., 1998; Parekh et al., 2010). Furthermore, the unconscious ego defence mechanisms were the first psychoanalytical concept acknowledged by the DSM-IV as an axis for future studies (Perry et al., 1998). They have been defined as unconscious, cognitive processes that can change at various developmental periods, that have a protective function, and that can be studied using the methods of personality assessment and experimental paradigms (Cramer, 2015).

Defence mechanisms provide a diagnostic template for understanding distress and for guiding the clinical management of challenging cases (Vaillant, 1994). Vaillant affirms that "no mental status or clinical formulation should be complete without an effort to identify the patients dominant defence mechanism" (1992, p. 3). Moreover, this phenomenon engenders reflection on how an individual deals with conflict and stress (Perry et al., 1998). Therefore, these mechanisms are of paramount importance in clinical practice to assess an individual's personality characteristics, psychopathologies and modes of coping with stressful situations (Wagas et al., 2015).

2.4 Empirical Studies on Psychological Blind Spots

The literature review disclosed a paucity of studies on psychological blind spots which not only resist direct comparison, but also invite different critical review approaches. However, I will critique two recent qualitative studies on blind spots and summarise several longitudinal and ancillary studies.

2.4.1 Wellington Kunaka (2016)

Research by Wellington Kunaka (2016) took a qualitative approach to explore trainee counselling psychologists' (TCPs) blind spots through engagement with informal reflective practice. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with six trainees on a practitioner doctorate counselling psychology course in which reflective practices were a compulsory component. Wellington Kunaka (2016) defines a blind spot as an issue that presents a form of challenge by falling outside of the individual's immediate awareness and presents in many forms, such as a lack of knowledge/skill, life challenges or a lack of educational experience. Kunaka's rationale for the undertaking of such a study was the need to view blind spots as a regular strategy of self-monitoring.[10]The reflective modalities that were used included journaling, thinking, self-talk, reading and talking about the problems in discussions with peers and significant others.

Comparable to my research, the literature established the challenges of defining a phenomenon as elusive as a blind spot. Wellington Kunaka (2016) defined a blind spot as an issue that presents a form of challenge by falling outside of the individual's immediate awareness and can present in many forms e.g. lack of knowledge/skill, difficult life or educational experience etc. However, MacMahon's (2020) definition of the word blind spot

[10] "This included self-monitoring as a result of reacting to something that had been evoked from within their inner self, which seemed to have the effect of unsettling the trainees by causing discomfort and anxieties" (Wellington Kunaka2016, p. 150).

was different in that it included many psychoanalytical concepts such as; transference-countertransference enactment, empathic failures, and misunderstandings.

Wellington Kunaka's (2016) research followed a grounded theory (GT) methodological approach to investigate trainee blind spots through reflective practice, which holds that theories of human behaviour can be deduced, analytically, from empirical data (Glasser & Strauss, 1997). The main influence of this study is the constructivist grounded theory approach suggested by Charmaz (2006). This has its roots in the work of Strauss (1987) and of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994, &1998). Wellington Kunaka's (2016) research approach is influenced by a relativist position, as it holds the belief that the researcher's theory is constructed as a subject of the interpretations of stories from participants. Wellington Kunaka (2016) chose a grounded theory approach to provide the opportunity to present variation in data. This aided the strength of the study, as different contexts were revealed and explained (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). According to Charmaz (2006), the ability to consider multiple perspectives is valued in that it potentially enables a complete picture of the phenomenon to be observed. Furthermore, the generation of theory about the exploration of trainees' blind spots through reflexivity will give insight about their practices, including the surroundings in which they practise (Birk & Mills, 2011). However, I was not drawn to a grounded theory approach for my study, as, historically, it has subscribed to a positivist epistemology, with little reflexivity (Willig, 2008). Furthermore, the lack of a literature review in advance of the research (McLeod, 2015) may have created difficulties for my research. Nevertheless, Wellington Kunaka (2016) overcame these challenges through Charmaz's (2008) contribution of the constructivists' grounded theory, which surmounts Glaser and Strauss's emphases on objectivity and generality by proposing the principles of relativity. Wellington Kunaka's relativist position provided opportunities for diversity (Barnett, 2012), in which various perspectives augmented the value of the final theory (Charmaz, 2006). Moreover, Kunaka's (2016) constructivist grounded theory approach also considered the influence of the researcher in the research process by engaging with participants during interviews and adapting with the analytical themes as they arose (Creswell, 2007). However, in this approach, Wellington Kunaka (2016) did not engage in analysis of the findings vis-a-vis literature until after the theoretical framework had been developed and the core categories identified. From this perspective, the constructivist grounded theory used was interpretative in design (Charmaz, 2006).

The sample size for Kunaka's study was determined when the point of saturation was reached and when no more new themes emerged, as advised by Charmaz (2006). However, Braun and Clarke (2019) argue that, in certain contexts, saturation is not useful, nor is it even a theoretically coherent concept. Nevertheless, Braun & Clarke (2019) did state that it depends on the study's objectives at large. The semi-structured interviews enquired about aspects such as how students reflect and what blind spots were revealed in this process. Interviews appeared a worthy choice, as they enabled the generation of theory from the experiences of the trainee counselling psychologists (Creswell, 1998).

Wellington Kunaka's (2016) research found that being surprised by something from the blind spot instigated questions in relation to oneself. Trainee counselling psychologists understood their blind spot as something being evoked as a result of gaps or limitations, which they perceived themselves as having in terms of meeting the prescribed competences concerning specific professional activities (e.g. gaps in knowledge or skills for executing particular tasks).[11]However, additional expansion on the various types and manifestations of blind spots, including the clinical implications, may have supported the rigour of this study further. A moment of awareness emerged for the trainee therapists when a blind spot was revealed. This realisation presented upon the discovery of the cause of the issue that had been evoked (i.e. the blind spot). The participants described the experience of being surprised, shocked and, at times, relieved by their recognition of the source of their problem, which had caused the emotions and evoked an experience of discomfort (Wellington Kunaka, 2016). The realisation was expressed as a process of coming out of darkness (Wellington Kunaka, 2016, p. 200).Understanding this realisation, which illuminates the darkness, and hence fosters further awareness, was the intention of my study.Wellington Kunaka (2016) stated the need to engage in personal development groups and classroom discussions that were facilitative in highlighting blind spots. This conclusion strengthened the clinical implications for their study and furher supported the rationale of my study.

[11]The findings indicated that several of the trainees had an awareness of how some of their "own historical factors disposed them to certain anxieties or areas of unawareness, such asa history of domestic abuse and bereavement" (Wellington Kunaka 2016, p. 66). A category marked by the awareness of anxiety and rudiments regarding fear of failing the course emerged from the data as trainee blind spots. There was a fear of the dangers of not seeing or knowing what was in the blind spot.

In terms of the truth value or rigour (credibility) the researcher has regarding the findings, the current research considered variations in the extracts that were presented which highlighted different aspects of the phenomenon based on individual contexts and research designs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, further checks would have heightened the truth value of this study, such as piloting the questions prior to the interviews (Kelley et al., 2003) and a further member checking exercise would have aided ethical autonomy (McCosker et al., 2001). The aforementioned concepts were included in my research to support the rigour of the study.[12]Neutrality is important to ensure that observations and reports that are made consist of only the participants' experiences. However, in Wellington Kunaka's (2016) study, the challenge was that the researcher was also a trainee of a doctoral programme in counselling psychology from the year/class directly before the cohort that participated in this research. Therefore, he was likely predisposed to personalising the experiences being described. Nevertheless, the researcher had completed all the criteria relevant to the course, which enabled the creation of distance from the issues discussed in the interview. Furthermore, the researcher engaged in reflexive analysis (Ruby, 1981). Nonetheless, in relation to the credibility of this research, the proximity of the researcher was deemed a beneficial factor."Opening blind spots and creating awareness was expressed through aspirations to achieve competences, be effective in their intervention skills and to develop as professionals" (Wellington Kunaka, 2016, p. 223). In endeavouring to identify their blind spots, "trainees gained self-awareness that enabled them to see the areas that they needed to develop in addition to the formal aspects of the course" (Wellington Kunaka, 2016, p. 223).This research implies that one of the ways that learning may occur is through the recognition of blind spots that are evoked during experiences on the course, which are then brought to light by different means of exploration during informal and formal reflection. This

[12]The findings in this study are not generalisable. However, that is not the intention of this research. Applicability of this research was evidenced through elaborate and adequate descriptions, which enabled comparisons by interested parties (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To maintain consistency, Wellington Kunaka (2016) followed and analysed the data, making no attempt to control, direct or forecast what it would indicate (Dufy, 1985). This was facilitated by endeavours to report variations or individual differences, as opposed to grouping based on similarities (Field & Morse, 1985). However, the validity of the research was limited to the collection of data at a single point in time, omitting the changing views and attitudes of respondents (Dash, 1993).

evidence supported the motivation for my research, which sought to understand psychotherapists' lived experiences of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness within a clinical and personal context.

2.4.2 MacMahon (2020)

MacMahon's (2020) interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) offers an exploration of integrative therapists' clinical experiences of personal blind spots. A breakdown in the relationship with MacMahon's personal therapist incited her interest in exploring therapists' experiences of personal blind spots within a clinical context. This study critically explored literature that illuminated how therapists' blind spots and vulnerabilities manifest themselves in their therapeutic work. This study differs somewhat from the intention of my research, in that it refers to blind spots as experiences where qualified therapists might encounter upset, helplessness and incompetence when clinical material touches on their personal issues (MacMahon, 2020). MacMahon was further interested in how therapists might reflect on their emotional experiences when their personal issues were triggered. However, similar to the research objectives of my study, MacMahon (2020) was interested in the motivations and emotions that might lie behind unconscious behaviour. MacMahon's (2020) literature review is comprehensive, and includes a range of psychological disciplines, such as social psychology, developmental psychology and relational psychotherapy. It offers a readable synthesis that was valuable to me as a fellow researcher. However, much of the literature review focused on many psychoanalytical concepts, with a very limited critque of published empirical studies. MacMahon (2020) confirmed my literature review findings, which indicated not only the lack of empirical research exploring how therapists perceived the experience of blind spots, but also suggested that more attention is warranted in relation to the inner worlds of therapists. Similarly to MacMahon (2020), the purpose of my research may be deemed a response to this problem.

The focus of the interview questions was on obtaining a retrospective account of the participants' unfolding lived experience before they recognised their blind spot. Furthermore, this study states how a blind spot is a dynamic concept that may be said to refer to conscious or unconscious biases or vulnerabilities that compromise therapists' ability to maintain a therapeutic stance with their clients (MacMahon, 2020). This study readily used the terms

"blind spot" and "vulnerability", including "shame", in the same context. MacMahon (2020) acknowledged the methodological challenges of exploring blind spots due to their implicit nature. I was most familiar with this particular challenge, as was Wellington Kunaka (2016). Therefore, MacMahon (2020) recognised that this domain of experience can only be apprehended indirectly by examining behaviour and the non-verbal realm.

This research was carried out according to the principles of IPA **(**Smith et al., 2009), which values the dynamic relationship between researcher and participants and views the data collected from each participant as emerging from the shared intersubjective space between researcher and participant (Finlay & Evans, 2009). As in most qualitative studies, IPA research is limited by participants' capacity for self-expression. However, this was less of a concern with the current study, as all participants were familiar with sharing their personal and professional experiences in therapy and supervision. A further criticism levelled against IPA concerns the extent to which accessing participants' cognitions runs counter to the aims of phenomenology (e.g. Willig, 2007; Langdridge, 2007). However, MacMahon (2020) argues that cognitions are not isolated, separate functions, but are intricately connected with our engagement with the world. They are "dilemmatic, affective and embodied" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 191).[13]Furthermore, MacMahon's (2020) rationale for her methodological choice is founded on a conclusion reached by Hayes (2004) and colleagues. This is based on a qualitative analysis of therapists' experiences of countertransference, indicating the need for an interpretative phenomenological exploration of therapists' experience of recognising personal blind spots. This approach influenced my methodological choice, and seemed pertinent to a study that sought to describe implicit processes that manifest themselves in personal blind spots, as well as therapists evolving a sense of meaning as they recognise them.

[13]Although IPA recognises the action-oriented nature of talk and how meaning-making takes place using certain kinds of resources (narrative, discourse, metaphor, etc.), this represents only a partial account of what people are doing when they communicate.MacMahon's choice of a qualitative approach seemed particularly useful in providing insights into the underlying reasons and motivations behind therapists' experiences. The strength of this IPA study lies in its ability to identify meanings and develop understandings through sustained interpretative engagement (Finlay, 2011).

The sample included five female experienced psychotherapists who were recruited in accordance with guidelines for a small sample size deemed appropriate for IPA. However, a lack of sample diversity (Neville & Cross, 2016) regarding the participants' gender and clinical modalities could have had implications for the rigour of this research. Nevertheless, MacMahon (2020) argues that the participants were selected on the basis that they could offer a perspective on the phenomena under study. The objective was to recruit a sample that satisfied the criteria for homogeneity associated with IPA's inductive principles (Smith et al., 2009). It was important for my research to include the voices of a wider range of participants, including various gender types, nationalities, clinical modalities and age ranges. Furthermore, in contrast to Wellington Kunaka's (2016) study, the validity of the research was aided through a second interview with the participants, which took place approximately one month later to allow time for new insights. This allowed a rapport to develop between researcher and participant, and it added strength to the trustworthiness of the research.

MacMahon's (2020) findings revealed how all participants' accounts contributed to revealing the complexity of the phenomenon of blind spots. Their experiences converged in terms of how they shared "avoidance" as a way of coping with feelings of vulnerability. Three main superordinate themes that emerged from the analysis of the transcripts were as follows: feeling under pressure; facing a blind spot and finding the missing piece; and holding my own. One participant shared how she recognised a personal blind spot through a casual comment uttered by her therapist when she was in personal therapy.[14]MacMahon (2020) concluded that all of the themes could be conceptualised as a fear of being vulnerable due to unresolved personal conflicts. This is a common theme in all participants' accounts, and it reflects MacMahon's (2020) findings in the countertransference literature that implicates "unresolved conflicts of the therapist as the source of blind spots and misunderstandings in treatment" (Gelso & Hayes, 2007, p. 25). However, MacMahon acknowledged that a review

[14]Similar toWellingtonKunaka's (2016) study, one participant created awareness by listening closely, tracking the patient's responses and relating in a non-defensive, open way while having a clear sense of what was appropriate. Another participant described it as a myopic spot – an area of vulnerability for which she needed particular attention. Most accounts show how avoidance rather than engagement with the client's issues manifested as a blind spot. Furthermore, participants were not fully aware of these processes until they were confronted with what was "other" in themselves through their surprising or frustrating behaviours. All participants spoke about ways in which a particular maladaptive coping strategy impacted on their client work, leading to collusions, ruptures or a therapeutic impasse.

of the interview transcript indicated that the research questions needed to have a clearer focus on exploring the actual lived experience of recognising a blind spot, as opposed to obtaining a description of blind spots per se. This was an imperative awareness that had relevance for my research, which was interested in therapists' understanding of a lived experience of a blind spot and not merely a description of it.

Reflexivity in IPA strengthens the rigour of the research process and enables the researcher to gain deeper interpretative access to the data. In the current study, the researcher's own experiences and observations of the data, combined with the "phenomenological philosophy of IPA provided a multidimensional approach to interpretative work", as advised by Goldspink and Engward (2019, p. 12). It was important to understand that the researcher did not attempt to bracket her presuppositions and assumptions, but instead worked with, and used, them in an "attempt to advance understanding" (Willig, 2013 p. 86). She openly acknowledged the extent to which her interpretations of the data were rooted in her projections and the fact that it was a significant bias influencing the findings of the research (Bager-Charleson, as cited in Goss & Stevens, 2016). It was significant that only one of the participants acknowledged the experience of shame and that this was in relation to her experience of disclosing her blind spot through the interview process.[15]

Finally, MacMahon (2020) argues that a piece of research should be judged on its impact and significance. .[16]MacMahon (2020) endeavoured to connect the findings with the wider

[16]MacMahon (2020) displayed a commitment to rigour (Yardley, 2008) through immersion in the research process and the use of reflexivity. This was an important component of every stage of my interpretative study. Rigour was further evidenced by the thoroughness of the study, the quality of the interviews and the comprehensiveness of the analysis undertaken (Smith et al., 2009). The principles of transparency and coherence (Yardley, 2008) were displayed at different stages of the research process. Thesewere shown through the use of appendices to demonstrate the logic of the iterative stages followed in the research. As comparable to Wellington Kunaka (2016), the focus of this study was not based on the transferability and generalisability of its findings. Rather, its intention was to understand the lived experience of a homogenous group of therapists who subscribe to ideas within contemporary relational psychotherapy that emphasises intersubjectivity and the concept of "reciprocal mutual influence" (Stolorow& Atwood, 1996, p. 18).

literature in the field of psychology and therapy. However, the extent to which this has been achieved can, in some part, be judged by the reader when reading the implications section of the discussion chapter. The efficacy of this study is visible in bringing to light participants' blind spots (i.e. personal beliefs and assumptions that are not readily available to the person who holds them). However, an obvious opening exists within the literature to expand and deepen upon therapists' lived experience of a psychological blind spot from a purely hermeneutic phenomenological standpoint, utilising greater sample diversity and within a context alternative to psychoanalytical concepts.

2.4.3 Summary of Further Empirical and Longitudinal Studies on Non-Conscious Processes

Gallrein et al., (2013) investigated the features of the blind spots of which others are aware but which are oblivious to the individuals themselves. Gallrein et al.'s (2013) investigation into "blind spots" acknowledged that people's knowledge of themselves is limited. Their study found clear evidence for the existence of distinctive blind spots in people's perceptions of themselves and their reputation, using a social reality model. A person-centred approach was used to investigate evidence between normative and distinctive blind spots. This approach was chosen, as it uses self-knowledge to create awareness of one's patterns of traits (self-perceptions and meta-perceptions) (Gallrein et al., 2013). Their findings imply that the average person is unaware of how other people perceive them, and they conclude that a "blind spot" is an appropriate term to describe a particular kind of interpersonal perception. Later, in 2016, Gallrein, Webels Carlson and Leising investigated blind spots using a more diverse set of participants, from different cultures. This study replicated the findings of the original study using a larger set of personality ratings (107 items were measured) and a more diverse set of participants, including those from different contexts (students, friends, siblings, partners, ex-partners),two different cultures (American and German) and languages (English and German), and with various ethnicities (62% Caucasian, 23.3% Asian, 8.5% African-American, 0.8% Hispanic). Two different studies across these samples were conducted. To emphasise the generalisability and robustness of this study, and therefore the phenomenon of blind spots, they computed the overall effect size across all known studies to date. This study proved that the phenomenon of blind spots is robust across participant samples and language communities.However, a limitation of this study was that they selected targets based on how

much they were known by the informant. Gallrein et al. (2016) report that the average person is partly unaware of how positively or negatively others view him or her and of the unique way in which he or she is seen. Gallrein et al. (2016) state that future work exploring poor self-knowledge is needed to help "shed light on these blind spots" (p.2). This study concluded that more research is recommended to explore the possible consequences of blind spots.

The utilisation of unconscious defence mechanisms as a form of blind spots was examined by Cramer. Two longitudinal studies of children and adolescents have confirmed evidence for developmental change in defence use (Cramer, 1998; Cramer, 2007). The first study followed the same group of children from age six to age nine (Cramer, 1998). The second followed another group of children, from age 11 to age 18 (Cramer, 2007). The results of these studies demonstrated the same general pattern of defence development, and change was found in the cross-sectional data (Cramer, 2012). Cramer's (1998) study demonstrates that when there is excessive stress, conflict, painful effect or other negative conditions during the early years of life, the use of the defence continues long after the appropriate age. This research considered denial an immature defence, and identification as a mature defence. However, the research and theory did not consider development after adolescence. Less is known about change in defence use between adolescence and adulthood (Cramer, 2012). Cramer (1998) raised the question of whether mechanisms that are used beyond their appropriate age period are associated with psychological problems later in life. Change in the use of defence mechanisms between late adolescence and adulthood was assessed in two different longitudinal studies from the Institute of Human Development, where the results were virtually identical (Cramer, 2012). One longitudinal study found an expected increase in identification at late adolescence (Cramer, 2007). However, with the same group of participants, Cramer (2009) found that the use of identification decreased, while the use of denial increased, and there was little change in the use of projection.[17]In a later study, Cramer (2015) tested the assumption that the function of defence mechanisms is to protect the

[17]This was unexpected, as identification had been considered a mature defence. Therefore, identification may be considered mature within the child and adolescent hierarchy, but not if it continues into adulthood. The decrease in identification in adulthood is consistent with predictions from the theory of defence mechanism development: "defenses are related to developmental period; once that period is concluded, the use of the related defense declines" (Cramer, 2012, p. 306). An increase in denial in adulthood, although an immature defence, could be a reaction to uncontrollable events, including illnesses such as cancer (Kreitler, 1999).

individual from anxiety and emotional distress. In a clinical hypothesis, Cramer (2015) predicted higher defence scores following a stressful incident. This supported the prediction which was clinically assessed as showing less psychological distress through the use of defence mechanisms. The participants who had total higher defence scores (denial + projection+ identification) were less distressed than those with lower defence scores (Cramer, 2015). Further findings showed that the use of mature defences such as projection and identification resulted in a greater lack of distress (i.e. b=-53, p.<004). Thus, the utilisation of unconscious defence mechanisms as a form of a blind spot was consistent with the theory: the participants who used more defence mechanisms at the time of stress showed fewer signs of psychological distress (Cramer, 2015).

Vaillant (1974) has shown in studies of men that the use of mature defences, such as sublimation, is associated with good psychological adjustment, marital success, happiness and objective physical health, whereas the use of lower-level defences, such as denial, is related to poor psychological adjustment and the presence of psychopathology. Vaillant's (1977) longitudinal study of 50 male Harvard students who were studied from college into later adulthood, found evidence for an increase in mature defences and a decrease in immature defences. Higher-level defences, such as altruism and sublimation, have been found to increase from late adolescence to adulthood (Vaillant, 1977). However, neurotic denial (dissociation), which can be considered an immature defence, continued to occur frequently into adulthood. Therefore, Vaillant (1977) did not classify this defence as immature. Nonetheless, it should be clear that distinction between the defences is rarely, perhaps never, a straightforward matter. Social psychologists have begun to research the psychoanalytical defences, albeit with dissimilar labels (Paulhus et al., 1997). Vaillant (2011) concludes that producing a comprehensive list of defences leads to much semantic disagreement (Vaillant, 2011). Projection and reaction formation may be understood as forms of displacement or forms of denial (Vaillant, 2011). Denial could be a special type of repression/suppression/censorship, and so forth (Erdelyi, 1985). It is for this reason that the

difficulty to distinguish between repression in the narrow sense and repression in the general sense (defence) is not likely to prove theoretically useful.[18]

In 2015, Wagas et al., confirmed the findings of Vaillant's (1977) longitudinal study which concluded that higher levels of anxiety, including neurotic ego defence, was more prevalent amongst the female population. Several studies found higher scores for neurotic defence style amongst females compared to males (Colbert-Getz, 2013; Parekh, 2010; Zeigler-Hill, 2007). Furthermore, according to Wagas et al., (2015), ego defences, like humour, pseudo-altruism and rationalisation, were positive predictors of academic performance, whereas the age of the respondents, projection and displacement were negatively associated with it. The hierarchies of defence mechanisms show that mature defence styles were associated with increased academic results and lower levels of depression and anxiety (Mc Cann, 2011; Wagas et al., 2015). Wagas et al., (2015) has confirmed Carvalho's (2013) findings, stating that neurotic and immature defence styles were associated with increased depression and anxiety, in addition to poorer academic results. Wagas et al., (2015) found that the most commonly employed ego defences of medical students were rationalisation, anticipation, pseudo-altruism, undoing and humour, whereas the least commonly employed defence mechanisms were devaluation, denial and dissociation. The results reveal a higher prevalence of neurotic defence mechanisms than immature or mature defence mechanisms. Furthermore, these results confirm Parekh et al.'s (2010) findings, who found that a neurotic defence style was more evident than either mature or immature mechanisms amongst medical students. In addition, Wagas et al., (2015) and Parekh et al. (2010) all found similar results, which showed rationalisation, pseudo-altruism and anticipation to be the most commonly employed defence mechanisms. The above longitudinal studies informed my knowledge base of the

[18]Although humour appears to reflect denial and dissociation, it, like meditation, helps shift the body's autonomic sympathetic agitation to parasympathetic calm (Vaillant, 2011). Furthermore, the phenomenon of isolation was named "dissonance reduction" (Cramer, 2000). Reaction formation is represented in self-presentation ploys associated with counteracting prejudice, racism and sexism through overly positive behaviour (Cramer, 2000). Denial (e.g refusal to recognise the reality) has been renamed "positive illusions", and undoing has been relabeled "counterfactual thinking". Freud observes that not only can emotions be dislocated or transposed from ideas (isolation), but they can also be reattached to other ideas (displacement) and then forgotten (repression) (Vaillant, 2011). The diagnostic and prognostic validity of such "mechanisms" in longitudinal studies more than makes up for any unreliability (Vaillant, 2011).

numerous manifestations of blind spots within various contexts and further illuminated the challenge of researching such a broad and implicit phenomenon.

2.5 Moments of Self-Awareness

> To see the world in a grain of sand
>
> And heaven in a wild flower
>
> Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
>
> And eternity in an hour. (Blake, 1977, p. 506)

According to Romanyshyn (2015), Blake's four lines above, open a place for those epiphanies of the invisible, those showings of what is ordinarily not seen, those extraordinary moments peeking out from within the ordinary. Romanyshyn's main purpose was, and is, to find a way of speaking about those "transient epiphanies that in their appearance open a vision and in their parting leave a trail of sorrow, moments that awaken soul through beauty and Eros" (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 7). In addition, Brown (1996, p. 2) concludes that "discoverers rarely find something totally new; instead, they see the ordinary in a new light". Milton (1608/1994) suggests that, through gratitude, people have the potential to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change how one experiences life and the world.

Archimedes was an inventor, scientist and one of the greatest mathematicians in history who was reported to have experienced an epiphany, proclaiming Eureka! (I found it!), when he discovered how to calculate density by displacing water while visiting a bathhouse. Supposedly, he had such a powerful moving reaction to the sudden realization that he ran home unclothed. Since that time, the expression "eureka" or "aha" represents the moment when the solution to a problem appears in a sudden flash of awareness or a moment of insight (Who Was Archimedes?, 2003). In addition, Taylor (as cited in Amos, 2019**)** states that experiences of sudden, positive and profound change, which can fundamentally alter the lives of those who experience it exist. Social reformers have also described the experience of a sudden moment of awareness or epiphany. In 1934, Wilson was hospitalised for alcohol detoxification for the fourth time. He experienced a vision of being at the top of a mountain and thinking, "You are a free man" (as cited in White, 2004, p. 463). He stopped drinking immediately and founded Alcoholics Anonymous. A moment of awareness can be more than

insight; it has the potential to transform one's perspective. It is a moment that changes a person so deeply that he or she is no longer the same (Chilton, 2015).[19]

> Jung implored one to bend down without prejudice and look in the despised corner of their own unconscious psyche for signs of awareness which might point the way (Von Franz, 1975, p. 14).

Unveiling a blind spot through a moment of awareness is no easier than any other form of self-knowledge, and indeed probably more difficult, since I understand myself only by means of the signs which I give of my own life and which are returned to me via others (Ricoeur, 1994). Furthermore, according to Jung (1961/1995), moments of awareness cannot be scientifically verified, and therefore he finds no place for them in an official worldview. However, regarding Kounios and Beeman's (2015) findings on the eureka moment, although it is an elusive concept, their study offers scientific accuracy on the phenomenon. Brown (1996) states that scientist achieve this eureka moment while tenaciously pursuing it.

For Kafka, Rilke, Joyce, Woolf, Proust, Apollinaire and the surrealists, although they believed in the ideology of a lack of awareness, an intense epistemological scepticism coexisted with an unremitting quest for privileged moments, epiphanies, moments of being (as cited in Timms,1987). Nevertheless, Neville and Cross's (2016) study is among the few empirical studies to provide evidence concerning the moment of self-awareness. Searle (2013) states that, thanks to consciousness, within any immediate moment, one has the potential of creating new awareness of the environment around him/herself. However, according to Kounios and Beeman (2015), the mental processes preceding insights are for the most part in one's blind spot, making it difficult to monitor them and forecast when a solution will open into awareness. Similarly, Von Franz (1975, p. 120) states, "The unconscious has its own way of revealing what is destined in a human life just at that moment when it is ready to be integrated". According to Jung (1961/1995, p. 339), the process is like what happens in

[19]Helen Keller had one such moment when in her frustration to understand the meaning of words her teacher brought to the well and ran cold water over it. The sensation of the water startled her into eureka moment. Helen later explained "Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten- a thrill of a returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew that water meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living joy awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free...thus a blind girl came to see".(Heller, 1921 pp.20-24).

the "individual psyche; a person may have an inkling of something for many years yet grasp it clearly only at a particular moment". Non-conscious processes akin to blind spots are submerged, and they can be brought to the surface, readily creating immediate awareness (Easthope, 1999). Moments of self-awareness can create awareness of how people attend to their own consciousness, body, personal history or some other aspect of themselves that was previously unknown (Duval & Wicklund, 1972). It allows one to be the subject of one's own attention (Legrain et al., 2010) and offers the ability to reflect on one's own thoughts and to create an alternative perspective (Gallup, 1982).[20] It is often through the unnoticed, ordinary extraordinary epiphanies of beauty that we learn to see in another way (Romanyshyn, 2015).

2.5.1 Moments of Self-Awareness in Therapy

> The activated unconscious appears as a flurry of unleashed opposites and calls forth the attempt to reconcile them or grow aware, so that the great panacea may be born. (Jung, 1954, p. 182)

The great panacea is the elusive moment when new awareness is created. In the field of psychotherapy, various terms have been used to describe outstanding moments of in-session change, among them are "good moments" (Mahrer & Nadler, 1986), "significant events" (Elliot, 1983) and "helpful events" (Grafanaki & Mcleod, 1999). In addition, the Boston Change Process Study Group (2010) refers to these moments as "now moments". In MacMahon's (2020) study, a participant confirmed the experience as a moment of emergence within a therapeutic context that confirmed her belief. Furthermore, MacMahon's (2020) acknowledges that the process of recognising a personal blind spot seems to be marked by momentary experiences of surprise or shock as participants create awareness of the impact of their behaviour within a clinical context. Noteworthy in some research accounts is how hot

[20]In addition, a moment of self-awareness creates awareness of one's own mental state, which may lead to greater understanding of someone else's mental state (Gallup, 1998). It fosters self-knowledge, which reflects people's awareness of their patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving, as well as awareness of their reputation (Wilson, 2009).

moments of truth, or now moments, and moments of meeting take place in a relational context where conditions might be described as safe but not too safe; in other words, suitably challenging (Bromberg, 2006, 2011).

2.6 Empirical Studies on Moments of Self-Awareness

Due to the transcendent and unpredictable nature of a moment of self-awareness, it is a relatively under-researched and underdeveloped phenomenon. The five empirical studies detailed in this stage of the literature review comprise the focus of this final section. Four of these studies availed of the literary term "epiphany" to describe positive change that is both sudden and profound.

2.6.1 Murray (2006)

Murray's (2006) doctoral thesis is a qualitative enquiry into a phenomenon similar to moments of self-awareness, which he called "an unencumbered moment" and defined as a life-changing moment of clarity when one's foundational beliefs about oneself and the world shift completely (p.16). What he set out to discover in his research was a more in-depth depiction and explanation of that moment of clarity when one commits to changing one's life in order to save it. This includes "action taken to change one's life, which is profound, positive, and irreversible and brings a reprioritizing of how the self and the world are perceived" (p. 2). However, Murray's study highlighted that words such as "insight", "self-awareness" and "epiphany" (2006, p. 20) can be representative of the process that leads to the experience, and not necessarily of the experience itself. Given the complexity of this study, my interest was in what contributions this research made to understanding the lived experience of a moment of awareness, including how its findings may confirm or challenge other empirical studies on the phenomenon.

Before Murray (2006) began to discuss his research question, he made personal statements to assist the reader with understanding the focus and context of his research project. By sharing his own story, Murray (2006) demonstrated the connection between his account and the reasons for which he undertook the research project. Murray's (2006) motive to study such a topic was based on his ability to make second-order changes in his life after an unencumbered moment, and because knowledge about such an experience could assist those who work daily with people, who struggle with making such changes, this encouraged him to learn more about the unencumbered moment. The aim of his research was to explore the conditions that promote the unencumbered moment; that is, the process that leads to, and

includes, the moment of “new understanding and positive second-order life change, the moment when one is emotionally, spiritually, and physically open to experiencing personal learning at a deeper and clearer level of understanding” (Murray, 2006, p. 103). It sought to emphasise the participants’ developmental progression, milestones and turning points. However, the aim of my research differs somewhat, in that its main objective is to understand the lived experience of a moment of awareness, and not its developmental progression.

Of interest to my research were the similar challenges Murray (2006) encountered in conducting his literature review. He struggled to find a universal term in the English language to characterise the experience of having what appears to be an instantaneous life-changing moment of clear and profound thought. Furthermore, Murray’s (2006) literature review encompasses models of change which were somewhat removed from the phenomenon under investigation. Prochaska’s et al., (1992) well-known Transtheoretical Model for Stages of Change and Mahoney’s (1991) theory of resistance to change were reviewed. Therefore, a frequent slippage away from the fidelity to the phenomenon was evident **(**Levitt et al., 2017).

Murray (2006) labels his study as qualitative. However, he does not stipulate which exact methodology guided his research. Murray (2006) formulated the research questions through introspective and retrospective processes whereby he used his experience of his own unencumbered moment. He repeatedly explored the circumstances of his life prior to his experience and critically analysed himself. He took an insider view which advocated that it was important to understand the personal logic that an individual gives to events (Murray, 2006). With regard to limitations, Murray’s (2006) inclusion criterion was somewhat broader than his finalised definition of an unencumbered moment. He chose a constricted demographic for his sample. The participants were chosen on the basis that their lives

were previously in danger and their foundational beliefs had suddenly shifted. Furthermore, five of the nine participants were previously known to Murray (2006). This was not noted as having implications for the data collected, and therefore may have led to unconscious bias or may have compromised the data collated. Furthermore, a noteworthy inadequacy was the

absence of member-checking.[21]In addition, confirmation and verification of the research data relied heavily on the interpretations of Murray's personal opinion. A further confirmation of the research data by an external researcher could have strengthened the rigour of the study. The purpose of an external researcher is to review and analyse the data findings, comparing themes and patterns that have been developed in the research (Dukes as cited in Creswell, 1998). Murray could have further verified his research findings through the use of logic to determine whether the patterns and themes that emerged from the analysis of data fitted together logically and "whether the same elements could be arranged to constitute an entirely different pattern" (Creswell, 1998, p. 207). Therefore, this research, viewed from the standpoint of modern research expectations of criticality, reflexivity and rigour, can be seen as rather underdeveloped at times. However, when critiquing Murray's study, it is worth noting that it was conducted at a time when qualitative research was still relatively in development.

Murray's (2006) findings expressed the unencumbered moment as indescribable. One participant disclosed the following: "everything changed for me [...] I can't really explain it [...] it was like a state of grace [...] I really couldn't feel my body anymore [...] I wasn't in tune with my brain anymore [...] I was in tune with something else [...] I guess you could call it my soul [...] answers to questions just came to me". Another participant in Murray's (2006, p. 290) study felt the experience came from the "centre of his soul" and came "without thinking" (Murray, 2006, p. 290): "it was a sense of peace and a calmness [...] there was no doubt in my mind [...] I felt it in my heart and in my soul [...] I thought that my words had come from the centre of my soul [...] this time was different than all the other times" (Murray, 2006, p. 290).[22]

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[21]I intend to utilise participant validation to enhance the quality of the findings, by arranging for transcribed interview tapes and paraphrased accounts to be reviewed by the co-researchers (interviewees) to ensure that records are accurate and relevant, providing compelling descriptions of their experiences. This is encouraged by Morse, et al. (2002), to support rigour andinterpretative claims.

[22]Further to this, one participant described an instant in which it became "absolutely, totally powerful, totally clear" that she needed to leave an abusive relationship (Murray, 2006, pp. 259-261). "What's left is a clear, bright idea. It's hard to describe [...] It's a moment of pure excitement, pure emotion" (Murray, 2006, p. 1). One participant in Murray's (2006) study openly shared her experience,which was sudden in nature:"I went to sleep and when I awoke [...]suddenly the name popped into my head [...] in an instant [...] wow, this is it [...] this

Given the disparate nature of the empirical literature exploring moments of awareness, the central strength of this study is its input of qualitative knowledge to a relatively uncharted area. What has become apparent from the information attained in this study is that once an individual enters an unencumbered moment, all internal debates about choices, all internal dialogue and resistance are removed and positive and second-order life-change occurs. According to Murray (2006, p. 281), this "kind of change does not appear as a result of insight or reflection, but it arrives out of a deep calm in the middle of deep pain and chaos with a strong emotional experience akin to fear combined with clarity". However, Murray (2006) concludes that the threshold for the unencumbered moment is still a mystery that requires further investigation. The intention for my research is to pursue this proposition.

2.6.2 McDonald (2005, 2007, 2008)

McDonald's (2005) study was a significantly more sophisticated enquiry than that of Murray (2006) in terms of its level of criticality, rigour, reflexivity and the positioning of the research within the context of the literature. However, there are some noticeable similarities in the subsequent findings between the two. Both researchers emphasised the suitability of a qualitative approach to understand and explore the phenomenon at a greater depth and equally drew attention to the paucity of literature related to moments of awareness. Nonetheless, McDonald's (2008) research differs from Murray's (2006) study in that its central aim was to explore the epiphanic experience from within the field of psychotherapy. McDonald (2005) found that, although the term has enjoyed popular application in various fields, its conceptual, empirical and theoretical understanding continues to be quite underdeveloped. Interestingly, McDonald's (2008) definition of an epiphanic experience shares similarities with my study's definitions. He described an epiphany as a "profound illumination of the inauthentic and authentic modes of self-identity", the "result of an accumulation of personal processes that take place outside of conscious knowing, that suddenly and abruptly burst into awareness as a meaningful and life changing event which

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name truly fits [...] there was something transcendent about it". One participant out of nine described an instant in which it became "absolutely, totally powerful, totally clear" that she needed to leave an abusive relationship

provides the impetus for a more honest and courageous encounter with the conditions of existence" (McDonald, 2005, p. 17).

Similarly to Neville and Cross's (2016) study, McDonald's (2008) study employed a narrative inquiry approach to collect and analyse participants' understanding of epiphanies. He chose this approach, as an in-depth understanding of epiphanies can be achieved by "obtaining an account of the participant's life story" (McDonald, 2005, p. 92). However, it is worth noting that this design of inquiry from the humanities would not have been appropriate for my study, which is interested in the lived experience of the phenomenon, and which is not a narrative chronology (Creswell, 2014). Further to this narrative inquiry, McDonald, (2005) has his "theoretical affinity with existential philosophy" (Polkinghorne, 1988, pp. 125-155), meaning that this study incorporated a self-identity existential analysis. As comparable with Murray's (2006) research, McDonald (2008) offered chronological coverage of the epiphany, including a narrative of the series of events that led to the moment of awareness and how one's life was transformed in the aftermath of the moment of awareness. He identified the antecedent and facilitative factors associated with this form of change (McDonald, 2008).

McDonald (2005) used circular reasoning to select a theoretical sample (Charmaz, 2008) to employ participants from a non-psychotherapeutic background, which consisted of individuals who had a self-identified epiphany. Similarly to Murray (2006), this was based on an a priori assumption that epiphanies would be "preceded by periods of anxiety, depression, and inner turmoil" (McDonald 2005, p. 97). McDonald reports that "each of the four participants experienced periods of anxiety, depression, and inner turmoil" (2005, pp. 93-98). Of note was the use of four non-therapists for his sample. This may have had clinical implications in that his findings were deduced not from experiences in a therapeutic context, but from experiences emerging from a range of alternative contexts. However, as part of engaging with potential participants, it was necessary for McDonald (2005) to estimate their capability for self-reflection and articulate verbal communication.

In McDonald's (2005) study, core characteristics emerged from the data via content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). However, a limitation of this study can be noted, as the presentation of his findings supported pre-formed characteristics or hypotheses. It compared self-identity and pre-formed characteristics of existential themes or hypotheses against the narrative findings. Although useful, this was akin to premature labelling of the emergent themes. Furthermore, some disparity was noted in the study between the researcher's interpretation and the

participants' understanding of the experience. His interpretive categories were often inadequately matched to the equivalent interview extracts. An example of this is evident in the findings, where, similarly to Murray (2006), the study found that "epiphanies are an experience of profound change and transformation in self-identity" (2005, p. 99); however, no quotation was explicitly used to elucidate this experience. Although he writes with great fervour, drawing on existing literature to promote the centrality of an epiphanic moment, the connection between the implications he proposes and the scale of epiphanic experiences elicited from his research data is not obviously explicated. Whilst seeking not to dismiss the significant findings which materialised from this study, it is, however, evident that the methodological weaknesses may have weakened the validity of McDonald's (2005) findings and the subsequent conclusions he draws concerning implications for therapy.

Despite the fact that I have outlined some of the methodological weaknesses in McDonald's (2005) study, one of its strengths was that the analysis process was supported by a number of quality control measures to evaluate the data. In contrast to Murray's (2006) study, these included consensual validation with the participants and credibility checks carried out by academic colleagues and a consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist with 25 years of experience (Elliott et al., 1999; Yardley, 2000). Furthermore, McDonald (2008) had personally experienced sudden and momentary occurrences that increased clarity and awareness. His acknowledgement of his own experience added to the transparency of the study. Transparency will be important for my research, in that the lived experience of a moment of awareness will emerge from the data, and my own assumptions, which shape these interpretations, will be elucidated (Levitt et al., 2017).

McDonald (2005) established an epiphany moment as "a sudden, abrupt, and positive transformation that is profound and enduring" (p. 90). He further described it as a profound insight or perspective into consciousness (Mc Donald, 2008).[23] In the critical discussion, I will compare my findings with those of McDonald and reflect upon whether the implications

[23]Illumination and clarity added to the profound effect of these moments. In McDonald's study (2005), each of the participants experienced a significant insight, which had the effect of illuminating elements of self-identity that had once remained in darkness. McDonald (2005) shared one such example from a participant: "It was like a veillifted [...] I'm going to be a nurse". One participant related this moment to "a realization" (McDonald, 2005, p. 99).

he proposed actually emerged in the lived experiences described by my participants. In conclusion, McDonald's study is significant, as it is an infrequent example of qualitative enquiry into the knowledge of an epiphany. This study greatly supported my learning, and the intention for my research was to develop this work from a psychotherapist's perspective.

2.6.3 Fletcher (2008)

Fletcher's (2008) paper argues for the relevance of the concept of a clinical epiphany, particularly within the diverse, multicultural, multi-faith communities that characterise contemporary Europe. Fletcher (2008) outlines how eliciting stories of epiphany can assist people with uncovering and articulating theories of therapeutic change, thus reinforcing neural pathways to healing and resilience, within the research interview process. Fletcher's intention seeks to uncover those rare moments of meeting which stand out as exceptional, transformational or transpersonal, which could be perceived as epiphanies. This paper is based upon an apprehension that therapy in the U.K. is in jeopardy of losing its way (Dryden, 2003), becoming so regulated, proceduralised and concerned with a narrow definition of evidence-based practice that much of the heart of what works is in danger of being removed from practice (Fletcher, 2008). Similarly to McDonald (2005), Fletcher's (2008) rationale for her research was based on the fact that few studies have sought to shed light on the precise elements, the rare pivotal moments within therapy, which lead to lasting and pervasive change.

This study was located within a relatively topical strand of process research, which Sherman (1994, p. 229) describes as "in-session change" research.This includes both the micro-momentary process of in-session change and the longer-term outcomes. However, this paper's focus differed from the intention for my research, which is interested in moments of awareness that is not exclusive to the therapeutic sessions. Fletcher (2008) was interested in the client narratives of in-session change which stand out as exceptionally memorable within a lengthy span of therapy (at least 10 years). This study sought to bring to attention not only the lived experience, but how it is later reshaped by words. The core aim of this paper is to shed light on the above outlined phenomenon and highlight the implications for psychotherapy research, training and practice. However, the concept of epiphany is used by Fletcher in preference to any other, because it respects certain dimensions of human

experience. Fletcher (2008) includes synonyms similar to those used in my research to define an epiphany moment; these include “revelation”, “moment of illumination”, “knowledge of thought without a reason”, “immediate cognition” and “intuitive understanding”.As with McDonald (2008), Fletcher (2008) chose a narrative approach to interviewing, because it affords understanding of human action and lived experience. This process included listening to accounts which unfurled during interviews, highlighting how stories could be a transformational force in people's lives, promoting self-reflection, self-regulation and connection with our higher selves (Fletcher, 2008).[24]

Using conversational analysis, this paper explores what was experienced at the time of the epiphany, as well as how clients later chose to make narrative sense of that encounter. Fletcher’s (2008) small-scale research project was based on qualitative data obtained from detailed interviews with four women who were asked to recount an experience of an epiphany in therapy. The sample of four women chosen in Fletcher’s study was drawn from qualified and experienced psychotherapists known to the principal researcher. The four women who became co-researchers on this project included an African-Caribbean woman, a homosexual female (of dual heritage); a Jewish woman and a white woman. However, opportunity sampling meant that the group was not a representative of the general population, and there was obvious bias (in terms of the participant being familiar to the researcher) and a lack of gender diversity. Nevertheless, the choice of participants arose out of a number of ethical considerations. The modest number of participants purposefully chosen could be deemed a limitation. However, qualitative inquiry which focuses on an in-depth understanding of smaller samples is deemed adequate (Smith et al., 2009). Furthermore, a small sample could offer what Plummer (2001, p. 133) has described as “information rich”. In contrast to Murray (2006) and McDonald (2008), Fletcher (2008) chose this sample, as they were perceptive about psychotherapy and had the advantage of training, reflexivity and the management of potentially painful memories. Learning from this, it was pertinent that the sample for my research study had psychotherapeutic and reflective insight.

[24]Fletcher (2008) highlights how the process of narration serves to reinforce and integrate the experience in ways that not only expand consciousness in the moment, but, in a more sustained sense, can foster an enhanced sense of well-being and a coping or resilient identity.

In parallel with previous studies, the data generated gave an insight into the complex and often quite implicit meanings that surround client-therapist interactions within the epiphany experience. The real-life stories within this study had a personal validity which would have been absent in over-interpreted texts. Of note for my research was the manner in which Fletcher (2008) directly invited the research participants to describe a lived experience of the phenomenon, which may have occurred in a clinical context. This was important for describing the therapeutic possibilities of the phenomenon. Fletcher (2008) stated that identifying particularly meaningful moments in psychotherapy may assist the identification and cultivation of distinct opportunities for client change. However, no claim is made to represent universal therapy experience within this study. Moreover, each of the stories is distinctive and unique, which makes it impossible to generalise findings to wider populations. In contrast to Murray (2006), and similarly to McDonald's (2008) study, Fletcher (2008) utilised participant validation to enhance the quality of the findings by arranging for the transcribed interview tapes and paraphrased accounts to be reviewed by co-researchers (interviewees). Participant checking and the incorporation of new interpretations in the data is suggested by some researchers (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010) as an important aspect of research validation, one which takes into account negotiated realities. This heightened the truth value of the research by ensuring records were accurate and relevant, containing convincing descriptions of their experience. This rigour supported interpretative claims (Morse et al., 2002). The clinical implications of Fletcher's study highlight the therapeutic benefits of recalling epiphany stories, for both the client and the therapist. Taylor claims that eliciting stories of epiphanies can thus become a way of promoting change-orientation and therapeutic hopefulness amongst practitioners, whilst strengthening neural and somatic channels to inter-subjective healing and autobiographical change for the client (as cited in Fletcher, 2008). Fletcher (2008) concluded by periodically asking clients to report on experiences of an epiphany, particularly at the beginning of the working relationship, practitioners can gain valuable insights into the client's theories and values of change. Norcross (2002) identifies this as key to a successful therapy outcome. Furthermore, Fletcher (2008) argues that epiphany stories can also help protect against the burnout that can result from largely problem-saturated stories.

As comparable with McDonald (2005), Fletcher (2008) concluded that heightened moments of engagement in therapy can lead to profound and transformational change. Fletcher's (2008) research offers a case for encouraging epiphany storytelling as a way of reinforcing

and embodying empowerment and resilience. However, Fletcher (2008) affirmed that the experience of clinical epiphany is something to which we can remain open and receptive but can never schedule.

2.6.4 Neville and Cross (2016)

Neville and Cross's (2016) study was grounded in adults' understanding and perception of epiphanic experiences, centring on the voices of 64 men and women from various countries. The intention for their research differed from the previous research in that they were interested in describing epiphanies and perceived outcomes of the participants' understanding in the context of their race. Neville and Cross (2016) described an epiphany as a sudden insight spurred by an event or experience that leads to personal and enduring transformation with respect to one's core understanding.

Their chosen methodology involved racial life narratives. Narrative enquiry appears to be the most common methodology used to investigate epiphanies within qualitative research (McDonald, 2008; Fletcher, 2008). Neville and Cross's (2016) choice to use maximum variation and purposeful snowball sampling to recruit diverse participants influenced my sample choice. Purposeful maximum variation sampling is used to select participants from an identified group of individuals (Miles & Huberman, 1994), as they will have specialised experience of the phenomenon (Goss &Stevens, 2016) under investigation. Neville and Cross (2016) added to the rigour and generalisability of their research by engaging in sample diversity. Sixty-four adult participants were gender-balanced; they originated from four different continents; involving those from varying familial backgrounds, with extreme social histories. Neville and Cross's (2016) research intentionally selected participants from different locations to reflect the diverse range of experiences. This strategy helped to minimise sampling bias (Neville &Cross, 2016). However, an obvious gap was evident in the literature as regards incorporating a psychotherapist's perspective. The data emerged from this research primarily through dimensional analysis. Many features of this analysis were in agreement with my constructivist paradigm, which encouraged the co-creation of themes in the dataset. Before data analysis, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for accuracy by the interviewer (Neville & Cross, 2016). However, further member-checking may have supported the rigour of this study (McDonald, 2008; Fletcher, 2008). The findings in their research were consistent with Cross's (1991) original conceptualisation of epiphanies.

Although this research is rooted in the context of racial awareness, it helped to inform my research in terms of identifying awakening prototypic stories and for counsellors by providing opportunities to assist individuals in the meaning-making process.

Neville and Cross's (2016) study is among the few empirical studies to provide a discussion of triggers of self-awareness. Similarly to Murray (2006), this study concluded that personal experience/observation-type epiphanies increased one's clarity and awareness. For many, changes in one's life were spurred by either an "aha!" moment (epiphany) or a series of events (encounters) that led to increased insight and reinterpretations of meaning (Neville & Cross, 2016). The majority of participants described this awakening change as a process of transitioning into an awakening moment (Neville & Cross, 2016). Similarly to Fletcher (2008),regarding the clinical implications of this research, it concluded that new insights lead to different behaviours, which lead to the establishment of a sense of connection to something broader than the individual self, the "aha!" moment or epiphanic experience, a "wow" moment (Neville & Cross, 2016). These experiences created "wow" responses which often led to a more informed way in which one thought about him/herself (Neville & Cross, 2016). In conclusion, Neville and Cross (2016) state that more information is needed to understand how identity may change over time after an awakening moment. They encourage future studies to identify whether there are prototypic awakening stories and to explore in greater detail the antecedents and uncovering of the process of awakening (Neville & Cross, 2016). This helped to inform the rationale for my research.

2.6.5 Amos's (2019)

The aim of Amos's (2019) doctoral research was to investigate the lived experience of an epiphany, which was defined as a "sudden discontinuous change" (Jarvis, 1997, p. 5) that can alter an individual in a powerfully positive and lasting manner through a reconfiguration of his/her most deeply held beliefs about him/herself and the world (Amos, 2019). The intention of this study was to contribute technical knowledge to the academic discourse related to the current psychological understanding of epiphanic experiences. Amos's (2019) enquiry further drew attention to the deficiency of empirical research on this subject. Amos (2019) illuminated the journey taken by the researcher whilst completing her doctoral research into the lived experience of epiphanies. The rationale for this research was based on Braud and

Anderson's (1998) assumption that "many of the most significant and exciting life events and extraordinary experiences—moments of clarity, illumination and healing—have been systematically excluded from conventional research" (p. 3). Amos's (2019) study found that the qualitative literature, which examined sudden and profound transformation, had mostly sought to elucidate the antecedent and facilitative factors associated with this form of change (McDonald, 2008; Murray, 2006). Amos's motivation to study such a phenomenon was based on her personal experience. This fuelled an interest to understand those who had such experiences, along with how they made sense of it.

Similarly to Amos's (2019) study, which emphasised the importance of choosing an appropriate methodology that would resonate with the elusive nature of the phenomenon under investigation, my research related to the implicit dimension of the experience which is in some way known but not yet available to reflective thought or expression (Orange, 2011). A central objective of Amos's (2019)epistemology for phenomenology aligned with my research assumption that understands knowledge can never be purely cognitive; instead, it is embodied by and interwoven with senses, mood and intersubjective contexts.This qualitative approach, therefore, challenges the epistemology of positivist and objective models (Anderson, 2011; Creswell, 2013a).

The strength of Amos's (2019) study lies in its methodological choice of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which enabled the ability to identify meanings and develop understandings through sustained interpretative engagement (Finlay, 2011). What mattered to Amos as an IPA researcher is how the experience is experienced. Therefore, Amos subscribed to a more relativist ontology, one which understands that reality is constructed intersubjectively. However, like all forms of phenomenological research, IPA suffers from both conceptual and methodological limitations. IPA could be criticised for not giving adequate recognition to the integral role of language and the extent to which language constructs, rather than describes, reality (Willig, 2013). Furthermore, accessing participants' cognitions contradicts the intentionality of a phenomenological study (Willig, 2001; Langdridge, 2007). Amos (2019) wondered whether IPA could accurately capture the participant's experiences and meanings of experiences rather than opinions of it. She questioned how qualitative research can engage with phenomena that are experienced to be more than words can articulate (Amos, 2019). A central concern for Amos that I too had identified in my research was how to capture and share with the reader the indescribable

quality of a moment of awareness that seemed so inherent to the lived experience of this phenomenon. Amos further questioned, "How might the data generated from the study be presented to the reader in a way that might facilitate knowing what something feels like" (as cited in Tracy, 2012, p. 110). According to Amos (2019), expressing qualitative research findings to evoke an empathic understanding has implications for the aesthetic merit of qualitative description. Amos's obstacle brought to my attention the pertinence of choosing an appropriate methodological choice to enable such expression of a lived experience of a moment of awareness. This difficulty encouraged Amos (2019) to include an arts-based representation of the research findings, in the form of found poetry. By providing an insight into the process of constructing found poetry, it is intended that the merits of its integration within qualitative enquiry are highlighted as being able to bring the meaning of exceptional human experience alive to the reader (Amos, 2019). However, it was important to note that its function was to supplement the emerging interpretations. Her choice was supported by the "crisis of representation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 16), which led to the adoption of literary and artistic styles of representing lived experiences, which appeared more suitable to the goals of qualitative enquiry.

Six found poems are dispersed throughout the paper. This offered me, as a reader, an opportunity to engage in an exploration of and reflection on, the value of found poetry. The strength of this style of presentation was that it invited the space and time to notice, observe and reflect on the impact of research poetry as I progressed through the paper. Poetic enquiry has become a form of representation utilised by qualitative researchers within social sciences (Butler-Kisber, 2004). Amos's (2019) study captured the holistic nature of the themes conveyed by research participants. The incorporation of found poetry offered me the capacity to go beyond discrete categories. The transcripts were represented in stanza form; this was considered "particularly effective as a means of representing the rhythm, meaning and structure of oral narrative" (McLeod & Balamoutsou, 2004, p. 291).[25]

[25]They were created by taking the words of others and transforming them into poetic forms (Prendergast, 2009).Amos concluded that any experience of struggling to find words is a genuine demonstration of how words are not a simple reflection of the experience. However, interpretive poetry, which is used as a means of data analysis to create original poetry as part of the investigation, differs from found poems that are a representation of participant data (Amos, 2019).

Amos's (2019) study involved interviews with six participants in an unstructured format aimed at exploring how they made sense of their epiphanic experiences. Following Amos's (2019) first interview, the snowball effect proved quite useful, in which participants referred other potential participants, who were contacted directly and invited to take part. None of the participants were previously known to the researcher, which reduced the potential bias. This differs from Murray's (2006) study, where over half of the participants were previously known to the researcher. Six people, all of whom identified as having experienced a brief, sudden, personal and positive transformation, consented to take part in a research interview in which they were invited to describe what their experience meant to them. The experiential knowledge offered here is considered particularly relevant to professionals working in caring or therapeutic roles. However, the lack of psychotherapeutic perspectives amongst the participants may have presented as a limitation and further affected the clinical implications of this research.

Amos's study highlights the "extraordinary potential for healing, which has come to be associated with the type of sudden and profound transformation experiences" (2019, p. 18). Furthermore, Amos's paper confirmed previous studies' findings which suggest that this type of change is of particular clinical interest (Fletcher, 2008; Taylor & Egeto-Szabo, 2017). A noted strength of this study lay in its rigorous methodology; however, more details on this study's findings would have been helpful.

2.7 Rationale

> I am more an absence longing to be a presence (Kennelly, ascited in Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 30).

I wish to support the above critique of the literature with a grounded rationale for my study. I will further discuss these empirical studies and their findings in the context of my own study in Chapters Five and Six. I will compare more closely my own findings against those of these studies, reflecting upon whether the clinical implications proposed actually emerged in the lived experiences described by my participants. While each of the qualitative studies discussed above intended to reveal the experience of the phenomenon, there were differences in terms of their research design, methodological rigour, levels of reflexivity and levels of

investigation. These studies nevertheless point in the direction of research-orientated human experiences. Amos (2019) suggests that these could be developed by future researchers. Furthermore, Hess and Pickett (2010) have encouraged future research into self-awareness avoidance, including unconscious defensive behaviour, to continue exploring the complex nature of creating awareness. My own study could indeed be viewed as a response to these suggestions. The rationale for researching blind spots within the context of a moment of self-awareness is founded on the knowledge that due to the implicit nature of blind spots (MacMahon, 2020); one can only understand them retrospectively and through a moment of insight.

Braud and Anderson (1998) declare that "many of the most significant and exciting life events and extraordinary experiences—moments of clarity, illumination and healing—have been systematically excluded from conventional research" (as cited in Amos, 2019,p.3). Furthermore, Fletcher (2008) affirms the relevance of the concept of a clinical epiphany, particularly within the diverse, multicultural, multi-faith communities that characterise contemporary Europe. Previous literature highlighted that words such as "insight, self-awareness and epiphany are representative of the process that leads to the experience" and not necessarily of the experience itself (Murray, 2006, p. 20). This accounted for my choice to include the actual moment at which one gains self-awareness. In addition, only one study (Fletcher, 2008) included a psychotherapeutic perspective on moments of awareness. Therefore, more information about the phenomenon from a therapist's subjective point of view would supplement the literature. Furthermore, despite the continual progress in self-awareness research, many theoretical issues remain ambiguous and unresolved (Silvia & Duval, 2001). Studies in this field are underdeveloped although it remains a core topic of experimental psychology (Kounios & Beeman, 2015). Searle (2013) states that future research lies in a better understanding of creating more awareness. Furthermore, Taylor (2017) affirms that such epiphanic experiences have been overlooked in the field of psychology.

In relation to psychological blind spots, Romanyshyn considers the process of creating awareness of non-conscious motives, ideas and fears to be not only an ethical imperative, but a productive one (2007). In addition, Hoedemakers (2010) states the need for more research to identify elements that unfold outside our direct awareness. Leuzinger-Bohleber and Solms (2017) affirm the importance of re-thinking some psychoanalytical and unconscious concepts in light

of modern neuroscience. Parekh et al. (2010) have suggested a need for further research to assess the effect of the manifold non-conscious blind spots such as ego defence mechanisms on people's quality of life. Wagas et al., (2015) advises that more research is recommended to explore non-conscious motivations. It has been suggested that psychiatric evaluation of an individual should be accompanied by identification of the subject's dominant defence mechanism or blind spot; a return to the Freudian defence mechanism is required for this task (Parekh et al., 2010). In addition, Hoyer and Steyaert (2015) conclude that further understanding of ego defences could help individuals to make sense of the frictions in their stories and their underlying non-conscious processes. However, present-day research techniques make it extremely difficult to investigate how a lack of consciousness as large-scale phenomenon is caused (Searle, 2013). Psychological blind spots are not easy to put to any kind of test; for this reason alone, they remain provisional. They do not fit into the methodology or conceptual framework of Western science (Kline, 1984). Therefore, there are great challenges with empirically examining Freud's or Jung's theory, which accounts for the lack of objective support (Kline, 1984). This awareness supported my choice of a qualitative methodological approach as a form of enquiry, as I wanted to learn and understand about therapists' lived experiences of blind spots in greater depth.

Comparison of methodologies within the empirical literature has been complex due to the inconsistency of the various methodological approaches. However, the literature review emphasised the appropriateness of narrative enquiry or phenomenology as an appropriate approach to investigate such implicit phenomena. It elucidated the importance of dialogue and conversation when collecting interview data. However, this review of the available empirical research has highlighted the shortage of studies that have directly explored participants' lived experience of a moment of self-awareness including an investigation of blind spots utilising a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology and from a psychotherapist's perspective. A constant definition and systematic programme of research is deficient in the psychological literature. Therefore, an obvious opportunity for updated research existed.

2.8 Conclusion

> The hypothesis of the unconscious is of absolutely revolutionary significance in that it could radically alter our view of the world because a serious consideration of the unconscious would require us to acknowledge that our view of the world can be but a provisional one (Jung, ascited in Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 26).

This provisional view of the world encourages one to continue seeking further moments of awareness through the unfolding of blind spots. The justification for exploring such phenomena is evident in relevant claims elucidated in the literature. It is clear that the phenomena of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness are evident, but an obvious gap in the research still exists, as there is a paucity of qualitative studies on both these phenomena from a therapist's standpoint and a hermeneutic perspective. Not only is empirical research on this topic limited, but it is lacking an authoritative name and descriptive framework in the literature (Ilivitsky, 2011). The issue of creating further awareness is therefore critical (Cramer, 2015).What might shed light on blind spots to create moments of self-awareness? Freud taught us to be sceptical about everything we think and know, and to be curious about what else we might learn (as cited in Kahn, 2002). To gain real insight into both phenomena, we do not need more theories or neurophysiological explanation, but rather deeper understanding of real-life experience with the phenomena that may empower human behaviour and clinical experience. Jung (1961/1995) has affirmed the fundamental need to assimilate insight that psychic life has two poles still remains a task for the future. Deeper understanding of psychological blind spots is paramount given the growing literature on adaptation to self-knowledge (Tenney et al., 2013).

Always, older theories require new interpretations. Meaningful contribution increases utility, and it can take many forms, including new theories, social change or new information on old theories (Levitt et al., 2017). Hillman welcomes the idea of a renewed disintegration in our understanding of humanity, because, "at those times when old vessels break, new glimpses into the abyss are at hand" (Drob, 1999, p. 62). Moreover, he implores the challenging of habitual dogmas (Drob, 1999). Replication studies may have utility when there is an enquiry related to earlier findings or when a new context is explored (Levitt et al., 2017). Hillman is interested in the disintegration of old theory and dogma which is creative and interesting, and not in the new theories that arise in place of old theories (Drob, 1999). It was therefore important for me to examine with great care the phenomena of moments of self-awareness

and psychological blind spots, however obscure they may seem, with a view to discovering the seeds of new and potential meanings.Due to developments in mental health awareness, a call for a re-examination of concepts and phenomena outside one's awareness that have the potential to come into consciousness has been requested (Galatzer-Levy, 2017). Certainly, this study could be deemed an answer to this appeal.

2.9 Challenges and Reflections Emerging from the Literature

Early in the literature search, I realised the enormity of my chosen topic. The obvious and immense challenge for me was deciding what literature was most pertinent to include in the review that would allow adequate critique of the material, do justice to the phenomena and include both philosophical and empirical literature. The more I read on this very broad topic the more literature I accumulated. I was fearful that the phenomena, given their nature, could become uncontained and there was a high probability of getting lost in a sea of literature. At times I felt over-whelmed. Similar to previous researchers who had sought to surmount this topic, my desire for certainty became an impediment to my work rate. Furthermore, the lack of space to engage with the material at a greater depth was a concern of mine and challenged every aspect of this research. No more so than in the literature review where the word count did not permit my desire to analyze and critique the more philosophical or theoretical aspects of this research. Therefore, a limitation of the literature review was the lack of space to trace back these phenomena to their philosophical and religious roots (see Appendix VI Additional Literature). A lack of clarity with an over-reliance on philosophical literature, my focus had narrowed. I sought external professional support, and an alternative perspective from critical friends to offer further insight as to which direction to take. Support in the form of my academic advisor, shed a light on my blind spot of my perfectionist tendencies that demanded assurance and control, and offered me comforting advice in understanding my limits and the impossible task of critiquing all literature on my chosen topic. I took this academic advice and time to reflect. This supported the process and the mammoth task that lay ahead. Three years of searching, researching and delving deep into a wide range of literature cleared the clouds of confusion, and clarity prevailed.

I chose a multi-method approach that was thorough and identified a range of theories, for example drawing from philosophical, humanistic, phenomenological, including Jungian sources and empirical literature. I have read widely and this is evident in my key study

analysis (Appendix XXXIII) and relevant books (Appendix VII). I choose not to rely solely on primary text and therefore, the literature review is a broad amalgamation of both primary and secondary sources of knowledge. Given that my study is an exploration into the experience of the phenomena in the area of psychology, this review critically engaged with the scholarly articles that explored the nature and function of the phenomena in applied contexts. Of particular relevance to my study are the few texts which offered a qualitative perspective on psychological blind spots and moments of awareness. The literature review comprehensively analyzed not only contemporary researchers who attract interest today but also the forefathers who have researched this topic historically.

This comprehensive literature review invited significant insight into my topic of interest and further guided my methodological choices. I specifically chose material that was most relevant and focused on the phenomena of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots. However, this literature review can never truly represent the complete work. On a daily basis, I continue to read, research and reflect to inform my knowledge. This habitual practice will continue following my doctoral studies as it is a hobby, interest and a lifelong passion of mine.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter will provide justification, including background information, a rationale and objectives for the chosen methodological approach of this study. The sections on data collection methods and data analysis justify the various choices I made.I will furtherprovide anexplanation of the sampling method employed, including the logical means of obtaining the sample group, the recruitment process and interview protocol. Furthermore, the intention for this chapter is to outline the methods of analysis that supported the methodological design of this research. I will explicitly state the steps of analysis utilised to strengthen the rigour of this study. I will further evaluate the methodological integrity and trustworthiness of this study. Finally, I will assess the ethical considerations pertinent to this research. As with the previous chapters all stages of the research are supported through ample reflexivity evident in this chapter and the appendices section. This chapter will commence with a discussion on the research approach and paradigms that oversaw this research.

3.1 Epistemological Considerations

> In the bodies of knowledge we create, our failure to take into account the presence of lack of conscious awareness, takes the shape of our epistemologies becoming one sided, fixed truths and ideological exercises of power. (Romanyshyn, 2013, p.336)

I therefore sought out an epistemological framework that was committed to impartiality and openness to how true forms of knowledge may manifest. I further questioned what the "legitimate sources of knowledge" were (O'Donohue & Ferguous, 2001, p.62). As a doctoral researcher, it was pertinent to answer this question, because my aim was to discover knowledge, as well as to discover methods that best yield knowledge. An obvious challenge for my research was the exploration of a non-conscious phenomenon such as psychological blind spots, as a phenomenon, according to Heiddegger (1927/1962), is that which is manifest. However, Fink and Husserl stated that the unconscious can be grasped and examined in a methodical way after the prior analysis of being conscious (as cited in Hanna 1995). Therefore, the phenomenon of blind spots can be understood belatedly and

retrospectively (see Appendix VI). The exploration of a moment of self-awareness encourages reflection on what was previously unknown. This interconnectivity presents as an existential duplicity, which is further discussed in Chapter Five.

3.1.1 Overarching Stance and Research Assumptions

According to Lincoln and Guba (1989), a positivist perspective holds that reality is single, tangible and fragmentable where knowledge and the known are independent of each other. A positivist approach also states that generalisations are unaffected by time or context and that the idea of cause and effect exist (Lincoln&Guba, 1989). However, similarly to Van Deurzen (2019, p.8), I became dissatisfied with the "positivistic, natural scientific approaches of the day and turned to philosophy to overcome their limitation". The ideology of absolute certainty is misleading and false, as I believe there are multiple interpretations of reality. Furthermore, Mazzola et al. (2011) stated the importance of using a qualitative approach to research in order to aid deeper comprehension of the findings reaped from a quantitative research paradigm. The authors argue that a qualitative approach can help a researcher understand the relative importance of participants' experiences. This approach was paramount for my research, which sought a deep understanding of the core meaning of therapists' experiences, and how they made sense of it. In addition, I do not believe in strict cause and effect, but that there is a probability that something may or may not occur (Creswell, 2013). I believe in the post-positivism stance that emphasises that social reality is viewed and interpreted by the individual according to the ideological positions he or she possesses. For that reason, knowledge is personally experienced rather than acquired from or imposed from the outside (Yalom, 1989). Postmodernism is deemed a powerful method of exploring naturalistic, real-world settings, especially in relation to sensitive topics (Pollock, 2012), such as psychological blind spots. It includes knowing that human knowledge is conjectural rather than unchallengeable, and that one's knowledge can be withdrawn in light of further investigations. In essence, the primary aim of this qualitative research was to reveal the "disordered multifaceted and complex reality" of psychotherapists' experiences (Breakwell et al., 2012, p.334).With this naturalistic worldview, I attempted to enter the world of the participants and describe their reality rather than objectively explain it. I did not attempt to control variables or outcomes. Postmodernism challenges the opinion that the researcher can remain neutral,

passive or an objective observer of phenomena (Gergen, 2001). Therefore, as a qualitative researcher, I understood the importance of acknowledging how my subjectivity contributed to the construction of the data collected and the interpretations that emerged (Goldstein, 2017)(see Appendix IV).

3.1.2 Research Paradigms

The process of making decisions about qualitative research is guided by specific beliefs that form a paradigm (Guba, 1990). These beliefs relate to assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), how or what is known (epistemology) and the value or purpose of the project (axiology). However, the differences or variations in paradigms mean that different beliefs about research processes exist. In Western society, there are many interpretive frameworks, but the main two traditions of inquiry are the dogmatic and the critical (Soldati, 2012). One line of work that has been successful in raising psychologists' awareness of the methodological pluralism of qualitative tradition typifies them in categories, such as the post-positivist, constructivist-interpretive and critical-ideological paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Ponterotto, 2005b). The research paradigms I considered were social constructionism, pragmatism, feminist theory and critical theory, including alternative inquiry paradigms in social science research: such as functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist and radical structuralist (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). I rejected the principle that the role of the researcher remains neutral and value-free. Although, a critical-ideological paradigm respects one's perspective as a lens to guide the analysis of the data and report on findings, I rejected it, as the purpose of my research was not to unmask and disrupt privilege, power and oppression for the sake of liberation, transformation and social change (Levitt et al., 2017). In addition, I rejected the pragmatic approach, which may use multiple methods to achieve practical aims, as the focus of my research was not on solving problems that may be defined by multiple stakeholders (Patton, 2015). Social constructionism resonated with my philosophical outlook that believes there is more than one way by which to evaluate knowledge.

From an ontological perspective, the research takes a critical realist stance which assumes that my participants' accounts reflect their subjective perceptions. Although critical realism accepts an objective reality, it further posits that we can only know the world through our own experiences (Howitt, 2019). It accepts that knowledge is context-specific and, as such, is

shaped by the social world within which it is situated. With this in mind, the critical realist approach I took assumed that data needed to be interpreted in order to access its underlying meanings (Willig, 2012). Furthermore, I chose the research paradigm of social constructionism to guide this research, as I believe the ways of knowing are social and inter-subjective (Gergen, 1985). This paradigm is shaped by symbolic interactionism, which acknowledges that social interactions between people lead to the formation of reality (Glasser, 2005). Indeed, as the chief researcher I became a co-constructor of knowledge rather than an objective observer in search of a universal truth (Langdridge, 2007). My intention was to investigate participants' ideologies and beliefs regarding their understanding of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness to enable me to observe beyond surface meanings. Choosing a constructionist and naturalistic paradigm to explore this research, I acknowledged that surface meanings can be surpassed and that realities are multiple and can be constructed.This approach also assumes that knowledge can be generated through the relationship between the language featured in the accounts and the context, within which they are created (Willig, 2008), making it a suitable framework for hermeneutic phenomenology. My intention was to utilise dialogue exchanges with participants in order to uncover the meanings of understandings that were held by experienced psychotherapists, while exemplifying their process of "analysis in order to illustrate and make transparent their interpretive processes" (Levitt et al., 2017, p.7). Therefore, during the mapping process, I operated from the perspective of interpretivism. The philosophical attitude that underpinned the research was one where nothing was taken for granted and where the data emerged in a natural organic manner. Therefore, my primary aim was the understanding and renewal of therapists' experiences and knowledge.

3.1.3 Rationale for the Chosen Epistemological Framework Approach

Qualitative research methods are particularly relevant for studying the perceptions of a specific micro-group of people, as they are interested in the perspectives and experiences of the social world that are both unique and universal to the particular people under study (Bryman, 2004). I considered many qualitative approaches that challenged the dominance of positivist and objective models (Anderson, 2011; Westmarland, 2001), such as ethnography, narrative research, a case study and grounded theory (McLeod, 2015; Creswell, 2013).

However, although they employ similar data collection processes, including interviewing, observation and transcriptions of audio material (Willig, 2008), the types of data one would collect and analyse differ considerably between these approaches (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, the above approaches have comparable primary objectives (e.g. exploring a life, as opposed to generating a theory); however, they differ in that some have single disciplinary traditions (e.g. grounded theory is rooted in sociology, and ethnography is founded in anthropology), whereas case studies and narrative research have extended interdisciplinary backgrounds (Creswell, 2013).

Narrative methodology was utilised previously in psychology as a means of investigating epiphanic experiences, as it is flexible and allows participants to share stories (McDonald, 2005; Fletcher, 2008; Neville &Cross, 2016). However, it was worth noting that this design of inquiry from the humanities would not have been appropriate for my study, which was interested in the lived experience of the phenomena, whereas a narrative investigation strives to articulate a life story. Furthermore, I rejected narrative research, as it lacks a systematic framework (Creswell, 2013). How the experience is told, the causal links and the sequence of experiences is significant to the narrative researcher (Holloway & Freshwater, 2009) whereas the focus of my research was on disclosing a deeper understanding of the essence of the lived experience.

I further considered a grounded theory approach based on developing a theoretical understanding of the phenomena. The constructivist grounded theory is based on the work of Strauss (1987), and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994 &1998). According to Charmaz (2006), the ability to consider multiple perspectives is valued because it potentially enables a complete picture of the phenomenon to be observed. Barnett (2002) argues that it enables the researcher to consider the intricate nature of the participants' experiences. However, I decided against a grounded theory approach, although it shares some elements with constructivist interpretative approaches (Charmaz, 2006), such as discourse analysis (Breakwell, 2012). I rejected it on the basis that as it subscribes to a positivist epistemology with little reflexivity (Willig, 2008), and the lack of a literature review in advance of the research (McLeod, 2015) may have created difficulties for my research. However, I am aware that Charmaz (2008) overcame these challenges through the incorporation of the constructivists' grounded theory, which surmounts the shortcomings of Glaser and Strauss's emphasises on objectivity and generality by proposing the principles of relativity. My

intention, however, was not to generate theories, but to understand the lived experience of moments of awareness and psychological blind spots at a greater depth.

IPA values the dynamic relationship between researcher and participants (Smith et al., 2009) and it views the data collected from each participant as emerging from the shared intersubjective space between researcher and participant (Finlay & Evans, 2009). The strength of IPA lies in its ability to identify meanings and develop understandings through sustained interpretative engagement (Finlay, 2011). Although IPA recognises the action-oriented nature of talk and how meaning-making takes place using certain kinds of resources (narrative, discourse, metaphor, etc.), this represents only a partial account of what people are doing when they communicate. However, like all forms of phenomenological research, IPA suffers from both conceptual and methodological limitations. IPA could be criticised for not giving adequate recognition to the integral role of language and the extent to which language constructs, rather than describes, reality (Willig, 2013). IPA research is limited by participants' capacity for self-expression. Another criticism levelled against IPA concerns the extent to which its concern with accessing participants' cognitions runs counter to the aims of phenomenology (e.g. Willig, 2001; Langdridge, 2007). Although I have previously used IPA, upon reflection, I found it very codified. I therefore rejected this method for the way it breaks stories down into themes, which seems incongruent given that I am not seeking to generalise the findings in qualitative research. Furthermore, it tries to provide a systematic structure to what is an open, interpretive process (Smith et al., 2009).

I considered auto-ethnography, which values a deeper understanding of the self as a means to achieving greater understanding of others (Ellis, 1999). However, I discarded this approach (Moustakas, 1990), as I felt that there was too much introspection, with not enough of a focus on the co-creation of knowledge with the participant (Willig, 2008). Furthermore, I examined the use of case studies. Freud analysed the unconscious through listening to hundreds of case histories (Easthope, 1999). The data from the individual case histories were used by Freud to develop his theories (Bargh & Morsella, 2008). However, I declined the use of case studies,

as I wanted to research more than one single case (McLeod, 2015), and I considered it too labour-intensive for the participants (Smyth et al., 2008).[26]

The above categories are not mutually exclusive and are not meant to be exhaustive. However, I sought a research methodology and design that resonated with my chosen topic whilst also remaining loyal to my natural research disposition. This engendered fidelity and heightened the truth value of the research (Levitt et al., 2017). Ultimately; therefore, it was the dialogical, reflexive and richly expressive epistemological framework of phenomenology with a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology that would enable the expression of the essence of psychotherapists' lived experience of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness. I chose a phenomenological approach which differs from the aforementioned approaches, as it "expresses a concern with experience as lived" (van Manen & Adams, 2017, p.782).

3.2 Epistemological Framework – Phenomenology

> The subject of phenomenological research is something implicit that begs to be made explicit by the researcher. (Churchill, 2018, p.211)

It was the implicit meaning of both phenomena under investigation that I sought to expose and understand at an explicit level. I was thereforeconcerned with the whole existence of the participant, not only his or her inner subjective reality (Craig, 2008). I will provide a brief account of the chosen epistemological framework of phenomenology that will guide this research, including a description of how hermeneutic phenomenology, as my chosen methodology, is congruent with my research question and personal values.

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[26]Discourse analysis may yield understandings regarding how the phenomenon is framed through language. However, while discourse analysis (DA) would allow insight into how participants develop their identities and create meanings, it was not suitable for the current project, as it is aimed at policy makers who deliver messages that are effective to specific groups (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Furthermore, its lack of dealing effectively with non-verbal data would have been a challenge for my study (Breakwell, 2012).

3.2.1 Background

"Phenomenology" is an umbrella term encompassing philosophical aspects, and it includes a wide range of research approaches (Kafle, 2011). It has a 100-year interdisciplinary history of developing qualitative methods for the study of lived experiences, one that includes descriptive, interpretive and narrative variants in psychology (Churchill & Wertz, 2001; Giorgio, 2009). The texts of the famous originators of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, contain critical methodological terms such as "epoche", "reduction", "phenomenality", "meaning", "truth", "intentionality", "lived experience", "transcendental consciousness" and "life world"(van Manen & Adams, 2017). These are interpreted in nuanced and diverse ways (van Manen & Adams, 2017). However, Merleau-Ponty (1962/2002), in his classic book *Phenomenology of Perception*, states that there are four characteristics common to all schools of phenomenology: intentionality, description, reduction and essence. [27]There are two dominant phenomenological traditions: the descriptive (Husserl, 1980) and the hermeneutic **(**Ricoeur, 2004). Sartre's phenomenology includes existential descriptions as part of its methodological dimensions (van Manen, 2014). My research was interested in formulating vivid descriptions of these everyday existential experiences while making analytical phenomenological sense of social realities. However, I rejected a purely descriptive methodology, as I believe engaging in reflexivity to identify the researcher's biases in an attempt to neutralise their potential impact (a practice known as bracketing) (Goldstein et al., 2017) would contradict the epistemological principles that underpin this qualitative study. Furthermore, I realised that my interpretations, including my preconceptions regarding the phenomena, were central to this study (see Appendix I & IV).

[27]Theorists of phenomenology reject the persistent dualism of mind versus body (or the traditional distinction between object and subject) in contemporary scientific thinking (Crotty & Crotty, 1998). Instead, phenomenological analysis examines the intentional correlation between noema (the object as experienced) and noesis (the mode of experiencing) (Moustakas, 1994). The former concerns physical, unchanging, concrete things (objects), and the latter relates to individual human beings' subjective understanding of the former.

3.2.2 Rationale for Choosing Phenomenology

In light of the enormous complexity of the phenomena under investigation, a phenomenological approach seemed like the only epistemological framework with any prospect of success. This research was based on the principles of a broad qualitative study guided by a phenomenological approach (Smith, 2003).

I chose phenomenology as my epistemological framework to guide the research, as it rejects the traditional objectivity measures imposed by the quantitative paradigm (Sanders, 1982; McClelland, 1995), but it is by no means a subjective approach that permits idiosyncratic explanations. As Crotty (1998) has indicated, phenomenology is both objective and critical. Furthermore, phenomenology was chosen for this study because it follows the constructionist view that meanings are shared, and that this occurs through the use of language in social processes (Mills et al., 2007). A central rationale for my choice of phenomenology was the assumption that understanding can never be simply cognitive. Instead, it is always interwoven with senses, moods and intersubjective contexts (Amos, 2019). Phenomenology may be described as the reflective study of pre-reflective experience (van Manen, 2014). In addition, I chose phenomenology as it expresses a concern with "experience as lived, that is, as it is, or may have been experienced in the lived moment" (van Manen & Adams, 2017, p.782). This research was interested in the therapist's experiential reality, and not merely opinions about the experience.

Phenomenology was also chosen based on its relatedness to depth psychology and the hidden dimensions of human experience (Brooke, 2015). Brooke (2015) has written about the interconnectivity between phenomenology and analytical psychology, which has provided the conceptual tools necessary to understand and articulate the experience and insight revealed and concealed in the movement from experience to theoretical formulation. Romanyshyn adds that we need the "praxis of phenomenology and depth psychology, we need to promote its habits of unveiling the underworld of our mind" (as cited in Brooke, 2015, p.4). Its practice is always to be "surprised by the epiphanies of experience, by the extraordinary that bewitches the ordinary, by the invisible world that haunts the visible" (Romanyshyn, 2002, p.19). Therefore, phenomenology was chosen because a central intention of this research was to make visible therapists' implicit meaning and unleash a depth of awareness that can spontaneously unfold in an instant. I found accurate exemplars of phenomenological writing

in van Manen's (2002) *Writing in the Dark* and Heidegger's (1927/1962) *Being and Time*. I also read philosophical works by Moran (2000), Ricoeur (1994) and Sokolowski, (2000).This allowed me to grasp the unique methods of philosophical phenomenology. Moreover, I became acquainted with its idiosyncratic language, including its poetic linguistic sensibilities (van Manen & Adams, 2017).

3.2.3 Objectives of this Phenomenological Study

According to King (2021, p. 40), three essential characteristics of a phenomenological inquiry can be identified: "the source of the inquiry (lived experience); the expression of the inquiry (a textual reflection on the experience); and the object of the inquiry (a description of the experience under investigation)". The aim of this study was a matter of "describing, not explaining or analyzing" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/2002, p.9). I incorporated a phenomenological stance that was inquisitive (Romanyshyn, 2007) and tolerant as regards how the therapists understood the phenomena. In order to achieve this, I reminded myself to remain open to the lived experience and be moved by it (King, 2021). The objectives of this research, therefore, were to unearthan understanding of the fundamental nature of therapists'experiences and seek appropriate terminology to measure their meaning. Furthermore, this research intended to facilitate a profound understanding of human meaning by bringing me, as the chief researcher, into closer contact with the experience of the phenomena (Heinonen, 2015). This involved unveiling both the essence and the original meaning of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness. I, therefore, attempted to deconstruct the therapists' understandings down to their elementary core and to transform the lived experience into a "textual expression of essence" (van Manen as cited in King, 2021, p. 40).

Van Manen (1990, p. 39) states that "A good description that constitutes the essence of something is construed so that the structure of the lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in an unseen way". My research most certainly aimed to unveil the phenomena with a fresh lens and reveal their inherent nature in new light. As a researcher, I attuned myself towards the ontological nature of the phenomena whilst also bearing in mind my pre-formed ideas. The phenomena itself set me the "task of learning from it while questioning it, that is, of letting it say something new to me" (Heidegger, 1993). This qualitative investigation therefore aligned itself in concrete human experience, seeking to explore meaning rather than obtain measurement (Amos, 2019). Furthermore, this approach was aimed at developing an empathic understanding that promoted awareness of the complex nature of psychological blind spots and moments of awareness. Therefore, my ultimate aspiration was to enter into the psychotherapist's experiential reality with the mind-set of a phenomenologist in order to illuminate the phenomena. However, it was essential that I understood the research approach, as well as understanding the phenomena of interest.

> "Negative capability is the abyss at whose edge the poet dwells, and where the psychologist as a failed poet belongs. On one side of this abyss is the scientist with his or her facts and measurements. On the other, the philosopher with his or her reasons and ideas." (Keats as cited in Romanyshyn, 2002, p.126)

Keats'idea of Negative Capability gave me the courage to relinquish control or certainty. Therefore, I did not seek a final resolution to the meaning of the lived experience, as this is deemed a drawback in phenomenological research (Heidegger, 1927/1962). The mistake that researchers often commit is to make "definite what is indefinite" (Dahlbery et al.,as cited in King, 2021, p. 40). This phenomenological research was aimed more at "questioning than answering, realizing that insights come to us in that mode of musing, reflective questioning, and being obsessed with sources and meanings of lived experience" (van Manen, 2014,p.27).

3.2.4 Epoche

Phenomenological reduction involves bracketing (epoche) of a natural attitude and a return to the original essence of the experience (Brooke, 2015). However, Gadamer views bracketing as impossible (as cited in Annells, 1996). I concur with Adams's (2014, p.2) belief that the term "bracketing is simply an illusion, a comforting idea that bears no relation to reality". However, reflexive procedures are often integrated in an attempt to achieve the impossible task of untying the researcher from the data (Bishop & Shepherd, 2011), which could suggest an unintentional adherence to a positivist paradigm (Goldstein, 2017). I agree with King's (2021) recommendation of less bracketing and more openness, including awareness of how I might impact the research. According to Finlay (2011, p.77), "many phenomenologist's– particularly those with hermeneutic sensibilities– prefer to move beyond the idea of bracketing per se and discuss the phenomenological attitude more broadly as openness". Gadamer echoes Heidegger's view that language and understanding are inseparable aspects of "dasein" being in the world (Laverty, 2003). As I do not believe in the dualistic belief of a subject/object division, I did not remove myself from the phenomena, and instead embedded myself within the research (King, 2021). Given the impracticality of controlling my pre-formed ideologies, I therefore questioned what reflexivity can add rather than deduct from the research. The profits of making myself transparent and reflexively accepting responsibility

for the impact of my assumptions on the research has been documented throughout this study. This has heightened the truth value and methodological integrity of the research.

3.3. Methodological Choice–Hermeneutic Phenomenology

> Hermeneutic phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology:it is a descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves;it is interpretative (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that there are no suchthings as uninterpreted phenomena.(van Manen, 1990, p. 180)

3.3.1 Background

Hermeneutic phenomenology was developed from Martin Heidegger's (1927/1962) writings, and was later enriched by Hans George Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur and Max van Manen. Ricoeur (1994) suggests that hermeneutics were practiced by Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. All three were "masters of suspicion, who took the contents of consciousness as in some ways false; they aimed to surpass this fallacy through a reductive interpretation and critique" (Ricoeur, 1994, p. 60). Heidegger (1984/1994) altered the phenomenological approach, drawing away from a philosophical discipline which shifted from a focus on consciousness, or description of the phenomena (Finlay, 2011), towards existential and hermeneutic (interpretative) aspects (Finlay, 2009). A working definition of hermeneutics is"the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts" (Ricoeur, 1994, p.43). The key idea of this research is the utility of communication as a means of text, along with the explanation of the units of meaning within those texts.

3.3.2 Rationale for Methodological Choice of Hermeneutic Phenomenology

This methodology supports my constructionist approach to research, which accepts that there may be many possible perspectives on one phenomenon (Kafle, 2011) and that research reality is perceived as an individual construct dependent on different situations (Cohen, 2001). I further chose hermeneutic phenomenology as my methodology of choice, as it rejects the ideology of suspending personal opinion (epoche) or bracketing (Annells, 1996), with a move towards interpretation (van Manen, 1990; Kafle, 2011).I was drawn to it as it "invites both freedom of experience and intellectual thoroughness" (Anderson, 2011, p.17) and acknowledges the interpretative nature of *Being-in-the-world*(van Manen, 1990, 2014). It highlights the significance of hermeneutic engagement with texts, as either a source or an expression of the phenomenon being studied (King, 2021). Such texts cannot be understood easily; in fact, it is only through the process of hermeneutics, "the cycle of interpretation and re-interpretation,that insight can be achieved" (Romanyshyn, 2007, p.119). It appeared as an appropriate methodological choice to help contain the vastness of my chosen topic whilst exposing its depth in an expressive unique manner. [28]

3.3.3 Objectives

> Without hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen (Smith et al., 2009, p. 62).

According to Laverty, (2003) hermeneutics elucidates the essence making the invisible visible. The primary focus of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was the discovery of minute details of the phenomena that may have been taken for granted (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991), as well as to unveil implicit meaning and offer a deep, textured description of the lived experience (Finlay, 2009). The epistemology of this hermeneutic

[28]A further rationale that informed this methodological choice was based on qualitative research conducted by Hayes (2004) which has indicated the need for an interpretative phenomenological exploration of therapists' experience of personal blind spots. This choice was relevant to a study that sought to understand the implicit processes of blind spots, including therapists'development of a sense of meaning.

phenomenological study is grounded in the belief that knowledge-making is possible through subjective experience (Hartley et al., 2006).[29]I have remained loyal to van Manen's (1990, 2014) hermeneutic approach, which is a very comprehensive process that has encouraged therapists' intrinsic understanding of psychological blind spots and moments of awareness. This hermeneutic study explored human activity and experience as texts. The use of interpretation was used to find expressed meaning (Kvale, 1996). The research findings I present are interpretations that are intertwined with the context of the research, where participant inter-subjectivity was active (Finlay, 2011).

Key aspects of hermeneutic phenomenology to which I adhered include the use of "the imagination, the hermeneutic circle, attention to language and writing processes" (Laverty, 2003, p.21). This hermeneutic study demanded a certain use of language to best elicit the true meaning of the participants' experiences (Kafle, 2011). I aimed to include expressions of meaning through the use of poetic, imaginative and metaphorical language. I encouraged anecdotal narrative with the creation of hybrid text to provide justice to the real-life stories of the participants (van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutics can be regarded as the demystification of a meaning presented to the interpreter in the form of a disguise (Ricoeur, 1994). Therefore, Heidegger's idea of unconcealment (*aletheia*) was a critical part of the process (as cited in King, 2021).

The best way for me to understand hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology was to model my approach on some good examples; Finlay (2011) offers such examples, as do Seth (2017), King (2017) and Mitchell (2020). This study was oriented towards the lived experience (phenomenology) and interpretation of the texts of psychotherapists' understanding of the phenomena (hermeneutics) (van Manen, 1990). Positioning myself in the hermeneutic-phenomenological tradition of van Manen (1990, 2014), my intention was to marry quotations and analysis of a wide range of philosophical and literary sources, including my own lived experience, participants'written reflections and interview transcripts from the research participants.

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[29]From an ontological perspective, the broad aim of the hermeneutic aspect of this research invited a dialogic approach between the researcher and herself, between the researcher and the research, and between the researcher and the reader/interpreter in iterative cycles of exploration (Lawn, 2006; McLeod, 2011).

Therefore, the aim of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was threefold: to understand the phenomena of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots through experience or consciousness (Finlay, 2009); to remain attuned to the description of the lived experience (King, 2021); and to "transform the lived experience into a textual expression of essence" (van Manen, as cited in King 2021, p. 40).

3.3.4 Interpretation

> Our investigation itself will show that the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in its interpretation. (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p.61)

For Heidegger, interpretation is critical to the process of understanding (Kelly, 2019). Gadamer has alluded to the fact that life interprets itself (Ricoeur, 1994). The possibility for interpretations to change was central to my research process. This was elucidated in the numerous iterative cycles of interpreting the data. There appeared to be no final interpretative destination, but an eternal flux of potential meanings that could alter, given the context until a point of clarity or revelation appeared. However, although interpretation thus culminates in self-understanding, it cannot be equated with naïve subjectivism (Ricoeur, 1994). The work of interpretation varied with the diversity of the texts, and therefore the activity of discernment was an essential part of my interpretative process (Ricoeur, 1994). The task of making meaning manifest while staying open (King, 2021) to the ongoing process of description was the ultimate task of this study. However, I was aware that "in the act of naming we cannot help but kill the things that we name" (van Manen, as cited in King, 2021, p.45). Therefore, this demanded that I remained present, patient and persistent regarding each phenomenon, and that I avoided premature labelling. I now feel certain in the knowledge that my descriptions and interpretations will never be complete. Ultimately, whatever meanings are "articulated in the research, much more remains unsaid and my findings therefore will always remain provisional, partial and emergent" (Finlay, 2011, p.189).[30]

[30]Jung (1954) states that it is important to admit the possibility of different interpretations of the observed material. According to King (2021), humans are meaning-making beings that continuously interpretate lived experiences**.** Jung explicitly warns against seeking explanations too soon (as cited in Brooke, 2015). King (2021) speaks of the tendency to hastily name things. For Hillman, the very process of interpretation "is suspect,

because in bringing an image or fantasy under the rubric of an interpretation or a concept, we have tamed it, made it familiar and essentially robbed it of its potential to frighten, enthrall, puzzle or transform our psyche" (as cited in Drob, 1999, p. 60).

3.4 Research Design and Methods

In this section, I inform the reader of the variousfeatures of the research design that supported this research. This will include the strategy I utilised to employ the sample size, the interview protocol and the methods utilised to collect and analyse the data.

3.4.1 Strategy

A total of seven individual interviews were conducted for the collection of primary data. The secondary use of data was optimised from the literature review and provided a theoretical framework within which to further investigate the research question (Saunders et al., 2012) and directly shape the focus of the interview questions. The literature is synthesised with the findings in the discussion chapter. Throughout the interview, key notes were taken, whilst also audio-recording the interview upon the receipt of consent from the participant, to ensure that any areas which were missed could be revisited.

3.4.2 Sampling and Inclusion Criteria

A purposeful maximum variation sampling approach was used to select a minimum of seven participants from an identified group (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of experienced psychotherapists, as they had specialised experience of the phenomena under investigation (Goss & Stevens, 2016). This sampling method aimed to select study units that represent a wide range of variation in dimensions of interest and to select data-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under review (Miles & Huberman 1994). The interviewing process was leveraged using snowball sampling, which entailed participants suggesting other people who would be worthwhile interviewing (Lewis et al., 2007). Pollock (2012) states that no section of the population should be excluded from the opportunity to take part in the research; however, as this study involved researching the topic from a therapist's point of

view, homogeneous sampling allowed for each participant to have mutual common experiences and therefore this created multiple perspectives on the shared experience (Ritchie, 2013).[31]

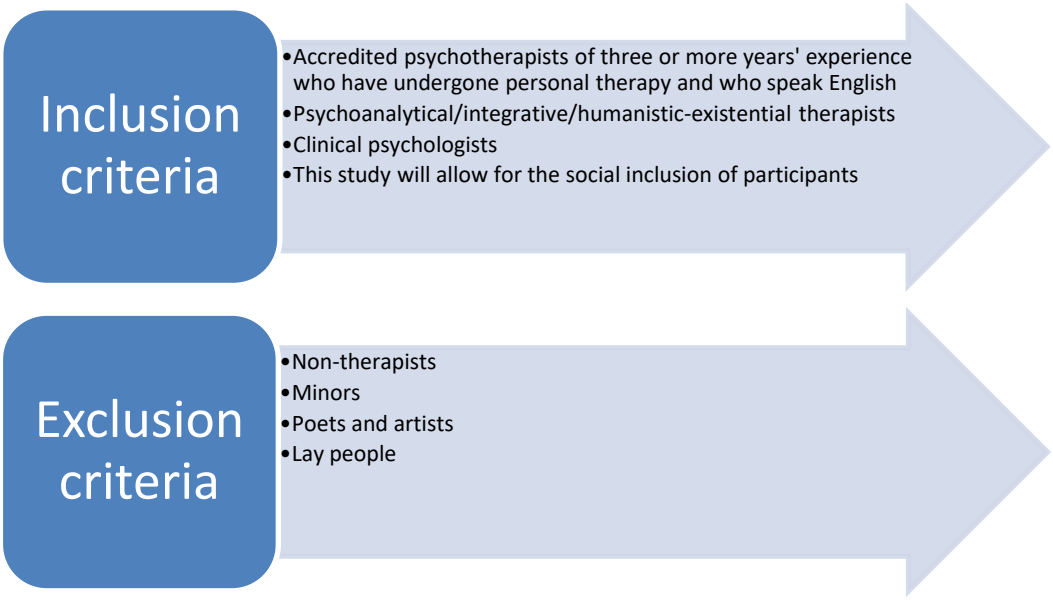

Fig. 3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Participants considered for this research included; experienced integrative psychotherapists, psychoanalytic psychotherapists, humanistic-existential psychotherapists, clinical psychologists, clients, artists, poets and other laypeople. However, I chose integrative psychotherapists, psychoanalytic psychotherapists, humanistic-existential psychotherapists and clinical psychologists, as they have lived experience of working with clients and ability to self-reflect. Further to this, as they come from different schools of psychotherapy and psychology, the information that was generated was data-rich (van Manen, 1997). Therefore, the inclusion criteria for the participants were as follows: accredited, experienced

[31]However, conducting qualitative research using non-probability sampling, as noted by Miles and Huberman (1994a), does not provide representation of the larger population; this was noted as a limitation. Rather, it is carried out for conceptual and theoretical reasons. Nevertheless, a probability sample, where all members of the population have an equal chance of being involved, was not appropriate for this research, as the participants represented a perspective rather than a population (Smith et al., 2009).

psychotherapists of varying psychotherapeutic modalities who have received ample amounts of personal therapy, to demonstrate an adequate reflexive ability. This study allowed for the social inclusion of participants who require wheelchair access or have reading difficulties.The exclusion criterion was non-therapists, including laypeople and minors, as this demography didnot suit the research objectives.

3.4.3 Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited via word of mouth and by placing posters outlining the research in ethically sensitive and appropriate locations, such as in the staff rooms of reputable counselling centres, always with a gatekeeper's consent (McFadyen &Rankin, 2016). Eight participants (two men and six women) were recruited. Four participants were integrative therapists, while two were humanistic existential practitioners, and two were psychoanalysts.[32]Five were Irish; one was British; one was Scottish; and one was Polish. I had acquainted with three of the participants previously in a purely professional capacity. This was noted in the limitations. Before data collection, one person participated in a pilot interview, and the protocol was slightly revised based on their feedback. Langdridge (2007) notes that piloting can be helpful for testing out an interview schedule and obtaining reflective feedback. In total, seven participants contributed to the research data. Once the initial interview was scheduled, participants were sent a letter or email asking them to read and complete a demographic backdrop document, a consent form (see Appendix XXX) and a plain language statement (see Appendix XXXI).

In reviewing a study with smaller numbers of participants, a researcher should consider whether the study captures diversity within the experience of the phenomenon so that the understanding has fidelity in relation to the question posed or by adding new perspective to the literature (Levitt et al., 2017). Therefore, the source of data in relation to diversity was important (Levitt, et al., 2017). Diversity was incorporated in several ways, including sample

[32]Most frequently drawing on the accounts of a small number of people, six has been suggested as a good number, although anywhere between three and 15 participants for a group study can be acceptable (Reid, 2005). However, the number of participants itself is not adequate for most qualitative criteria (Morrow, 2005).

diversity in terms of gender, age, geographical location and psychotherapy modality (See Appendix XX1) and the collection of data from multiple sources across different contexts (participants' written reflective texts, personal reflections and transcripts) (Levitt et al., 2017).

3.4.4 Interview Protocol

The interviews were flexible, semi-structured and open-ended in style, as advised by McLeod (2015).The individual interview protocol was adapted from McAdams's (1995) general Life Story Interview. The interview included questions about critical incidents exposing the therapist's lived experience of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness. Interview strategies I incorporated to manage my perspective included seeking a wide range of data, using non-leading language when asking questions and using open-ended questions (Josselson, 2013)(see Appendix XIX). I further remained close to the lived experience (Koch, 1995) and sought implicit meaning (Kvale, 1996). I adopted a stance which was curious and facilitative. It required salient accounts of great depth, which further captured the richness of the experience (Gill, 2014).[33]Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes, with a 30-60-minute debriefing session after each interview. Debriefing consisted of an invitation to reflect on and summarise the participant's experience of the research in an "interactive summing up" (Finlay, 2011, p.224). I invited participants to reflect on whether they felt that (a) I had understood them and/or (b) they had been able to communicate their experiences completely (Seth, 2017). All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim personally. Finlay (2011) argues that, by doing so, the researcher begins the process of immersion into the lived experience of the participants. I followed-up with text messages one week after the interviews and sent a check-in email a month later to ensure all interviewees remained positive about their research involvement and received critical feedback. I engaged in a supervision session following the interviews (McFadyen &Rankin, 2016). This supported my own well-being and enabled further clarification on my research.

[33]Furthermore, I considered how the relational dynamic between the interviewer and participants may have impacted the quality of the data collected (Josselson, 2013; Levitt et al., 2017). The objective of the interviews was to promote a "conversational relationship" through mutual exploration of the phenomena, through which "the interviewee becomes the co-investigator of the study" (van Manen, 1990, p.98). Therefore, I entered the existential field of the participant in "an empathetic and open way", which heightened the reliability of my interpretative psychological research (Churchill et al., 1998, p.66).

3.4.5 Research Questions

> Every inquiry is a seeking. Every seeking gets guidedbeforehand by what is sought (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p.24).

According to King (2021), articulating the right research question is possibly the most critical part of the process, because everything emanates from the right research question. However, phenomenological questions may sometimes be deceptively difficult to articulate (van Manen & Adams, 2017). My purpose was to seek meaning of the lived experience underlying the words (van Manen & Adams, 2017). I tried to engender active-passive receptivity in every interview (van Manen & Adams, 2017). Therefore, I was interested in the therapist's lived experience, without seeking exact answers. The questions were broad and general so that the participants could construct meaning from their unique experience, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons. I attentively listened with an open mind and attuned myself carefully to what people said in the interviews and avoided premature labelling (see Appendix III).

3.5 Data Collection

Methods of data collection used included a comprehensive literature review, my personal reflections, participants' written reflections, interview transcripts, participants' feedback and validation, including a pilot interview (Polkinghorne, 1989), and hermeneutic interpretation of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990, 2014). Participants' reflections consisted of written descriptions given by all participants (Seth, 2017) regarding their lived experiences of moments of awareness and psychological blind spots.

3.5.1 Data Collection Methods

> Our journey requires us to be touched and shaken by what we find on the way and to not be afraid to discover our own limitations, uncertainties, and doubts. It is only with such an attitude of openness and wonder that we can encounter the impenetrable everyday mysteries of our world. (Van Deurzen-Smith, 1997, p.96)

Through an attitude of openness and wonder, I engaged with the text material and sought out its core meaning. To support the truth value of this research, I utilised three varietiesof text to understand the lived experience and the felt sense of the phenomena.

1. Verbatim written transcripts from each interview added a nuanced understanding of the phenomena.
2. Written reflections from each participant of their lived experience descriptor (LED) of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots.
3. A reflective research journal with my own personal experiences and understandings of the phenomena.

3.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

When choosing my data collection method, I needed to think about how the research findings could be extracted from the data. It was important that I reflected on the data collection method, as the method of analysis would be influenced by this (Willig, 2008). I did not consider quantitative methods such as questionnaires to collect data, as these methods were not aligned with my research position or the type of information I was hoping to attain. However, I considered many other data collection methods, including focus groups, diaries, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, descriptions of participants' written lived experiences and my own personal reflections. I rejected diaries, although they are becoming more prevalent in qualitative research (Wilkinson, 1998), as there can be poor recruitment and higher dropout rates (Willig, 2008). Even though focus groups may appear more productive than one-to-one interviews, upon reflection, I felt that they were not appropriate, as the latter is more conducive to seeking in-depth understanding (Kvale, 1996). Therefore, semi-structured interviews appeared the most effective data collection tool (Kvale &Brinkmann, 2009), as I was aiming for in-depth information (Kvale, 1996) that would

generate data-rich information with fewer logistical challenges (Willig, 2008).[34] The phenomenological interview was used "as a means of exploring and gathering experiential material", along with the hermeneutic interview, which was aimed at "exploring the ways that fundamental phenomenological notions and methods could be understood" (van Manen, 2014, p.317).[35]

3.5.3 Descriptions of Participants' Written Lived Experiences

Prior to conducting the interviews, the participants were asked to write a short, written description of their experience of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots. Van Manen encourages the externalising of one's lived experience on paper. This fosters an objective stance towards an experience and allows one to view it from another perspective. Externalising subjective or inter-subjective awareness and distancing oneself from the "immediate lived involvements with the things in our world" (van Manen 1990, p.125) promote a reflective attitude which is paramount to hermeneutics. Handy and Ross (2005, p.40) suggest that semi-structured written accounts of experiences can also provide "highly focussed, descriptively rich, reflective data". Furthermore, van Manen (1990, pp.127-129) describes how textual reflection, although "it connects us more closely with what we know

[34]This study designed all interviews as flexible semi-structured and open-ended in style (McLeod, 2015). I asked each participant to describe their unique lived experience of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots. Openness was critical, to encourage the interview process to stay as close to the lived experience and seek out implicit meaning (Koch, 1996). In addition, the interview questions allowed for new topics to emerge. I included a summary at the end of the interview to enable the participant to include additional points (Brocki and Wearden, 2006). This was to ensure that the interviews engendered rich data material and allowed for an inductive analysis.

[35]Semi-structured interviews were chosen because, when rewritten verbatim, they make it possible to trace non-conscious processes, including defence mechanisms, and to trace the way in which they interact (Naziri, as cited in Timmermann et al., 2009). Interviews allow for the simultaneous observation of non-conscious processes alongside the conflict, context and danger that provoked the mechanisms and strategies, and, finally, the possible overlap between the adaptive processes (Timmermann et al., 2009).

and draws us more closely to the lifeworld, […] also separates us from what we know and ironically distances us from the lifeworld". Finally, although it objectifies thought via print, it also subjectifies our understanding. The aim of the participants' written reflections was therefore to gain an understanding of their lived experience description (LED) of each phenomenon in a personal or clinical environment and to outline their felt sense of the phenomena. I encouraged freedom of written language, including anecdotal, poetic, hybrid and metaphorical prose. I guided participants towards a pre-reflective experiential account of the phenomena (i.e.I advised them to write spontaneously and freely about a lived experience, as opposed to seeking direct descriptions of their thoughts about it). The objectives of this written exercise were manifold: firstly, to grasp a general idea of the participants' experience of the phenomena; secondly, to produce an initial research text on each phenomenon; and, thirdly, to investigate the emergent themes for each participant, which would further assist and support the interviews (Seth, 2017).

3.5.4 Descriptions of Personal Lived Experiences (LED)

A primary feature of phenomenological enquiry is Heidegger's concept of how the researcher's pre-understanding is integral to the relationship with the phenomena. This, essentially, is the initial step in phenomenological research. Pre-understanding cannot simply be bracketed out, but is implanted in our meaning-making (Seth, 2017). Phenomenological reduction within the hermeneutic paradigm requires transparency of the self. Therefore, I explicitly laid out my pre-understanding of the phenomena (see Appendix I, IV & VIII) so as to understand how this may have influenced the interpretive process. Van Manen (1990, p.47) issues a caveat stating: if we "try to ignore what we already know we might find that presuppositions persistently creep back into our reflections without awareness". As Heidegger (1927/1962) states, we are *Being-in-the-world*, and are therefore always connected to it. Therefore, my pre-knowing, the influence of "culture, prejudices and historical consciousness" (McLeod, 2011, p.24), were brought to my awareness through reflexivity, and they became an integral part of the research (Kelly, 2019). I therefore had to become aware of my previous experience and knowledge, and to understand this in a way that creatively fed into the research (Kelly, 2019). My journal was a perfect channel to communicate my personal lived experience of the phenomena. Furthermore, I espoused a system of reductive

thinking characterised by openness and bracketing of my familiar interpretations, pre-understandings and private feelings (Seth, 2017). This took many forms, but predominantly involved honest engagement with a daily journal and relational supervision (see Appendix I-IV for extracts).[36]

3.6 Data Analysis Methods

The paradigmatic concern of attaining adequate levels of rigor whilst utilising hermeneutic phenomenology urged me to seek out previous empirical exemplars. Initially, I conducted a literature review using the relevant databases, to obtain the use of van Manen's method. The review found that the method has been utilised in different sciences, health services, education and psychology, including pedagogy (van Manen, 1998; Saevi, 2005), in addition to medicine (paediatric and palliative care) (Mak &Elwyn, 2005; van Manen, 2014b). Researchers have used it in different areas of nursing research, family nursing (Hall 2005), cancer research (Sabo, 2011) and mentoring (Wilson, 2014). Johnston et al. (2006) used an "ontological phenomenological approach" informed by Heidegger's ideas, with the data analysed thematically using van Manen's method (Heinonen, 2015, p.39).The first instance of the use of van Manen's method by another researcher was provided by DeWitt (1993); more recent exemplars exist in the context of psychotherapy, in hermeneutical phenomenological explorations of "Wonder" (Seth, 2017),"Openness"(King, 2017) and

[36]The creative reflective process of writing a journal was not exclusive to the incipient stages of the research, but was adaily activity which involved checking in and honestly questioning the opacities that may have eclipsed my awareness. Therefore, I valued my subjective experience of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots (Moustakas, 1990), including my self-reflective voice and the participants' secondary illuminating voices (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), which are compatible with the participatory inquiry paradigm I chose. This prized self-reflexivity and experiential knowledge are gained through participating in a phenomenon (Heron & Reason, 1997, as cited in Smith, 2003). I invited poetic license, metaphorical language and hybrid text to equal the measure of a hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry into my chosen topic, which, by its very nature, demanded the liberation of language. What I learned was that the depth of my language was the depth of my knowledge, which equalled my reality. I encouraged van Manen's heuristic methods of "focussing, indwelling and phenomenological writing" (1990, pp.64-65). This included the elucidation of several specific experiences of each phenomenon in detail. I described these experiences, giving ample attention to existential dimensions, including bodily feelings of the experience (Seth, 2017).

"Gravity Dreams" (Mitchell, 2020). These studies all focused on obtaining in-depth individual experiences to try to understand one's lived experience more accurately.

However, despite this, in terms of methods to be followed, hermeneutic phenomenology is restricted in the guidance it offers. Van Manen (1990, p.29) argues that there are no "fixed procedures, techniques and concepts" governing hermeneutic phenomenological research. According to Finlay (2011, p.115), "there is no actual method of how to do hermeneutic phenomenology". Van Manen (1990) does not offer a prescriptive method for research. Instead, he suggests that the researcher should draw on and adapt methods as necessary, in response to the phenomenon under investigation. There is no template to model upon, and therefore,virtually anything is acceptable, providing the research intention involves a clear phenomenological sensibility (Finlay, 2011). It encourages an approach of both wonder and curiosity. This hermeneutic phenomenology study required a sensitivity and attitudinal disposition to attune to the subtleties of life meaning (van Manen& Adams, 2017), and this cannot be captured via a procedural or step-by-step analytical method (Kafle, 2011). However, to satisfy the level of rigour demanded for empirical research, King, (2021) advised to explicitly articulate the variation I might use. As a researcher, I sought outclear steps to follow. Van Manen affirms the need for a "creative engagement with method" (as cited in Langdridge, 2007, p. 122). Therefore, in light of different researchers using this paradigm, methodological guidelines have been suggested. Both Groenwald and Aspers (as cited in Kafle, 2011) have recommended structured patterns and steps for hermeneutic phenomenology, while Gadmer (1960/1975) understood hermeneutics as a process of co-creation between the researcher and the participant through reading, reflective writing and interpretation. Therefore, positioning myself in the hermeneutic-phenomenological tradition of van Manen (1990, 2014), including van den Berg (1955) and Hycner(1985), my intention was to merge quotations and analysis of a wide range of philosophical and literary sources, including my own lived experience and interview data from the research participants. I chose the steps of analysis within a hermeneutic phenomenological selective or highlighting approach, as outlined by van Manen (1990, p. 94; 2014, pp.320-321), to analyse the transcribed verbatim texts from the semi-structured interviews.

3.6.1 Max van Manen: Phenomenology of Practice

This research has been principally guided by van Manen's (1990, 1997 &2014) hermeneutic phenomenological approach. This approach is guided by the philosophies of Heidegger and Gadamer, and is orientated towards seeking an understanding of the lived experience. Van Manen (1997) has listed four important criteria for hermeneutic phenomenology to ensure a high standard of rigour.

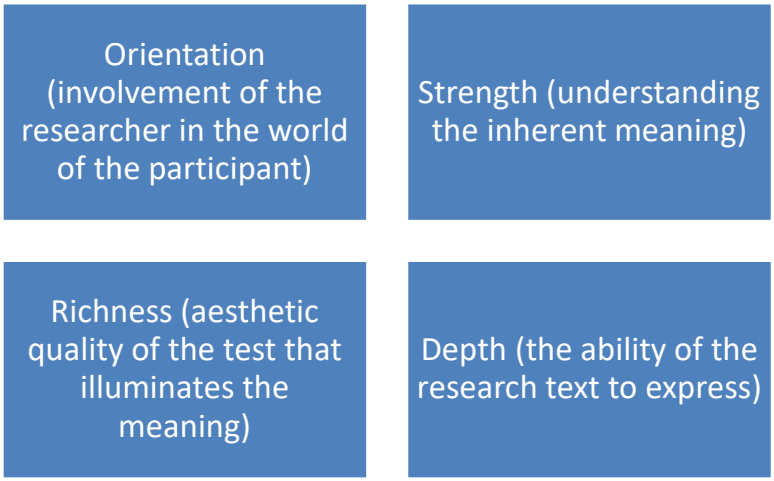

Fig.4 Criteria for Hermeneutic Phenomenology

I incorporated the above criteria in various ways. I explicitly orientated myself within an inter-subjective context with the participants to enable the co-creation of the interpretations of the findings. Through rigorous methods of phenomenological reduction, the inherent meaning of the participants' experiences was exposed. I aided the richness and depth of the phenomena through the use of metaphorical, poetic, imaginative and idiosyncratic language.

Van Manen (1990, pp.30-31) has offered a fundamental methodological structure for hermeneutic phenomenological research. This includes a dynamic interplay between six procedural activities:

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world.

2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it.

3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon.

4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.

5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon.

6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole.

The ways in which I used these six activities to guide my research process are illustrated throughout this chapter, and they are detailed reflectively in the appendices. My research design created opportunities for participants to actively explore different aspects of their lived experience while disclosing essential qualities of a psychological blind spot and moments of awareness. Concrete first-person descriptions of the phenomenon were accumulated (lived experience descriptions or LEDs) (van Manen & Adams, 2017).The reflective and interpretative process intrinsic to my writing and that of the participants was to the fore at all times. Metaphorical, imaginative and poetic language was used to expose the essence of the lived experience in a nuanced manner. I regularly took a step back from the process of analysis to consider the research from a holistic perspective.

3.6.2 Approach to Theme Analysis

> Theme analysis refers to the process of recovering structures of meanings that are embodied and dramatized in human experience represented in a text. (van Manen, 2014, p.319)

For the analysis of data, I followed van Manen's approach to theme analysis, which included a "holistic", "selective" and "detailed reading" approach (1990, p. 94; 2014, pp. 320-321).[37]In order to strengthen the analytical process, the methods used to analyse the data were

[37]Theme analysis can be a fairly mechanical application and computer programs are even available which supposedly conduct the theme analysis for the researcher (van Manen, 2014). However, van Manen (2014) issues a caveat against using such devices, as "undercovering a phenomenological lived experience is a complex and creative process of insightful invention, discovery, and disclosure" (van Manen, 2014, p.320). It is worth noting that in other qualitative research models, such as grounded theory and ethnography, the use of theme analysis differs greatly from that of a phenomenological study (van Manen, 2014). It is an open act of seeking meaning that is driven by the epoche and reduction (van Manen, 1997). This includes existential and linguistic reflection (Seth, 2017).

explicitly and sequentially outlined. Each finding was supported by several verbatim quotations, and the number of participants contributing to each theme was clearly indicated. In exploring themes and insights, I treated text as a source of meaning at every level. This incorporated the participant's written lived descriptors and the interview transcripts, including every paragraph, each sentence, phrase, expression and word (van Manen,2014). My interpretations were intertwined with the research findings which included the context of active research-participant inter-subjectivity (Finlay, 2011). Hence, the co-creation of the interpretations emerged (Gadmer, 1989). In analysing the written lived descriptors, I used a detailed or line-by-line approach, and in analysing the interview transcripts, I used a selective or highlighting approach. Steps suggested by van Manen's "selective" or "highlighting"approach(1990, p. 94; 2014, pp. 320-321) were adhered to. I worked sentence-by-sentence, phrase-by-phrase in a slow, methodical, patient manner. I remained loyal to the felt sense and the core of the therapist's experience.

The following steps of analysis outlined by van Manen (2014) supported the rigour and methodological integrity of the analysis.

1) I transcribed each interview verbatim, noting gestures and pauses, leaving a wide margin at the side of the text for aspects that seemed significant, or for reflective statements.
2) An initial condensation of the transcripts was created to identify the concreteness of the phenomena of psychological blind spots and moments of awareness. The transcripts were presented as a lived experience description (LED), reflecting what was understood as the most important aspects of the participant's lived experience.
3) The lived experience description (LED) was then converted into an anecdote where appropriate. Van Manen's guidelines for "editing and honing an anecdote" were utilised (2014, p.256). This involved nuanced editing, omitting no more than was absolutely necessary in terms of superfluous words,whilst also remaining constantly open to the lived experience of the phenomena.
4) Thematisation: LEDs and anecdotes were subjected to holistic, selective and line-by-line thematisations.

    i) A holistic reading approach was used to obtain a basic sense of the participant's LED or anecdote (van Manen, 2014; Dickelmann et al., 1989, as cited in Annells, 1996). I attended to the text as a whole with great

circumspection. I enquired into the eidetic, ordinary or phenomenological meaning, or into the main significance of the text as a whole (van Manen, 2014). I sought an overall theme for the experiential description. This involved "empathic dwelling" within the participants' descriptions in order to attune myself to their position within the situation described (Churchill et al., 1998, p.65).[38]

ii) The next step involved the selective reading approach. I listened to and read the transcripts several times. I examined parts of the text relevant to the research question, identifying separable categories and exemplars that represented different aspects of the participants' experiences (Aspers, 2004). I highlighted statements and phrases that seemed particularly essential or revealing about the phenomena being described. My intention was to capture the phenomenological meaning in thematic expressions or through longer reflective descriptive-interpretative paragraphs (van Manen, 2014). If some experiential accounts were particularly powerful, I used them as exemplary stories or anecdotes (van Manen,2014). Several evocative phrases were saved as potentially valuable terms for writing and developing the phenomenological text (van Manen, 2014).

iii) The detailed reading approach involved reading, re-reading and reflecting on every single sentence or sentence cluster and questioning, "What might this reveal about the phenomena or experience being described?"I identified and captured thematic expressions, phrases or narratives that allowed the meaning of the experience to show itself in the text (van Manen, 2014). I developed meaning units, which are keywords attached to text segments (Kvale&Brinkmann, 2009).

iv) I moved reflexively and iteratively between the whole and the parts of the text (Finlay, 2011). I considered the hermeneutic of suspicion, analysing

[38]Ajjawi and Higgs (2007, p.622) propose the centrality of "empathic listening", where the researcher remains "open to questions that emerge from studying the phenomenon and allows the text to speak; the answer is then to be found in the text".[38]Understanding emerges in the process of dialogue between the researcher and the text of the research. The act of interpretation itself represents a gradual convergence between insight on the part of the researcher and the text itself.

statements that mean something other than what was explicitly stated (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), and"looking behind the experience for lost or hidden meaning" (Finlay & Evans, 2009, p.188).[39]

v) The use of the hermeneutic circle, imagination, attention to language and writing processes was central at all times (Laverty, 2003). The message for me as a phenomenologist was to use language in a way that communicates "the mood of a situation or experience" (Todres, 2007, p.11).

vi) I interpreted and summarised the meaning within each of the coded groups of text fragments into conceptions and relational themes. Conceptual analysis can be a helpful tool for phenomenology, because concepts can reveal how human beings understand their world (van Manen, 2014). I reviewed whether my comments were congruent with the content of each statement, and the column of emerging items was analysed to cluster the themes.

vii) Themes were chosen for exemplary phenomenological reflective writing (van Manen, 2014). I experimented with writing tentative text aimed at exploring the experience of the phenomenon. This allowed me to extrapolate the themes further through the aid of reduction, and this produced the reflective phenomenological themes and confirmed my interpretation.

viii) I interpreted the text until a "good gestalt" or inner unity of text free from contradiction was reached (Kvale &Brinkmann, 2009, p.210). This involved up to 12 iterative processes of reading, reflecting and writing in a methodical manner. However, I now understand that definitive interpretations are doubtful, as it is an ever-evolving process (Gadamer, as cited in Annells, 1996).

ix) Final reflection, interpretation and consensual discussion with critical friends, my academic adviser and academic consultant followed, as suggested by Finlay (2011). I sought external professional support commensurate to

[39]To be hermeneutically suspicion demanded space and reflexivity to imagine what the implicit message may be. This was a circumspect process of reading a part of the text followed by a written reflection and concluded with a reflective walk to allow me inhabit the data and reflect on context and content of the transcript in relation to the whole study.

doctoral standards. The findings were confirmed and critical feedback was received from several doctoral researchers.

3.6.3 The Hermeneutic Circle

Interpretation was conducted on the basis of the hermeneutic circle, a process of coming to understand the essence of something through moving iteratively between the whole and the parts of the text material (Finlay, 2011; lawn, 2006). It was a process of co-creation between the participant and I, involving reading, reflective writing and interpretation (Gadmer, 1960/1975). This was a circular rather than a linear process (Kelly, 2019) which involved an interchange between activities of crisscrossing each other (King, 2017). This stood in contrast to the linear process of empirical and quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It supported my research, as there were times throughout my research life cycle, no more so than at the data collection and analysis stages, that I felt I was oscillating between themes that were emerging and disappearing. It was a constant iterative process of focusing on the content of the research whilst reflecting on the context of what my research was trying to convey. It was important for me to understand the process of researching, reflecting, re-looking and circling round a subject to view it from many viewpoints (Kelly, 2019). However, it was crucial to learn that the hermeneutic circle was "not vicious, where we simply confirm our prejudices" (Anderson, 2000, p. 98), but more concerned with openness and perseverance (King, 2021).

Themes were not only chosen according to prevalence in the data, but also according to the significance of the data (Smith, 2008).Thematic parts were, however, always seen in relationship to the whole text and were viewed as an emergent understanding of psychological blind spots and moments of awareness. A theme, for van Manen, is not a thing, a conceptual formulation or a categorical statement. Rather, it is "the experience of focus, of meaning, of point" (van Manen, 1990, p. 87).[40]

[40] "Themes have phenomenological power when they allow us to proceed with phenomenological descriptions" (van Manen, 1990, p.84). Phenomenological themes are understood as the structures of experience. In order to

3.6.4 Summary of Methods of Analysis

1. Honing and editing anecdotes.
2. Descriptions of written lived experiences (van Manen, 1990, 2014).
    - Initial condensation to identify the concreteness of phenomena.
    - Line-by-line analysis.
3. Interview transcripts.
    - Selective approach or highlighting approach (van Manen, 1990, 2014).
4. Theme analysis across participants (van Manen, 1990, 2014).
5. Hermeneutic circle and self-reflection.
    - This was ongoing and recorded in the research journal.

I isolated thematic statements from both the written descriptions and the interview transcripts using two different approaches described by van Manen (1990, p.93).

3.7 Written Descriptions: The Detailed or Line-by-Line Approach

A useful contribution to this study was the concrete written example of the participant'sexperience (van den Berg, 1955). Phenomenology is aimed at "fictionalizing a factual, empirical or already fictional account in order to arrive at a more plausible description of a possible human experience" (van Manen, 2014, p.256). It was not only the words of the participants that were necessary to convey, but also "the evocative happenings that were in the words" (Todres&Galvin, 2008, p.572).

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reveal experiential structures making up the participants' descriptions of moments of awareness and psychological blind spots, I sought themes which related to what was "universal (the general meaning which can be derived) and the particular (the meaning for the participants in a specific context)" (Langdridge, 2007, p.123).

3.7.1 Stage One

Stage one of the analysis involved a re-working of each written description according to van Manen's (2014) guidelines.

Table 1: van Manen's guidelines for editing and honing an anecdote

• Remain constantly oriented towards the lived experience of the phenomenon. • Edit the factual content, but do not change the phenomenological content. • Enhance the eidetic or phenomenological theme by strengthening it. • Aim for the text to acquire strongly embedded meaning. • When a text is written in the present tense, it can make an anecdote more evocative. • Use of personal pronouns tends to pull the reader in. • Extraneous material should be omitted. • Search for words that are "just right" in exchange for awkward words. • Avoid generalising statements. • Avoid theoretical terminology. • Do not rewrite or edit more than absolutely necessary. • Maintain the textual features of an anecdote as described above. (van Manen, 2014, p. 256)

Phenomenological text appeals to one's pre-reflective or primal impressionable sensibilities (van Manen& Adams, 2017). Phenomenological anecdotes are intended to serve as an evocative example of human experience (Van Manen & Adams, 2017).

This is why they are generally written in the first person, present tense. I created anecdotes from the written descriptor; this was a sensitive process that demanded concentration and attuning to both the written word and the felt sense of the experience (see example below of Lucy's lived experience).

Example 1

Anecdote

I had a moment of self awareness recently... I was out in the garden and it was May and I had brought a lounger for the garden and lying on the lounger, I had done a load of work on cutting back trees so I could see the bark and looking up at the, beauty of the tree, saying yeah it really is alive or something..I don't know... it brought me into myself and what was going on for me, and that inner stuff of self awareness... it was very alive, because the leaves had come out and you could see it moving and that sense of just presence, in nature and then that brought me into myself and encouraged a moment of awareness through and in my body. (Lucy)

Reflection

In the above anecdote a moment of awareness materialises for Lucy within her body. It was interesting to learn how the body was experienced with respect to the phenomenon. This lived experience description of the phenomena brought her into her body and it was within this bodily presence that her moment of awareness became manifest. Nature had kindled the ability for her to reflect and connect with herself. This engendered a feeling of aliveness. The elements of nature and space brought her into her body which created an environment that was conducive to reflection and further awareness. The body was the channel that carried and delivered the moment of awareness. Lucy's experience resonated with my own personal experience of harvesting awareness in a natural environment such as my garden or at the seaside, which in turn created bodily awareness.

3.7.2 Stage Two

Stage two of analysis began post editing the written descriptors where I re-read the edited description several times. Van Manen, (1990, p.93) posed the question "What does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the experience of the phenomenon being described?" Through analysis of each line of the text I identified and isolated thematic experience of moments of awareness and psychological blind spots from the main body of text. They were then placed in order as units of thematic meaning **(**see Table 2). A unit of meaning are "those words, phrases, non-verbal or paralinguistic communications which express a unique and coherent meaning clearly differentiated from that which precedes and follows" (Hycner, 1985, p.282).

Table 2: Example of stage one analysis: Written lived experience description

Extract from Participant A **Written Lived Experience Description:**	**Line-by-Line Thematic Analysis Stage 1**
Example I had a moment of self awareness recently... I was out in the garden and it was May again and I had brought a lounger for the garden and lying on the lounger, and I had done a load of work on cutting back trees so I could see the bark and looking up at the, beauty of the tree, saying yeah it really is alive or something.I don't know, and it just, brings me into myself and what's going on for me, and that inner stuff of self awareness... it was very alive,because the leaves had come out and you could see it moving and that sense of just presence, in nature an then that brought me into myself and encourage a moment of awareness in	1 I had a moment of self awareness recently 2I was out in the garden and it was May again and I had brought a lounger for the garden and lying on the lounger 3 I had done a load of work on cutting back trees so I could see the bark and looking up at the, beauty of the tree, saying yeah it really is alive or something. 4 I don't know 5 It just, brought me into myself and what's going on for me 6 the inner stuff of self awareness

Extract from Participant A **Written Lived Experience Description:**	**Line-by-Line Thematic Analysis Stage 1**
my body..	7 It was very alive 8 Because the leaves had come out and I could see it moving 9 That sense of just presence, in nature 10 And then that brought me into myself and encouraged a moment of awareness in my body.

3.7.3 Stage three

Stage three involved clustering similar extracts to create a tentative thematic statement (Seth, 2017) (see Table 3). This documentation process enabled me to: "show not only how each one is thematic of the phenomenon but to present a decision trail through the data that illustrates the process of revelation" (Rapport, 2005, p.135).

Table 3: Example of clustering units of meaning into thematic statements

Tentative thematic Statement	**Unit of meaning**
Ambiguity	I don't know
Connection with body and sense of aliveness	It just, brought me into myself and what's going on for me The inner stuff of self awareness It was very alive And then that brings you into yourself allowing your

Tentative thematic Statement	Unit of meaning
	body a moment of awareness
Presence	That sense of just presence

3.8 Interview Transcripts: Selective or Highlighting Approach

3.8.1Stage One-Identification of units of meaning

Van Manen'squestion of; "What statements or phrases seem particularly essential or revealing about the experience being described?*"*(1990, p.93) was kept in mind at all times. Transcriptions from the interviews were analyzed into themes where I created a catalogue of quotes relating to the concept under study. I adhered to van Manen's (1990) guidelines in highlighting only those phrases or statements which evoked an aspect of the lived experience of moments of awareness or psychological blind spots (see Table 4). I examined parts of the text relevant to the research question, and I was able to identify separable categories and exemplars that represented different aspects of the participant's experience (Aspers, 2004). I interpreted and summarised the meaning within each of the coded groups of text fragments into conceptions and relational themes reflecting what emerged as the most important aspects of their understanding. I very loosely developed units of meaning codes (see right hand column Table 4) which were keywords attached to text segments (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I reviewed whether my comments were congruent with the content of each statement. Through consistent reflective engagement together with a commitment to bracketing my beliefs, I made my subjective opinions transparent (see left hand column of Table4). Critical friends were essential to alert me to assumptions I was unaware of. (For full transcript and analysis example seeAppendix XXII).

Table 4: Example of stage one: identifying units of meaning from the written transcript

Felt Sense and Personal Reflection	**Participant A Verbatim Transcript**	**Stage 1 Selective Theme Analysis** **Units of meaning which relate to the lived-experience descriptor of moments of self-awareness (MSA) and psychological blind spots (PBS)**
1 I feel this is a familiar narrative and hope that the participant will be able to give a more nuanced description 2 This feels like a very subjective comment 3 I wondered how his mother's behaviour might have influenced his experience of the phenomena and hoped the participant was not going off course too much. 4 Slow and gradual awareness did not feel like a MSA but more like a process 7 I feared she was	1 A client was coming for a good few sessions with anxiety, and no matter what we tried out to solve or break down his anxiety and get to the root of it, he always felt that there was nothing that could ameliorate it. 2 I felt he had a blind spot that nothing from the past was affecting him right now.... 3 He grew up with his mom who was an alcoholic.. 4 Slowly, he became aware that he had a lot of trust issues with everyone that was currently in his life... 5 but the biggest person he had the trust issue was with himself. 6 He eventually, after many sessions, made a connection that his trust issue formed from his bond and relationship with his mom. 7 He didn't have any trust with his mum at all.....	1 block or stuck 2 Past potentially influencing present 3 Interpersonal relationship with Mother 4 Slow awareness 5 Lack of trust 6 Gradual awareness 6 Relationship with Mother 7 Trust with Mother 8 It became clear- clarity

Felt Sense **and** **Personal Reflection**	**Participant A** **Verbatim Transcript**	**Stage 1** **Selective Theme Analysis** **Units of meaning which relate to the lived-experience descriptor of moments of self-awareness (MSA) and psychological blind spots (PBS)**
going away from the LED 8/9 This felt more apt 10 Bingo! Jackpot! Great descriptor/ metaphorical word 11 I was very pleased and felt this anecdote was a very good exemplar of one's lived experience of a MOA 13 I loved this metaphorical use of language, very rich, potent and descriptive	8 And, when it became clear then that this was causing anxiety that was feeding into all the different areas in his life. 9 He became hugely aware. 10 It was like a bingo moment for him 11 Therapy opened him up to having some more conversations with friends outside of the sessions 12 He brought that conversation into the session that he had with his friends. 13 And he felt that he actually linked the piece of the puzzle that was missing for him....	8 Pattern in life 9Become hugely aware 10It was like a bingo moment 11Opened him up- An opening 11Awareness begets awareness 12 He felt he linked the piece of the puzzle that was missing for him

3.8.2 Stage Two- Clustering units of meaning

Stage two involved clustering the units of meanings as experienced by each participant to form “tentative themes to which conditional descriptive titles were given” (Hycner, 1985, p.287) (see Table 5).The clustering process required a “judgement call” on my part (Hycner, 1985, p.284). The column of emerging items were analysed to cluster the themes. It was recommended that themes were not only chosen according to prevalence in the data, but also according to the significance of the data (Smith, 2008).

Table 5: Example of stage two: clustering units of meaning from Roisin

Thematic Theme: Spatiality **Thematic Statement: The experience of a moment of self-awareness comes suddenly in ones spatial milieu**
It was like a bingo moment He felt he linked the piece of the puzzle that was missing for him Knowingly and unknowingly awareness pops up Comes to light That moment comes during a creativity exercise Brought to their awareness I grew aware I created the space for my awareness to come around When the space was created Awareness is when it comes to light The bingo moment for them to have the awareness In a more confident space, and better resourced to deal with the awareness I had a moment of awareness in my personal therapy session Uncovering the blind spots Through gardening, baking, swimming, practising mindfulnessAnd that brings me to those moments that I become self aware, personally

3.8.3 Stage Three-Immersion

This involved total immersion in the hermeneutic process by dwelling with these highlighted themes within the context of the whole transcript. This evoked the essence of each participant's lived experience (Seth, 2017). Van Manen, (1990, p.107) asked "does the phenomenon without this theme lose its fundamental meaning?" Dr. Seth (2017) distinguishes between essential themes, as separate from incidental themes. The former being if the theme was removed from the final account of the phenomena, this would mean the description was incomplete and would lack resonance.

Table 6: Example of stage three: list of emergent themes of moments of self-awareness from Roisin

Roisin
1 The experience of a moment of awareness comes suddenly in ones spatial milieu
2 Felt like a release of something
3 A sense of freedom
4 A different perspective came to light.
5 A space for awareness to come around
6 A flow of awareness
7 A truth
8 Getting to know self better
9 A breaking point
10 An important point in my life.
11 Awareness begets awareness- ripple effect
12 Like an opening

13 Like a beginning of a journey

14 A confident space

15 Familiarity

3.9 Cross Participant Analysis

3.9.1 Stage One

The provisional themes expressing the clustered units of meaning across all seven participants emerged. Through an immersive phase of reading and re-reading, progressive coding, categorising and re-ordering (Seth, 2017) I started to inter-relate similar themes across the transcripts. I condensed a collective list of themes which portrayed psychotherapists lived experience of psychological blind spots and moments of awareness.

3.9.2 Stage Two

A further clustering of themes was necessary at this stage (Seth, 2017). It became evident that some themes were present in each of the participant's narrative, whilst other themes emerged less frequently. However, it was vital not to ignore those latter themes. Therefore, whilst themes experienced by all participants may indicate an essence, a phenomenological perspective also acknowledges individual differences (Seth, 2017).

3.9.3 Stage Three

I engaged in a continuing process of dwelling in the clustered themes. I re-read the extracts from the participants written and interview descriptions that gave expression to these theme sseveral times which included up to twelve iterative cycles. Iconstantly sought the "evocative presence of the individual experiences which presented variations within the theme" (Hycner, 1985, p.291). By means of progressively clustering, and delineating themes that communicated the lived experience of both phenomena described by the participants, four main categories with five main themes and seventeen metathemes emerged from participants lived experience of moments of self-awareness and two main categories, with five main themes and thirteen metathemes from the understandings of psychological blind spots(see Appendix XXIII & XXIV). These are the themes which I structured and compared my subsequent discussion

3.10 Phenomenological Reduction

The importance of reduction was an essential element of this phenomenological inquiry (van Manen 1990, 2014; Giorgi 1970/2009). The central mechanism of Husserl's phenomenological method, by which a"break-through"of the phenomenon occurs, was the interrelated concepts of epoché and reduction (van Manen, 2014, p.215). The epoché can be understood as the deferment of formative beliefs or suppositions to create a more open disposition to explore one's experience. It is the way a phenomenon is revealed afresh which appears as a "spontaneous surge of the life-world" (Merleau-Ponty as cited in van Manen, 2014, p.220). The epoché-reductive attitude of phenomenology is an "invitation to openness" (van Manen, 2014, p.222). The epoché (in terms of openness) and reduction (in terms of revelation) are used to facilitate structures of the lived experience of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots.

In this segment, I will display six categories of the epoché and reductive methods described by van Manen (2014) that enabled further insight and deeper interpretations of the data. The first four he describes as being "preparatory elements of the reduction proper" (van Manen, p.222). I will outline their methodological purpose in eliciting a "break-through" including

disclosure of the pre-reflective lived experience of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness. The reduction is not an end result but merely a means to an end (van Manen, 2014). The reduction-proper espouses a phenomenological reflective disposition that aimed to reveal the distinctiveness and singularity of the phenomena.

1) The heuristic epoché-reduction.

> This is the experience of bracketing our normal attitude. It is the method by which we can "break-through" the taken-for-grantedness which Husserl termed the "natural attitude" of lived- experience to a place where we can investigate previously-hidden layers and depths of existence (van Manen, 2014, p.215). At a fundamental level reduction consists of an "attitude of wonder" (van Manen 2014, p.223). Van Manen (2014, p.27) states that: "Phenomenological research begins with wonder at what gives itself and how something gives itself. It can only be pursued while surrendering to a state of wonder". I therefore, aimed to awaken a sense of wonder and surprise about the phenomena of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness. It was an act of adjusting the routine lens I viewed life through, to allow the phenomena be seen from an alternative perspective. This demanded of me an "active-passive receptivity" to let the phenomena present on its own terms (van Manen 2014, p. 223).[41]

2) The hermeneutic epoché-reduction.

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[41]In some incidents a total of twelve iterative cycles were necessary to expose the essence of the phenomena. I embodied the disposition of wonder throughout every aspect of this research. Phenomenology calls us to wonder, reflect, and draw nearer to all manners of deeply human meaning (van Manen, & Adams, 2017). I encouraged and espoused a child like mind to witness and experience the words of the experience anew. Through interminable questioning, I wondered what less could this, word, sentence or sentence cluster accurately represent

King (2021) avows if we remain open we can achieve a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon "the hermeneutic reduction consists of a search for genuine openness in one's conversational relation with the phenomenon"(van Manen, 2014, p.224). I had to overcome my subjective "preferences, inclinations or expectations" of the phenomena (van Manen, 2014, p. 224). Therefore my implicit fore-understanding were made explicit. The concept of concrete reflection was further enriched by the theory of interpretation. It was not only a descriptive but also an interpretative process, where I as the researcher mediated between different meanings. By subordinating my "subjective intentions to the objective meaning of the text, the theory effected an initial displacement of the primacy of the subject" (Ricoeur, 1994, p.18). Continued commitment to critical self-reflection through journal maintenance, relational supervision and out sourcing of professional opinions grounded the research in adequate reflective practice (see appendix I-IV).[42]

3) The experiential epoché-reduction.

Van Manen issued a caveat to "suspend abstractions" when engaging with the data set (2014, p.225). This demanded attuned attention to the lived experience of the phenomena and bracketing all theoretical meaning making. A distinction was made between the actual experience and the grounding within our experience (van Manen, 1990). My interest lay in the unveiling of the pre-reflective experience. I was continually orientated towards the essence of the therapist's lived experience (van Manen, 2014). Experience is how we are "corporeally and relationally in our existence as embodies relational beings" (van Manen 2014, p.225). I was interested in

[42]Interpretation paves the way for reflection (Ricoeur, 1994). Interpretations were not a leap into the patient's mind, but an articulation of hermeneutic latencies that may become manifest (Romanyshyn as cited in Brooke, 2015). Inferential processes, such as inductive reasoning, explanation, and model –based reasoning are common to scientific understanding as well as the hermeneutics circle, in which there was continual reflective movement among aspects of the content of the text and its context (Levitt, et al., 2017). An interminable process of rigorous observation and reflections of my automatic pre-formed thoughts made me accountable in every aspect of this study for my interpretations

exploring the experience with a fresh awareness that was new to my previous understanding. I sought out the essential truth and purity of the experience.[43]

[43]However, it was important to note that I did not however ignore my pre-formed theoretical influences but was acutely aware of not allowing them to guide the interpretations whilst remaining dedicated and loyal to the essence of the experiential phenomena.

4) The methodological epoché-reduction.

Van Manen (2014, p.226) encourages the methodological reduction, which is the bracketing of research techniques in order to devise a methodological approach which is appropriate to the phenomenon being investigated. I therefore incorporated many methodological techniques to support the epoché-reduction of these phenomena.

i) As previously stated, a constant commitment to honest, rigorous and thorough reflexivity buttressed all aspects of this study.
ii) The interviewing process was an intensely relational and co-creative activity. A key aspect that I incorporated to analyse the data was the co-creation between the researcher and the participant (Gadmer, 1989) through the use of the hermeneutic circle, imagination, attention to language and writing processes (Laverty, 2003). Co-creation involved an open inter-subjective communication style to enable data rich material to surface. This was an interminable process throughout each interview, of clarifying, paraphrasing and probing so as to come to a place of mutual agreement and felt sense of each phenomenon. [44]
iii) I remained open to challenge and change my opinions throughout the stages of analysis. This openness engendered a curiosity and a non-defensive attitude right up to the final iteration, which allowed the latent meaning of the data a space to manifest.
iv) The phenomenological challenge for my research was to "create a text that is iconic in its entirety" (van Manen, 2014, p.226). I strived to capture the basic unit of meaning throughout the text that revealed the unique essence of the phenomena. As is evident in the findings chapter, I utilised potent insightful yet evocative language to equal the measure of the phenomena (van Manen, 2014).

[44]I encouraged a fundamental naivety about the experience being explored with my participants. This was espoused through inter-subjective wonder and curiosity of the raw experience of the phenomena. My interpretations were intertwined with the research findings and context which research-participant inter-subjectivity was active (Finlay, 2011).

5) The eidetic reduction.

The aim of the eidetic reduction was to grasp some essential insights (van Manen, 2014). Husserl (1931) sought for eidieticstructure .The eidios are the internal meaning structures of a phenomenon. Via embodiment, use of imagination (Kelly, 2019) and ensconcing myself in the felt sense of the emergent themes allowed me to engage with the truth of the phenomena and elicit its essential make-up. (see imaginative images used in Chapter Four to help illustrate the themes). Seeking the eidetic reduction was done through comparing empirical examples. The aim of my study focussed on what was "unique or distinct in the phenomena being explored and grasping its essence" (van Manen, 2014, p.229)

6) The originary reduction.

This final reduction is grounded in Heidegger's understanding of attunement to the originary moment of the phenomenon. Heideggerian's originary reduction traces "emergent meanings and how a phenomenon originates and comes into being" (van Manen, 2014, p.236). Therefore, my research sought an original meaning and core insight. "Heidegger speaks of a flash of insight that may happen as an appropriative event this event occurs when the truth of being reveals itself" (van Manen, 2014, p.235). By foregrounding openness as "an inviting space" (Hansen 2012, p.15) the potentiality of a moment of awareness to reveal a blind spot was encouraged. Within the praxis of the phenomenological interview many moment of awareness were unexpectedly disclosed. This happened organically within the inviting milieu of openness, surrender and acceptance.

3.11 Methodological integrity: Trustworthiness, Rigour and Validity

Validating phenomenological research can be a controversial issue (Bradbury-Jones, et al., 2010; Finlay, 2006; Rashott and Jenson, 2007). There are differences between the manner in which quality control measures are applied in quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of consensus regarding the criteria by which phenomenological research should be judged. In addition, validity is a positivist ideology, which is not compatible with phenomenological research (Sandelowski, 2004). As an alternative to the terms validity and reliability used in quantitative research, Agah (1986) suggests the use of the terms credibility, accuracy of representation and the authority of the writer in qualitative research (Krefting, 1991). Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1982) suggested a model for quality control measures in qualitative research, which highlights the truth value, consistency, neutrality and applicability of the research. Levitt, et. al., (2017) proposed the overarching concept of methodological integrity, as the methodological foundation of trustworthiness. "Trustworthiness is a term that has been used across qualitative traditions and epistemologies to indicate the evaluation of the worthiness of research and whether the claims made are warranted" (Levitt, et. al., 2017, p.9), whereas other terms such as credibility and validity have been associated with specific perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Trustworthiness is established when the research design and procedures support research goals and respect the researcher's approach to inquiry (Levitt, et al., 2017). Morse et al., (2002) affirm that rigour and trustworthiness are best achieved by ensuring that criteria for reliability are evidently part of the research design and interconnected with all parts of the enquiry. (Please see Table 7 to view appropriate measures taken to ensure a high level of methodological integrity).

Paramount in the conceptualisation of this study's methodology integrity was the consideration that methods were synergistic; the diverse data collection methods needed to accommodate the characteristics of the participants to enhance fidelity and utility (Levitt, et. al., 2017). Levitt, et al., (2017) distinguish two constituents, fidelity and utility, at the core of methodological integrity. These two composite processes involve: a) fidelity to the subject matter, which is the process by which researchers develop and maintain allegiance to the

phenomenon under study as it is conceived within these tradition of inquiry, and b) utility in achieving research goals, which is the process by which researchers select procedures to generate insightful findings that usefully answer the research question.[45]Utility refers to the effectiveness of the research design and methods. This was achieved by meeting the aims and objectives of this study (Levitt, et. al., 2017). Meaningful contribution increase utility (Levitt, et. al., 2017), it can take many forms, such as a new theory or social change. Replication studies may have utility when there is a question related to earlier findings or when a new context is explored (Levitt, et. al., 2017). This research offers utility in its ability to re-evaluate old theories including psychodynamic ideologies through the lens of a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective and psychotherapists' lived experiences.

[45]Finlay (2006) states due to the variety of criteria by which their research could be judged, qualitative researchers should make evaluative comments explicit from the beginning. Therefore, the three concepts-integrity and its constituents components of fidelity and utility influenced every aspect of the research (Levitt, et al., 2017), including the delineation of the topic of research; the comprehensive literature review; the research goals; the methodology employed; the formulation of the questions; procedures such as researcher reflexivity, participant selection, data collection, and analytic steps; the articulation of the study's implications, the audience and report presentation (Levitt, et al., 2017).

Truth Value	Consistency	Neutrality	Applicability
Prior to running the interviews, the questions were piloted with an experienced therapist , critical friends and my academic consultant to ensure that the questions were appropriately phrased, consistent, and aligned with the research's objectives (Kelley et al., 2003). They were asked to validate the overall Topic Guide approach in terms of question sequencing and flow (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation from another therapist helped give another perspective on the topic (Bryman and Bell, 2007).	As this qualitative study intends to emphasize the uniqueness of therapist's experiences, I was not surprised to find variations in their experience rather than identical repetition (Morse et al., 2002).	The avoidance of bias through the research process is referred to as neutrality (Sandelowski, 1986). I enlisted the guidance of critical friends and academic professional supports in order to minimise the impact of biases whilst also clarifying the research process and my role as researcher throughout the process (Bryman and Bell, 2007).	Applicability of the findings relates to "the degree to which findings can be applied to other contexts and settings with other groups" (Krefting, 1991, p.216).
A pilot interview was carried out prior to the interviews. This invited great learning in relation to the questions and approach of the phenomenological interviews.	The rigor of the research was limited to the collection of data at a single point in time, omitting the changing views and attitudes of respondents (Dash, 1993).	I situated myself within the research and through reflexive awareness remained transparent as possible (Finlay, 2009; Bager-Charleson, 2014).	The findings in this study are not generalizable but that was not the aim of this research. To help resolve this issue I related questions to existing theory, this showed that the work has a broader theoretical significance (Saunders et al., 2012).
I proposed participant's feedback for quality and analytical rigor (Langdridge, 2007).A further participant checking exercise was conducted with the pilot person and all participants to carefully read through their interview transcript and make amendments as they wished; this ensured ethical autonomy (McCosker et al., 2001). It was an important part of feedback that the therapists recognised the	Diverse sources of data collection increased rich and varied findings (e.g. participants, reflective texts; interview transcripts; personalself-reflection; including member checking and a comprehensive literature review) This was deemed a strength as rich diverse findings illuminated the variations and comprehensiveness in	I reflexively avowed my own unconscious process within the research (Bager-Charleson, as cited in Goss & Stevens, 2016).	By offering true meaning of the lived experiences of the participants, the reader can validate the phenomenological descriptions of the phenomena by mutual recognition and give the phenomenological nod which means yes that is an experience I could have (Van der Zalm and Bergum, 2000).

Truth Value	Consistency	Neutrality	Applicability
interpretations as their own (Sandelowski, 1996).[46] Further to this academic colleagues including doctors of psychotherapy critically read the developing analysis to check that themes and patterns were consistent, credible and supported by evidence (Elliott et al., 1999; Yardley, 2000; Dukes, 1984, as cited in Creswell, 1998). This strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings.	the phenomenon which were relevant to the study's goals (Levitt, et al., 2017).		
This qualitative study may be deemed credible if it reveals accurate descriptions of the phenomena under investigation (Guba and Lincoln, 1982). This was achieved by using persuasive accounts of the findings including ample accurate exemplars that supported the interpretation of the text (van Manen, 1990). Fidelity of this study was captured through the 'intimate connection that I obtained with the phenomenon under study' (Levitt, et al., 2017, p.10). I structured		"The notion of the neutral, objective researcher is as absurd as the notion of the neutral, objective therapist" (du Plock, 2016, p.86). Therefore, within the hermeneutic circle I served to function as the interpreter, this meant incorporating my experience into the data (Gadamer, 1975). To aid the trustworthiness of the research (Yardley, 2000; Willig, 2013), self-reflection was central to establishing procedural integrity	

[46]Participant checking and incorporation of new interpretation into the data is recommended by various researchers (Bradbury-Joneset al**.,** 2010; Doyle, 2007) as an important aspect of attaining methodological integrity. Participant's feedback is essential for quality and analytical rigor (Langdridge, 2007). As part of a process of consensual validation (Elliott et al.,1999; Yardley, 2000), participants were invited to review and amend their transcripts for accuracy (Morse et al., 2002; Smith et al, 2009) and withdraw any comments they found too personal or incorrectly interpreted (Orb et al., 2001). All participants described their satisfaction with the transcripts and interview process.

Truth Value	Consistency	Neutrality	Applicability
the data collection to capture the lived experience of the phenomenon. I reached verisimilitude through thick descriptions (Ponterotto, 2006).		(Morrow, 2005). Fidelity was enhanced through remaining transparent about the influence of my perspective upon data collection (Levitt, et al., 2017).	
In addition, the importance of reading and reflexive writing was essential in the production of meaning and rigor (Allen, 1996).		Reflexive awareness was maintained through self reflective journaling and memoing, which supported me as a researcher to identify my assumptions and the way they may have influenced the data	
Theoretical sampling and the quality of the interview and the completeness of the analysis undertaken aided the truth value of this research (Smith et al., 2009).			

Table 7 Measures of Trustworthiness

3.12 Ethical Considerations

> In traditional forms of research we have, as we should, an ethical responsibility towards our subjects. This ethical obligation also applies to the imaginable approach to research (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 336).

Prior to commencing this research, a proposal was submitted to and approved by, Metanoia/ Middlesex, Research Ethics Committee(see Appendix XXVIII & XXIX). I availed of *Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University Research Ethics Guidelines* and the *Statement of Ethical Principles of the European Association for Psychotherapy* (EAP) to secure appropriate conduct for level 8 descriptors. The research incorporated the University's Policy on Good Research Practice (2009). This study adopted the over-arching ethical principles of respect, beneficence and fair treatment for the research topic and all research subjects invloved. I adhered to my regulatory bodies (IACP) code of ethics that outlined the terms, conditions and responsibilities I have towards each person who commits to this study.A more appropriate approach to protect the ethical integrity of qualitative research is through recognition of the distinctive epistemological and methodological paradigms involved (McLeod, 2015). This ethical process took into account a full technical assessment of risks and potential benefits(see Table 8 Stakeholders Analysis). I managed the risks and research governance by dividing responsibility between key stakeholders in the research in order to clarify accountability (Bond, 2004).

I needed to be clear about the psychological safety of the people involved (McCosker et al., 2001). Moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots offer valuable insights but in my clinical experience even partial self-knowledge may involve a degree of unexpected pain. One of the safety issues was the psychological impact of being a participant in sensitive research. There may have been immediate and/or delayed impact on the mental health of anyone involved that may have included a physical response to the psychological impact. Literature has outlined strategies to minimise psychological impact on participants, especially when research focuses on a sensitive phenomenon (McCosker et al., 2001).Therefore, the success of this research maintained the highest standards of quality and rigour throughout the whole research process rather than in selected parts of the study(see Appendix IX for further ethical consideration).

Table 8 Ethical Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Ethical Risks	Benefits	Safeguards
Participant	Breach of Confidentiality	Confidentiality was of paramount importance (McCosker, 2001).	Anonymity was maintained by using aliases and fictionalising all identifiable information. Any biographical material which might identify participants or their clients was excluded (Eysenbach and Till, 2001).
Participant	Disrespecting participants	I adhered to the principles of beneficence/non-maleficence, which states that research should produce recognisable benefits for all involved. This research should cause no harm (Pollock, 2012).	Respect for the participant's autonomy required that research participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any point (Pollock, 2012). "Relational ethic of care"(Ellis, 2016, p.2) was practiced which put the client's best interest to the fore (Bager-Charleson, 2012). This ensured the relationship was equal and not exploitative (Mitchell, 2019). Phenomenology encourages an attitude of loving acceptance of all aspects of the client's existence (Copper, 1993).

Stakeholder	Ethical Risks	Benefits	Safeguards
Participant	Incorrectly or disorganised stored data Unclear information	Mandatory data protection	Permission to use the material that arose when interviewing was obtained in writing (NAPCP, 2015). Consent form, and plain language statement outlined clearly the objectives of the research. All data was taken offline as soon as possible. Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed files transferred to an encrypted USB stick for storage. Files were deleted from the recorder. The encrypted USB stick was then stored in a locked cabinet. All information will be securely stored until at least until six months after I graduate (Eysenbach and Till, 2001). Data is stored according to the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Freedom of Information Act (2000). I adhered to the ethical data protection nand regulations of my professional body IACP who advocate for the protection of sensitive information and publication and dissemination of findings
Participant	Misinterpreted transcripts or incorrectly written	Confirm accuracy, further reflection on the subject	I gave each participant the opportunity to review their transcript for accuracy (Smith et al, 2009) and withdraw any comments they found too personal or

Stakeholder	Ethical Risks	Benefits	Safeguards
	up.		incorrectly interpreted (participant validation) (Orb et al., 2001). This ensured ethical autonomy (McCosker et al., 2001). It was an important part of feedback that the therapist recognised the interpretations as their own (Sandelowski, 1996).
Participant	Participant dissatisfaction with interview process	Benefits of engaging in conversation on influential psychotherapeutic topic There is evidence that those who take part in qualitative studies often find this to be a positive experience, and are willing to engage in research even when it involves discussion of topics which may be distressing and emotionally challenging (Pollock, 2012).	Participants have the right to withdraw or complain about the research at any point before the completed research is handed in for marking, without having to give any explanation for doing so (McLeod, 2015).

Stakeholder	Ethical Risks	Benefits	Safeguards
Participant	Establishing contact with the participant. .	May interest and entice people who might benefit from the experience.	
Participant	Inappropriate environment	Comfortable relaxed environment to encourage participant to open up.	The time and place for the interview was in an environment where the researcher and the interviewee felt safe and comfortable (McCosker, 2001) i.e a counselling room.
Participant	Psychological unsafe causing emotional or psychological distress	Creating awareness allowing for emotional healing	A debriefing session after each interview offered additional support especially in the event of emotionally upsetting material surfacing during the interview A commitment to avoiding harm to research participants was buttressed with the provision of additional supports (Bond, 2004). It was pertinent that supports were in place for the interviewees both during and after the research process.Arrangements were made for the participants to avail of threelow cost counselling options post interview should they feel the need. In response to the 'sensitive' nature of the phenomena psychological blind spots and moments of awareness, the

Stakeholder	Ethical Risks	Benefits	Safeguards
			ethics committee acted as gatekeepers during the research process to protect the individuals from harm (McCosker, 2001).
Researcher	Ethical awareness and integrity.	Grow in ethical awareness and maturity.	I committed to methodological integrity (Levitt et al., .2017) to ensure that the data collection and analysis was undertaken competently and accurately. Safeguarding depended on the practice of micro-ethics (Pollock, 2012) and my personal integrity.
Researcher	Researcher's bias. Possibility of dual relationship with other therapists.	Increased transparency; Increased awareness.	It was important to monitor my bias in order to maintain a high level of transparency through reflexivity and supervision (Pollock, 2012).
Counselling Service	Ethical malpractice	Increased relationships with counselling bodies.	I engaged honestly with the professional gatekeeper in the counselling service (McFadyen and Rankin, 2016).

3.13 Integral role of Researcher

> If we can be aware of how our thoughts, feelings, culture, environment and social and personal history inform us as we dialogue with participants, transcribe and interpret their conversations with us, and write our representations of the work, we can come close to the rigour that is required of good qualitative research (Etherington, 2016, p.2).

Reflexivity includes the inevitable participation of my subjectivity in the process of research. However, qualitative researchers highlight the potential for ethical problems when researchers use reflexivity as a means to claim objectivity while failing to acknowledge the difference between observer interpretations and the actual experience of those being observed (Bishop & Shepherd, 2011; Finlay, 2002). DuPlock (2016) posed the question where am I within the research? Dr.Bager-Charleson (2016b) stated that where one is in terms of his/her relational world is of significance to the writing. In previous research I availed of reflective strategies, such as Husserl's concept of the epoche (bracketing) (Moustakas, as cited in Creswell, 2013), in order to limit the influence of my perspective on the data collected. However, Dr Adams affirmed the value of adding one's personal perspective and embedding oneself in the research. Nevertheless, this was a great challenge initially especially in a world that values empirical research (Adams, 2016). However, I learnt, that many "phenomenologist's particularly those with hermeneutic sensibilities-prefer to move beyond the idea of bracketing per se and discuss the phenomenological attitude more broadly as openness" (Finlay, 2011, p.77). This knowledge confirmed my suspicion that the practice of bracketing felt not only impossible, but also incongruent as a researcher. I am now very aware of how subjectivity plays a vital part of my epistemological stance (Bager-Charleson, 2016b).[47] (see Appendix I).

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[47]Furthermore, fidelity was enhanced when I recognised and was transparent about the influence my perspective had on the data collection (Levitt, et al., 2017). Therefore, I appropriately limited that influence to obtain a clearer representation of the phenomenon. This maximized fidelity and assisted the readers in understanding the data (Levitt, et al., 2017). Self reflective journaling, academic input and participant checks (Morrow, 2005) helped to manage my bias. This approach better served me to draw forth innate understandings that were presented in the data (Levitt, et al., 2017). Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, that considers that

3.14 Methodological Reflections

One major methodological dilemma I encountered was how can I account for something phenomenological that is hidden such as a blind spot? Due to the implicit character of a blind spot it was an arduous phenomenon to investigate. Furthermore, I was aware of the contradiction when investigating the phenomenon of a blind spot, as a phenomenon is that which is manifest. This complexity was shared with many earlier researchers. I discussed this epistemological problem with my academic advisor at great lengths to help shed light on my predicament. This assuaged my disquiet. Fink and Husserl (1936) stated that the unconscious can be grasped and examined in a methodical way only after the prior analysis of being conscious. Therefore, the unconscious nature of psychological blind spots can only be understood retrospectively and often through a moment of awareness. The concept of blind spots and creating awareness therefore raised many epistemological challenges for me and these divergences were subject to rigorous discussion with my critical friends, academic advisor and academic consultant alike. As Jung stated he never doubted the reality of the unconscious, but during those early years he was lacking an effective tool with which to investigate in an objective way the unconscious (as cited in Frey-Rohn, 1974). However, as I soon discovered it is difficult to find an objective approach for understanding the internal nature of the human personality. Furthermore, my integrative practice includes an existential perspective which is concerned with the whole existence of my client and not just their inner subjective reality. For that reason, these phenomena under investigation demanded a methodological approach that would help expose inherent meaning and engage with metaphorical language in an inter-subjective manner to help reveal its essence.

For many reasons hermeneutic phenomenology was the most suited methodological choice to explore therapists' understandings of such phenomena. This approach attempted to seek out the therapist's lived experience, to elicit implicit meaning of their unique understanding,

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understanding is not a way we know the world but rather the way we are (Gadamer, 2008; Lawn, 2006) spoke to me and my research. Therefore, "prejudices" and "historical consciousness" (McLeod, 2011, p. 24) were brought to awareness through reflexivity and became an integral part of the research (Kelly, 2019). This included my pre-knowing and assumptions I held in relation to my chosen topic.

and express their core experience through the use of nuanced, metaphorical and imaginative language. It is an approach to understanding or the interpretation of unexamined assumptions, biases, and theories to allow things to speak for themselves. Hermeneutic phenomenology investigates both the research-participant's experience and the phenomena being studied. Therefore, I selected an overall methodology specifically geared to hermeneutics (interpretation) but one that also incorporates the experience (phenomenology) of the researcher and participants. My chosen methodological approach not only resonated with me personally but seemed like very natural obvious choice given the topic under investigation. (see Appendix II).

3.15 Chapter Conclusion

This previous chapter has shown the rationale and justification behind the research methods for an interpretive study within a qualitative paradigm. I offered a concrete rationale and elucidated my objectives to support the research design choices. I highlighted the data collection and analysis process. This was supported through evaluation of the methodological and ethical integrity that buttressed every aspect of this study. The coming chapter will elucidate the key findings from the research.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

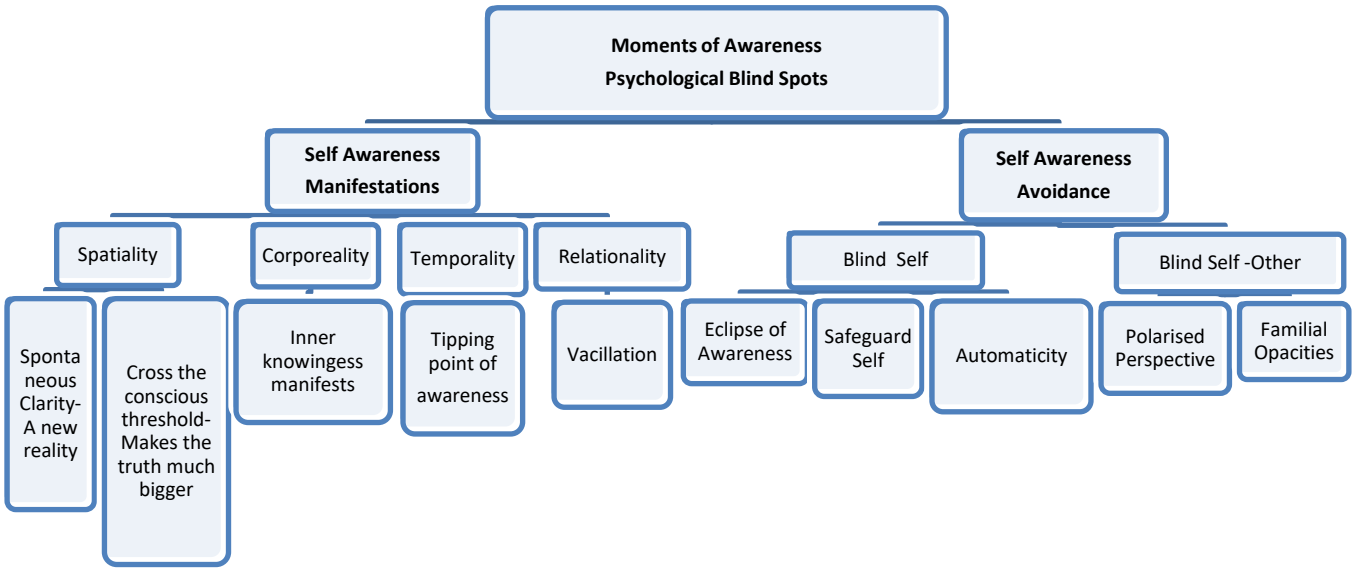
> Researchers should not engage in data collection seeking only to confirm their own perspective but instead strive to be open to all responses. (Levitt, et al., 2017, p. 13)

I will discuss the findings of the interviews in the context of the categories, themes and metathemes that were uncovered in the research. Participant's communication about their understanding of moments of awareness and psychological blind spots were of note. The findings revealed that the participants responses were varied and multiple, leading me to seek the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few themes or ideas. Through the use of qualitative narratives several main themes indicated the density of the analysis. The narrative encapsulated the participants unfolding and unique understandings of the phenomena. The figure below illustrates the breadth of data uncovered.

To help achieve my goal, I have included several anecdotes and creative images that illustrate the phenomena in greater depth. Anecdotes and images illustrate key ideas and stir inspiration (Kounios, & Beeman, 2015). Within each theme and metatheme are ample anecdotal examples, followed with considered reflections of their meaning. The use of anecdotes was a useful hermeneutic phenomenological tool to seek deeper understanding of the participant's lived experience descriptor (LED). The anecdotes bare the participant's stories of their lived experience of the phenomena. Evidenced in the data set are the participants understanding of the phenomena which is of a reflective and rich nature. The phenomena are exposed in a unique manner including the use of hybrid, imaginative and metaphorical language. This made the hermeneutic circle of reading, re-reading, reflecting and writing, for the most part, a pleasure and a joy. The co-creation and interpretation of themes emerged in an organic way either through the inter-subjective nature of the dyadic relationship or upon insightful ruminations and reflections after the interviews with academic colleagues. Twelve iterative cycles of reading, reflective writing and interpretation took place. As hermeneutic phenomenology is both descriptive and interpretative, the phenomena needed to be described as well as interpreted to fully understand its meaning (Heinonen, 2015). The interpretative process as is lucidly visible through the iterative process demanded much nuanced insight, patience and attunement to the felt sense of the participants lived experience. This was repeated until a 'fixed gestalt' or point of saturation became manifest.

The findings evinced two main sections; self-awareness avoidance and self-awareness manifestations. The research uncovered four main categories from self-awareness manifestations and two from self-awareness avoidance. Five main themes emerged under each section and a miscellany of metathemes emanted from each theme. The research yielded 'Spatiality', 'Corporeality', 'Temporality' and 'Relationality' as four general categories within self-awareness manifestations. "These existential themes, fundamental to the universal theme of life, are always present, but one dominates in different situations" (Heinonen, 2015, p. 37). The existential lifeworld is common to all human beings regardless of their history, culture or social situation (van Manen 2006a; Adams & van Manen 2008; van Manen 2008, van Manen and Adams 2010).'Blind self' and 'Blind self-other' emerged as the two main categories within self-awareness avoidance. The formermanifested in relation to the personal self; as an obstruction of awareness, or blockage of emotion; a non-consciousness way of living; or an act of self-protecting oneself from the full truth. The latter emerged as therapists understanding of lack of awareness in relation to others. This presented in brief encounters with others or through a dynamic relationship (sees Fig.5 for overview of main categories and themes of both phenomena).

Fig. 5 Overview of main categories and themes of both phenomena



4.1 Understandings of Moments of Self- Awareness (MSA)

Analysis of the data yielded a number of insights into the complex, often quite unspoken meanings that surround a lived experience of a moment of self-awareness (McGovern, 2021). Four general categories within self-awareness manifestations emerged: 'Spatiality'; 'Corporeality'; 'Temporality'; and 'Relationality'. On the basis of these categories, five main themes were uncovered: 'Spontaneous clarity -A new reality dawns'; 'Cross the conscious threshold - Makes the truth much bigger'; 'Inner knowingness manifests'; 'Tipping point'; and 'Vacillation' (See Fig. 6). From these themes, 17 metathemes emerged (see Fig. 7).

Fig. 6 Overview of main categories and themes of moments of self-awareness

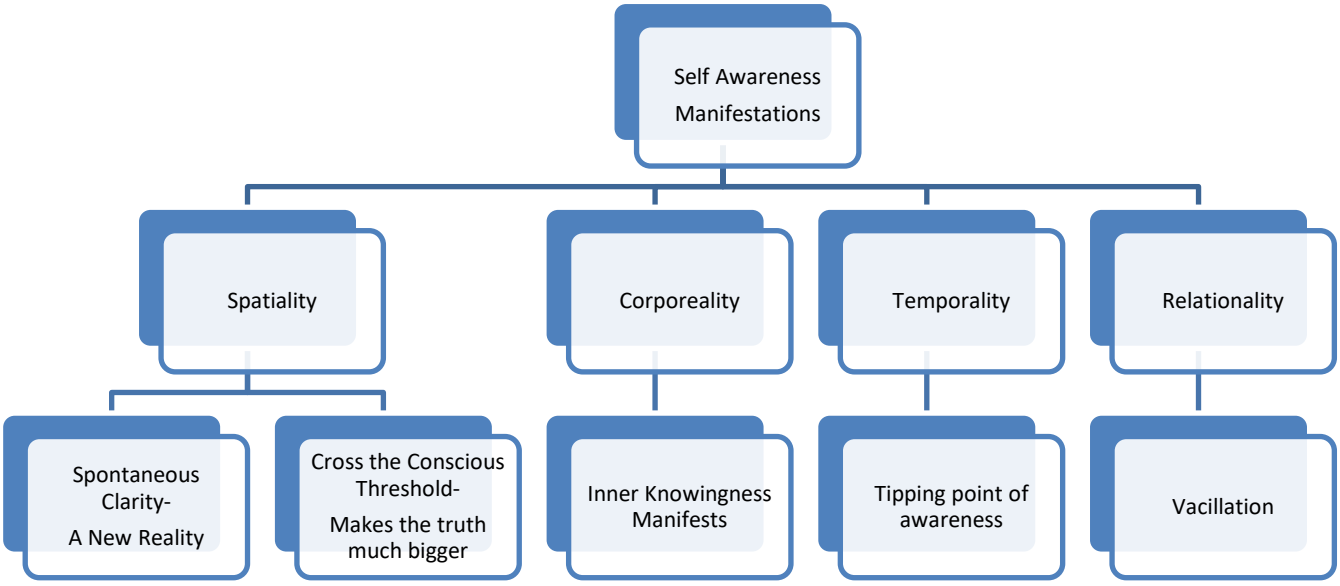
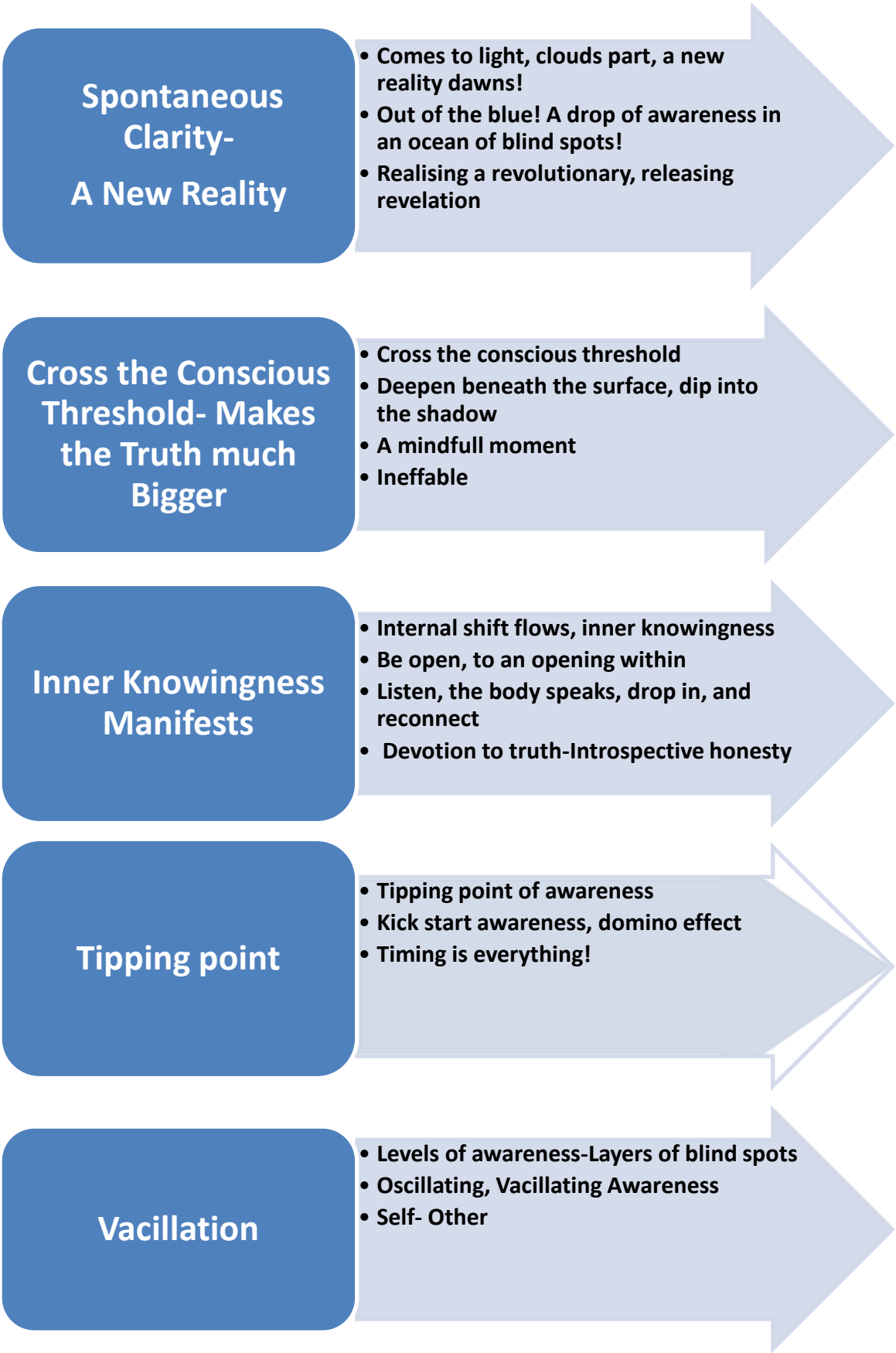


Fig. 7 Overview of main themes and metathemes of moments of self-awareness


Spontaneous Clarity-
A New Reality
• Comes to light, clouds part, a new reality dawns!
• Out of the blue! A drop of awareness in an ocean of blind spots!
• Realising a revolutionary, releasing revelation
Cross the Conscious Threshold- Makes the Truth much Bigger
• Cross the conscious threshold
• Deepen beneath the surface, dip into the shadow
• A mindfull moment
• Ineffable
Inner Knowingness Manifests
• Internal shift flows, inner knowingness
• Be open, to an opening within
• Listen, the body speaks, drop in, and reconnect
• Devotion to truth-Introspective honesty
Tipping point
• Tipping point of awareness
• Kick start awareness, domino effect
• Timing is everything!
Vacillation
• Levels of awareness-Layers of blind spots
• Oscillating, Vacillating Awareness
• Self- Other

4.2 Category 1: Spatiality

The sense of space became apparent in participants experiences of moments of self-awareness. The participants shared that the space to question engendered the space to create awareness. A feeling of 'felt' space was evoked in the participants in a moment of awareness. The findings revealed that the category of spatiality can be subdivided into two main themes; 'Spontaneous clarity- A new reality'; 'Cross the conscious threshold- Makes the truth much bigger'. Although both themes are similar there distinction was apparent in the findings. Both themes represent self awareness engendered in a spatial domain.

4.3 Theme 1: Spontaneous Clarity- A New Reality

The first main theme emerged as; 'Spontaneous clarity- A new reality'. Participants understood moments of awareness as a dawning, something new coming to light, clouds parting and ultimately a new reality. From this theme three metathemes emerged from the data; 'Comes to light, clouds part, a new reality dawns';'Out of the blue! A drop of awareness in an ocean of blind spots!' and 'Realising a revolutionary, releasing revelation'.

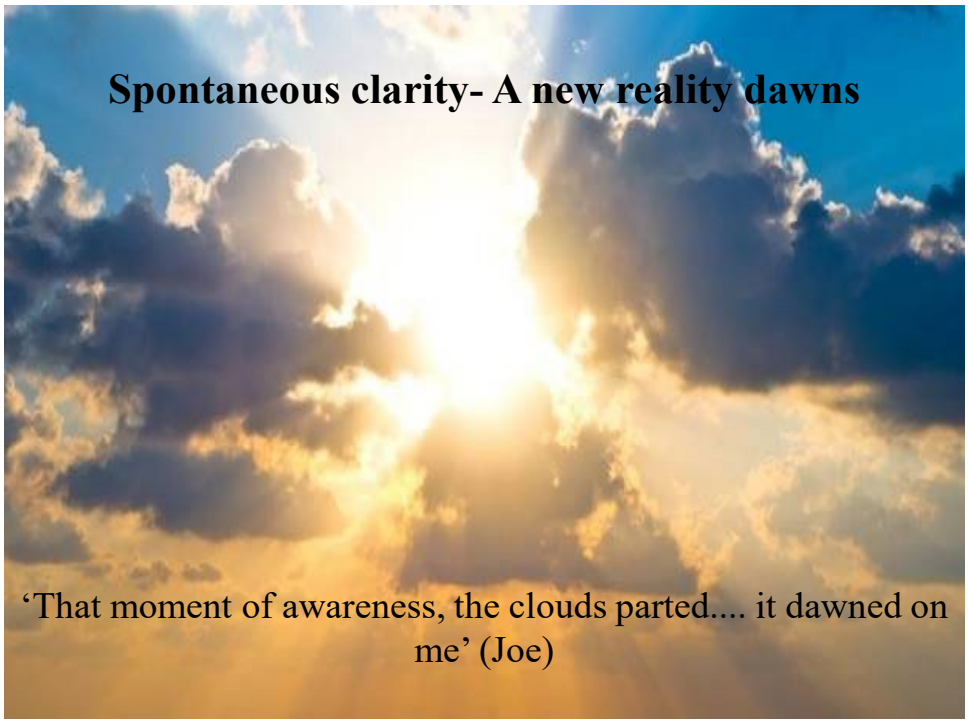


Fig.8 Metaphorical image presenting spontaneous clarity

4.3.1 Metatheme 1: Comes to light, clouds part, a new reality dawns!

The metatheme 'Comes to light, clouds part, a new reality dawns!' captured participant's understanding of a moment of awareness as a sudden emergence of awareness comingled with a sense of dawning of a new reality or outlook. Five of seven participants described their lived moment of self-awareness as bringing to light; an experience of spontaneous clarity that allowed them to see with fresh eyes (see Fig.8). Jacob understood the moment as a clearing of awareness, like 'a curtain being drawn back' and 'something new coming to light'. The narrative below elucidates accurately how Jacob understood a moment of awareness as a new found clarity, which presented differently from the ordinary consciousness of a busy day. It fostered the ability for Jacob to objectively witness himself. This created an 'aha' moment where not only did Jacob understand more about himself, it awakened curiosity and revealed new information:

> It's almost like a curtain being drawn back and spontaneously I am moved to see what the busyness of life on a daily basis doesn't necessarily let me see. It was a moment when I got clarity.... that moment of clarity, drawing back the curtain, giving a reflective space, objectively looking at self and catching self and that 'aha'... like coming to a sense of understanding something more about myself. Something that is new, something that surprises me. Something that can delight me as well as, awaken curiosity. Something like that. (Jacob)

Annabelle further understood a moment of self-awareness as a new sense of reality that challenged her perspective or the way she viewed the world. This moment created a space for her to 're-evaluate' what she thought was 'truth' or 'fact':

> So I'm imagining, what I imagine it is it's like I'm coming from a particular perspective that I believe to be like a fact or truth or obviously the only way to think or see a thing. And then something shifts or moves or there's an insight or an awareness that comes from left field or unexpectedly, and then suddenly all this truth or a fact just gets thrown in the air and things have to be re-evaluated and re-assessed again. And I suppose with that comes a bit of self doubt and having the confidence to be able to accept a new reality. (Annabelle)

The final example under this metatheme elucidated the Joe's experiential reality. The experience is revealed in a fresh and pre-reflective manner that feels akin to pure eidetic reduction of the phenomenon which was a main objective of this hermeneutic phenomenological study. For Joe that moment was a parting of clouds that created a dawning of awareness and consequently increased clarity:

> That moment of awareness, the clouds parted... it dawned on me... I would see it clearer than ever before with new eyes. ...What I'm sharing is experiential reality not from reading books or whatever. It's in experience of my own life. So everything, the essence of everything is the divine. (Joe)

Joe's narrative emulated my experience of this elusive moment that was experienced as a dawning or awakening of awareness. Metaphorically, it felt like a rising sun shone and a bright new clarity of awareness (see Appendix I).

4.3.2 Metatheme 2: Out of the Blue! A Drop of Awareness in an Ocean of Blind Spots!

Fig.9 Imaginative photograph to portray the creation of a moment of awareness

Under the main theme of a ‘Spontaneous clarity- A new reality’ a second metatheme emerged as; ‘Out of the blue! A drop of awareness in an ocean of blind spots!’ The majority of participant’s (six of the seven participants) lived experience of a moment of awareness presented suddenly and without volition. For some participants the moment appeared like ‘a light bulb moment of clarity’ that ‘popped up’ or ‘bubbled up’ ‘out of the blue’ ’bingo moment’ and ’aha’ moment. The aforementioned metaphors were nuanced expressions several of the participants used to describe their lived experience of moments of awareness (see Fig. 9 illustrative photograph).

> A client was coming for a good few sessions with anxiety, and no matter what we tried out to solve or break down his anxiety...slowly, he became aware that he had a lot of trust issues with everyone that was currently in his life... but the biggest person he had the trust issue was with himself. ... He didn't have any trust with his mum at all.....And, when it became clear then that this was causing anxiety that was feeding into all the different areas in his life, he became hugely aware, it was kind of like a bingo moment for him. ..... he felt that he actually linked the piece of the puzzle that was missing for him. (Roisin)

The above anecdote elucidates Roisin’s lived experience descriptor of a moment of awareness within a clinical context. The use of metaphorical language akin to a ‘bingo moment’ and ‘finding the missing piece of the puzzle’ is illustrative language that phenomenology prizes. The narrative describes the notion of a virtual space within or without wherein the moment of awareness given the right elements reveals itself. The above ancedote is an appropriate example of a lived experience descriptor (LED) (van Manen, 2014) which is the bedrock to a hermeneutical phenomenological approach. There appears to be a natural unfolding of blind spots that fosters more awareness to allow the ‘bingo moment’ manifest. The image of a ‘bingo moment’ conjures up with great clarity and ease of understanding, that exact instant when awareness befell this person. This ‘bingo moment’ is similar to other narratives under the category of spatiality, such as ‘out of the blue’ and ‘clouds parting’ crediting the moment of awareness as sudden and unexpected. That same sense of space was fundamental to permit moments of awareness.

The short anecdote below exemplifies Joe's lived experience of a moment of awareness that emerged unexpectedly and 'out of the blue'. Within this profound moment came a heightened awareness, intense clarity and new found knowledge. The use of metaphorical language creates an evocative image of a rocket of awareness soaring through the air and out of a blue sky or sea awareness profoundly emanated. This poetic language describes Joe's personal experience of his moment of self-awareness with immense imagination:

> I remember one time surrendering to God. As I was surrendering, I was walking up the steps to my apartment and this inner knowingness came, non verbal but 100% rocket-like, 100% clear, you're only surrender to your own higher self. And I just laughed, I know exactly where I was standing. I was standing behind the supermarket walking up steps to the apartment. And this inner knowingness came non verbal out of the blue, silence. You only surrender to your own higher self. There was nothing to surrender to you're surrendering to God, your own surrender (Joe)

The final two examples similarly display the participants lived experience of phenomenon through symbolic and inspired language. Not only do these examples reveal the essence of the phenomenon, they further align with the hermeneutic phenomenological purpose of this study that hoped to creates nuanced insight a moment of awareness:

> And I think that the conversation with my dad was really ..it was like that kind of (sighs) light bulb moment again where you know there's room for us all. (Annabelle)

> Well I think I took the family role in other groups that I did at home. However, I did gain a drop of awareness in an ocean of blind spots along my studies that I was also contributing to that as well. (Samantha)

4.3.3 Metatheme 3: Realising a Revolutionary, Releasing Revelation

The final metatheme to emerge from the theme 'Spontaneous clarity- A new reality' was 'Realising a revolutionary, releasing revelation'. This tongue twister was interpreted through the participants lived experience and the hermeneutic engagement with consonantal

alliteration. This literary repetition of the same sound creates a rhetorical and poetic effect which is both thought provoking and evocative. The data set disclosed that five of the seven participants understood moments of awareness as a release of information or new knowledge, which engendered a 'realisation' or 'revelation'. Annabelle described her experience as revolutionary moment that has altered her behaviour. This insightful experience came as a revelation:

> That moment of awareness was just like, a revelation. Revolutionary. And has actually impacted the way that I work since. (Annabelle)

Joe and Jacob described their understanding of the unique moment as both a revelation and realisation which fostered deeper comprehension and opening of awareness:

> That is a moment of awareness it is a revelation. And yet we're going around all day, every day with these potential revelations in our body! But they're, the blind spots aren't they or the protection. That's very profound (Jacob)

> So what am I? So the question I kept asking myself was what am I, what am I, what am I? I had a moment of realisation after a while that I am the universe. Everything is within me. The essence of everything is the divine. (Joe)

4.4 Theme 2: Cross the Conscious Threshold- Makes the Truth Much Bigger

The second main theme derived from the category 'Spatiality' was; 'Cross the conscious threshold- Makes the truth much bigger'. The research established that the creation of consciousness yielded moments of awareness. The cultivation of consciousness was established through various channels and means. Four metathemes manifested from this theme'; 'Cross the conscious threshold'; 'Deepen beneath the surface, dip into the shadow'; 'A mindful moment'; and 'Ineffable'.

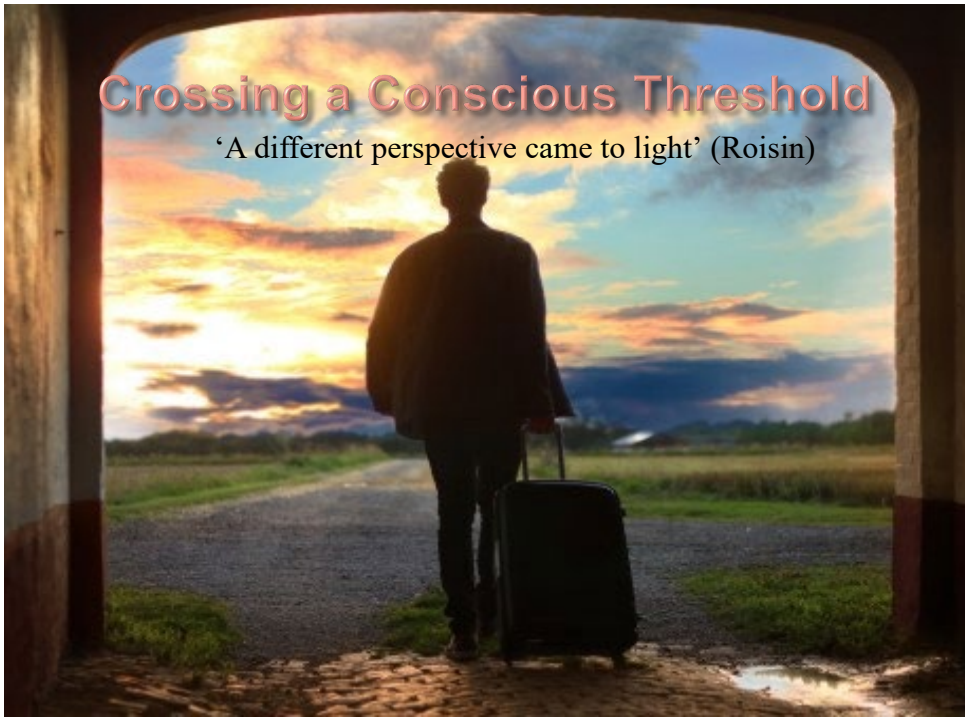


Fig.10 Methaphorical imagine of crossing into a conscious threshold

4.4.1 Metatheme 1: Cross the Conscious Threshold

The first metatheme to emerge within this theme was 'Cross the conscious threshold'. Through the use of alliteration and metaphorical language an image of disembarking a realm of unawareness into a space of awareness was elicited from the participant's findings. The cultivation of consciousness was encouraged by 'stepping back', 'paying attention', 'looking objectively' and 'seeing another perspective'.There was a sense of crossing over a threshold and into a conscious spatial realm where truth became more conspicuous and heightened (see Fig.10 for pictorial image). Six of the seven participants described the conception of consciousness through the use of metaphorical language such as; 'Come off the treadmill of life', 'step back', 'be flexible', 'be less judgemental',' it doesn't have to be this way', 'question my own beliefs', 'take a detour of understanding', 'look around the corner', 'cross the conscious threshold', 'pay attention', 'look for more information', 'question black and white thinking', 'take another angle', 'arrive at a different perspective', 'in a field of clearer vision', 'feels like the world is wider, makes the truth much bigger'!!. These descriptive phases from different participant's understandings of moments of awareness are suggestive and inventive. Each word in its own way is a lived experience descriptor of a moment of

awareness. Merged together they form a guide or a map to moments of awareness. This creative play of words and language is encouraged within my chosen methodological approach of hermeneutic phenomenology.

> It was like seeing around a corner and then suddenly you know what's there, whereas you can be on the other side of the corner thinking that's all there is this bend....it was like widening my field of view, and seeing the world from a different angle .... But it's also there's something, when it happened for me when I allowed myself to see that blind spot from the other side and create a moment of awareness and it certainly felt like the world is wider....just stepping back and looking at life in a bigger way just having a bigger perspective created a moment of awareness...Well it kind of made the truth bigger. With compassion, it feels like we can all live together in this world, .. if we can all endeavour to ourselves to be open to challenging what we think is one way that perhaps there is another way, ...to open or to see around a corner. (Annabelle)

The above anecdote challenges a way of seeing or thinking. Annabelle used the terminology of 'seeing around a corner' as a spatial metaphor for a new insight or a moment of awareness. It challenges one's way of habitually seeing or thinking and creates an image of something spatially new and different that feels opposite or different to one's previous view. Within the instant of turning a corner, new possibilities and another perspective was visible. Annabelle's lived experience of that moment of awareness then presented itself as a wider perspective on life which brought a greater truth to the fore. Annabelle described her moment of awareness through symbolic use of imagery. Similarly, Roisin's narrative below uses descriptive language to describe her felt sense of the experience of awareness in relation to client work. For Roisin, a moment of awareness brought an alternative 'perspective' to 'light'. This has the power to challenge one's standpoint:

> I think verbalising or I often would give the clients some time to write out stuff to help process during sessions, like art work or imagery allow a different perspective to come to light. (Roisin)

The narrative below illustrates Jacob's felt sense of a moment of awareness. Jacobs likens the moment to coming off a treadmill of life which equates to non-conscious living. He further generates consciousness through increased conscious or mindful living. He uses the metaphor

of treadmill to illustrate mindless living and how by coming off the 'walker' we can create a moment of awareness:

> Sometimes that clarity and self awareness in relation to a client comes after a break...Mind, body, heart and soul type of a break, so that clarity, when I'm meeting the client again, I've stepped off the, treadmill and I step back on again and I have this fresher sense of understanding the client. The complexity of their needs. ...come off the walker. The treadmill. I liked that metaphor or that image because it feels like we can be a little bit more mindful. (Jacob)

4.4.2. Metatheme 2: Deepen Beneath the Surface, Dip into the Shadow

The second metatheme under the theme 'Cross the conscious threshold- Makes the truth much bigger' was 'Deepen beneath the surface, dip into the shadow'. Five of the seven participants revealed their felt sense of deepening below a superficial or external layer of knowingness. This metatheme described connecting with the shadow or unconscious side of oneself to engender moments of awareness. Samantha creates new understanding of her process through a deepening of awareness. The evocative language of deepening creates the notion of an intensifying and expansion of knowingness; a sense of creating awareness on previous unknown or unconscious material:

> I think I've deepened into awareness now that I speak....that moment of awareness was a deepening,....a deepening of everything. (Samantha)

The narrative below elucidates Jacobs understanding of a moment of awareness as an invitation to previously unknown area. Suggestive words akin to 'the shadow' conjure up an image of creating awareness of one's unconscious side. Jacob finds this awareness is helpful within a clinical context too:

> The moment of awareness invited me into my shadow...without a doubt they invited me. ...which is so much deeper....And that's helpful for me to name it within myself or to name it in a client. It deepens an understanding and gives direction. (Jacob)

Annabelle lucidly described this moment as something additional or extra depth of awareness. The poetic phase below stimulates the imagination ofa moment of awareness presenting as 'something more' and of greater depth than one's habitual understanding:

> It's something more than meets the eye, it's not all surface (Annabelle)

4.4.3 Metatheme 3: Ineffable

Participants struggled to capture the indescribable feeling associated with such a profound lived experience. Participant's integration of new awareness into consciousness was difficult to put into words. Four of the participants struggled to describe accurately their felt sense or experience of that exact moment of awareness. Their understanding of the phenomenon was inexpressible. Lucy aptly describes her experience of the phenomenon as:

> Moments of awareness are hard to describe but I've gained huge awareness, its ineffable, elusive, gradual and subtle. (Lucy)

Similarly, Joe experienced a moment of awareness as an experiential reality that was hard to find words to define it. It presented as a 'state of beingness' that was beyond words:

> That moment of awareness is a state of beingness. It's difficult to explain it in that it can only be experienced as an experiential reality. (Joe)

Similarily, my personal experience of this moment was inexpressible. It was pre-verbal and the measure of language could not fully articulate my experience.

4.4.4Metatheme 4: A Mindful Moment

The narratives below are apt examples of a participant's experience of moments of self-awareness that manifested through mindful living and in mindful spaces. These included 'paying attention', 'noticing more' and 'engagement with nature'. Four of the participants experienced a moment of awareness in a natural milieu. For Lucy this moment of awareness was exampled readily in natural environments. Nature appeared to invite Lucy into a mindful

present moment that removed her from the busyness of the day. This engendered space to think, reflect and allow a moment of awareness open up. This moment contrasted to her ordinary experience of life. It felt 'very alive':

> I can remember a moment actually. It was through nature. I was very busy. That's, the way I've lived my life really. Some years ago, I had a very not so nice experience.. And I remember coming home And noticing the first row of flowers opening up. And it just brought me into that moment ...But that really stood out because it was in such contrast to what was going on in my life..... I don't know, it just, brought me into myself and what was going on for me, and that inner stuff of self awareness... it was very alive, because the leaves had come out and you could see it moving and that sense of just presence in nature and then that brings you into yourself allowing a space for moments of awareness. (Lucy)

Samantha understood her idiosyncratic moment of awareness as a moment of mindfulness. Through the act of mindfulness a space opened to connect with her breath and create awareness:

> Mindfulness helped me a lot with that. And breathing.. mindfulness has been huge for me to create more awareness around this..To create that moment of awareness. (Samantha)

Joe witnessed moments of awareness in simple and ordinary everyday mindful activities. This created a space for the mind to be silent and fostered further awareness:

> Having a shower, going into the sea. They're leaving this space for the mind to be silent. And the mind is silent, thinking is like a form of madness. Complete madness. Cause our true source, our true beingness is silence and that's when awareness can bubble up. (Joe)

4.5 Category 2: Corporeality

The category of corporeality emerged as an understanding of participant's experience of moments of awareness. This encompassed moment of awareness relating or existing within the body. There was tangibility to these moments that manifested within the body. This included intuitive moments of a visceral nature. The data yielded a significant amount of internal truths that emerged from within the body. There was a qualitative felt sense to this moment that was instinctive in nature and sometimes pre-verbal. Other narratives within this category related to the ways in which participants' bodies formed part of their experience of an epiphany moment. Participants mentioned listening to, connecting with, and dropping into the body.

4.5.1 Theme 3: Inner Knowingness Manifests

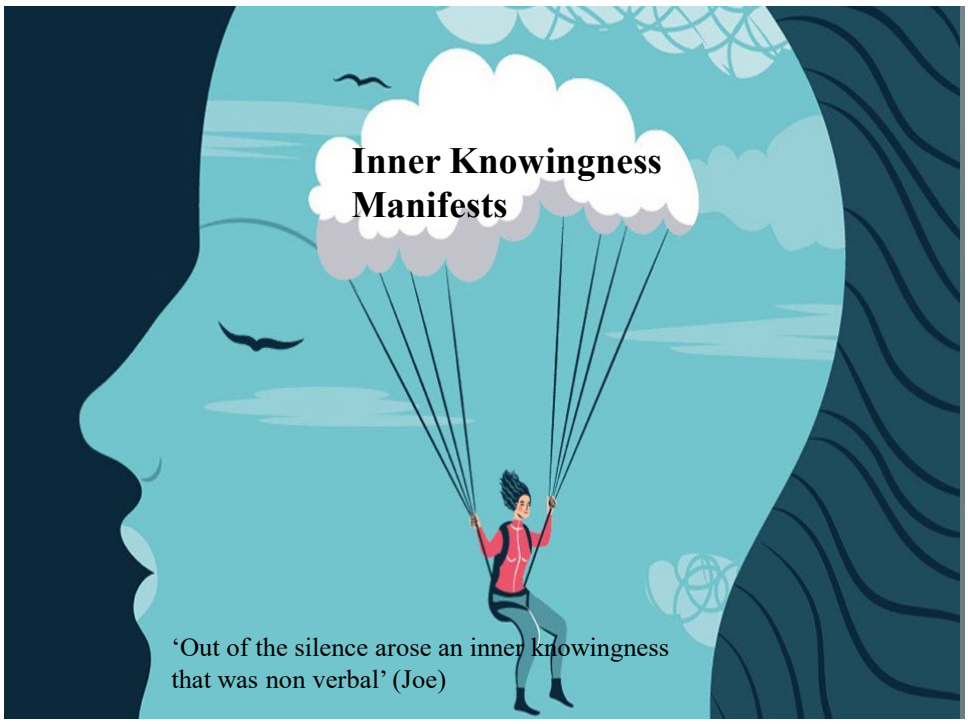


Fig.11 Imaginary picture depicting the manifestation of a moment of awareness

From the category of corporeality emerged the theme, 'Inner knowingness manifests', which subsequently four metathemes manifested; 'Internal shift flows-inner knowingness'; 'Be open, to an opening within'; 'Listen, the body speaks, drop in, and reconnect'; 'Devotion to truth-Introspective honesty'. These metathemes all related to moments of awareness within

the limits of the body. Some of these experiences occurred in the physical body and other in a more abstract physical way.

4.5.2 Metatheme 1: Internal Shift Flows- Inner Knowingness

Participants spoke of their lived experience as involving 'an internal shift' that created an 'inner knowingness'. Six of the participants understood their moments of awareness as originating from within their bodies. For Joe, his moment of awareness emerged as a pre-verbal inner knowingness that came from the divine within. This created an image of intuitive knowledge that could not be denied. It was definite, conclusive and an alternative way to knowing that was not cognitive in nature:

> It was beyond doubt. It was just an inner knowingness and from my own experience, when I meditate and I'm in silence and the mind's completely silent, and through prayer and surrender and devotion.. So out of the silence arose an inner knowingness that was non verbal.... So it came as a knowingness washing the dishes the following day. It was not like a voice (Joe)

In the narrative below Jacob described how his lived experience of a moment of awareness involved him connecting with his body in order to disconnect from his busy mind. This in turn altered his state of awareness. For this participant, the body has the potential to be the vessel or channel that carries and delivers moments of self-awareness all the time but we are mostly 'blind' to them:

> Knowingly and unknowingly. Consciously and unconsciously…it poped up...the awareness of the body holding something of the past. And the awareness of the body being able to reconnect with what was repressed...that is a moment of awareness it is a revelation. And yet we're going around all day, every day with these potential revelations in our body! But they're blind spots aren't they or the protection. That's very profound. (Jacob)

4.5.3 Metatheme 2: Be Open, to an Opening Within

A second metatheme within the theme of, 'Inner knowingness manifests' presented as 'Be open, to an opening within'. Four of the seven participants experienced their moment of awareness as openness; being open or seeking an opening within. Just as an attitude of openness is essential to phenomenological enquiry, internal openness engendered a freedom within, one where a moment of awareness could potentially manifest. Participants spoke of having the 'openness to challenge one's perspective', being 'open to view another possibility', and facing a 'choice to be open'. In the narrative below Jacob describes his moment of clarity as an 'openness' and an 'opening within'. This evokes a sense of unlocking or unfastening awareness:

> Sometimes that clarity and self awareness in relation to a client for me comes very often after a break. ...I'll come back, the routine has been disturbed and there has been that openness, that opening within, and it's a break, simply kind of a break. Mind, body, heart and soul type of a break, so that's the moment of clarity (Jacob)

Annabelle uses metaphorical language to describe an opening into awareness, 'the opening of a door' and being 'open to another possibility'. Annabelle stated that opening awareness is similar to the opening of a blind spot. It felt like a choice and that courage was needed to create a moment of awareness:

> Well I definitely think that I have a feeling of the imposter and it took courage to open the door and catch that moment of awareness..... So for me it might only be possible if I let myself be vulnerable enough to be open to another possibility... to be really open and honest and be compassionate. Its not an easy thing for people to do, to open a blind spot like that...it's very difficult then to look at the other side (Annabelle)

4.5.4 Metatheme 3: Listen, the Body Speaks, Drop in, and Reconnect

A third metatheme within the theme of, 'Inner knowingness manifests' presented as 'Listen, the body speaks, drop in, and reconnect'. A number of the participants mentioned how body psychotherapy and general connection with the physical and emotional body encourages

moments of awareness. The narratives included the idea of listening, connecting and dropping into the body. Less than half the participants, three in total, understood this phenomenon as a listening exercise and attuning with their bodies. Although, this metatheme is similar to the metatheme of 'inner knowingness manifest', it differs in the subtle ways awareness emerges through listening and connecting with the body as opposed to arising from within. In the former metatheme the awareness ostensibly emanates from within the body, whereas the latter appears to be imposed on the body from without. In the narrative below Samantha understands this moment as paying attention and relating with her body. This hypothetical language presents an accurate hermeneutic representation of the phenomenon in question:

> Getting to know your body is big as well, with clients. I think my body was telling me everything...Even how I hold my hands, I wouldn't have that awareness, maybe a year or two ago. But now I realise, if I listen to my body, I know what's going on and that's really connecting with the blind spots and creating an opportunity for awareness (Samantha)

Jacob's understanding of the phenomenon was in relation to a client and inviting a client into their bodies to create awareness. With this connection to the body a sense of 'dropping' into the body, awareness unfolded:

> When creating the richness and the significance of bringing the body into therapy. I'm reminded of, what can be a very challenging invitation for a client to bring awareness, which is so very often from the safety place of the head..Creating moments of awareness, inviting the client to drop into their bodies (Jacob)

4.5.5 Metatheme 4: Devotion to Truth; Introspective Honesty

A fourth metatheme within the theme of, 'Inner knowingness manifests' presented as 'Devotion to truth; Introspective honesty'. The idea of looking within and demanding rigorous honesty of self was a prevailing lived experience for therapists. All of the participants alluded to the notion that where there is reflective honesty and truth, there is potential for moments of awareness. Moments of awareness appear to bring clarity of truth

and this can be encouraged through scrupulous honesty with self. Asking truthful questions of self is a worthy exercise in initiating moments of awareness. In the account below Samantha described how through honest introspections that awareness was created:

> I had to be very honest and introspective to create that moment of awareness. I had to very much look at how I contributed to situations...willingness to look at self. That's a moment of awareness within itself (Samantha)

Both Roisin and Lucy understood a moment of awareness as arising in an introspective environment of sincerity and frankness with self. Their comprehension of the phenomenon was through reflective truthfulness:

> In our contemporary society, in the modern age blind spots are not new, but it's, bringing more awareness on the subject and helping to create more awareness through honest introspection of self. (Lucy)

> It is important all the time, to be developing self awareness of myself ... by re-evaluating the situations, asking truthful questions such as what part am I playing in it? (Roisin)

The above findings were confirmed in the workshop I designed, where a surprising number of workshop participants shared the narrative of how the medium of the body can be a perfect channel for creating moments of self-awareness.

4.6 Category 3: Temporality

The category of temporality emerged as an understanding of participant's experience of moments of awareness within the context of time. The concept of creating awareness at a particular time was evidenced in the findings. Out of the category of temporality the main theme of 'Tipping point' was evidenced. Many participants experienced moments of awareness in relation to timing. Timing appeared essential when uncovering moments of awareness. With some participants it felt like a choice to allow the awareness arise at a safe

time for them when they were resourced to manage it. However, for others it was more a gradual process of smaller revelations that created a tipping point into moments of insight.

4.6.1 Theme 4: Tipping point

Fig. 12 Image illustrating a 'Tipping Point of Awareness'

Three metathemes subsequently materialized from this theme; 'Tipping point of awareness'; 'Kick start awareness- domino effect' and 'A point in time'. Moments of awareness appeared to have a unique time of revealing what was intended just at that moment when it was ready to be integrated into consciousness. For most participants, there was a definite sequential dimension to their moments of acute awareness.

4.6.2 Metatheme 1: Tipping Point of Awareness

Tipping point was presented as a turning point or breaking point in one's life. The tipping point of awareness evidenced how the development of awareness cumulated to a critical moment when consciousness manifested. It presented as an exact time of change from an unconscious state to a moment of awareness. Three participants described their experience of

awareness in relation to a cumulative effect of little measures of awareness that produced an obvious moment of awareness (see Fig.12). The imaginary language of a tipping point illuminates this incident with potent language that brings a depth of knowledge to the experience. The sense of time be it objective (cosmic) or subjective (lived) appeared to be experienced with respect to the phenomena being studied. In the passage below, Susanne reflects on her lived experience of gaining awareness. This was similar to a turning point of new awareness that influenced her life. Susanne told of how her insightful moment had been preceded by years of 'turning a blind eye' to her own unhappiness. Then things reached the point where she could no longer look away, she had to tackle the truth. This was noted as a turning point in her life. Time appeared to allow things to change. It almost seemed that her unconscious behaviour climaxed and reached a tipping point. As if an accumulation of a certain practice had a time limit, and once that limit or climax was reached a moment of awareness was released:

> Now, my marriage broke up years ago. And I had small children. And my husband was living abroad; we came back to Donegal under false pretences. I spent months crying at night in bed. And one night I woke up, I had a moment of awareness and I thought, he doesn't even know that I'm crying..... So it really was a, very important moment or turning point in my life.. - I turned a blind eye to the truth and to the behaviours, until it became so bad, I couldn't do it anymore, that was a breaking point, or my tipping point into awareness ....which was I have choice!.. (Susanne)

Annabelle's experience was similar, in that at a particular time when she was more ready and willing to listen, awareness came forth:

> It was like, semi awareness... You can do it.., there is a part in me that I wasn't always ready to listen to it. But there was a voice and there did come a point. (Annabelle)

4.6.3 Metatheme 2: Kick Start Awareness, Domino Effect

A second metatheme within the theme of, 'Tipping point' presented as 'Kick start awareness, domino effect'. Within this theme was the sense that a moment of awareness could have a

domino or ripple effect: that they could engender further moments of awareness. Over half of the participants (4/7) experienced this moment as a fulcrum into awareness. Roisin experienced this as one moment of insight that begets further awareness:

> By opening a smaller blind spot, or by creating a smaller moment of awareness, it has a kind of a ripple effect on other parts. I suppose you could say that awareness kind of creates more awareness... I see that in client work as well where sometimes a client is not progressing after a couple of sessions even though those sessions are very valid, like an opening or beginning of the journey. I think, those small little moments of awareness, be it something simple, like becoming aware of a trigger of anxiety ,they're definitely valid and they do lead up to the bigger moments. (Roisin)

The narratives evinced the concept of moments of awareness as having a gradual spreading effect or influence. This disseminating effect of awareness can be caused by a single moment of awareness that then engenders further awareness. Several participants experienced a series of moments of awareness that occurred as a direct result of one initial event. In the narrative below Lucy understood it as creating awareness in one area of her life that further generated awareness in other areas:

> This opening of a smaller blind spot then opened up a fuller, better life overall, where awareness then opened up in many aspects of his life. it's interesting because when you create a moment of awareness more comes out .... (Lucy).

For Joe that moment of clarity brought him into another intensity or level of awareness, which felt like a step beyond that. The imagery Joe avails of to create that notion of 'kick starting' a phenomenon is potent and captures the experience in a true phenomenological sense. Those minor moments of awareness build up to a major moment where with it Joe's whole life perspective altered:

> That moment of awareness allowed for another deeper moment of awareness that Consciousness is another step or level beyond awareness..... So that moment of awareness was a kick starter to other awareness and seeing life differently I realised I'm not my body, I'm not my thoughts, I'm just a passing phenomena. (Joe)

4.6.4 Metatheme 3: Timing is Everything!

A third metatheme within the theme of, 'Tipping point' presented as 'Timing is everything!'. The participant's account of awareness appears to be dependent on how well one is resourced and able at a certain time in their lives to open blind spots. 'A point in time' and 'Appropriate timing' were some of the interpretations of the findings below. This conjured up the notion that one's sense of self, which we presume to be relatively established, has the potentiality to alter and transform in awareness depending on the timing. Annabelle understood her experience of this elusive moment in relation to a time in her life when she was more able and ready to handle the truth:

> It's a timing thing and it's an inner resource thing I think, to be able to handle the truth, you have to be in a position to be able to manage what you're going to find out for yourself, because those blind spots are not always beautiful. Like finding out the person you're in love with is in the throws of an addiction is not a wonderful truth to become aware of..... (Annabelle)

Lucy confirmed Annabelle's understanding of the phenomenon. Lucy needed to be at a certain age to appreciate or accept further awareness. Therefore, stage of life was important for that moment of awareness:

> The whole thing about blind spots...is having the ability, space and want to look at self. I know that I wouldn't have been able to look at blind spots before, when I was younger and less aware; I would have been closed to them. (Lucy)

Furthermore, Lucy was conscious of how the timing of moments of awareness was a critical thing for clients and had clinical implications. It was important for both therapist and client to get the timing right:

> In the therapeutic room, the risk might be if you help the person create a moment of awareness when they're not ready. Or it's not our place to. ....there's some skill, in having enough awareness yourself to know when to illuminate another's blind spot. Timing is crucial (Lucy)

My professional experience of a moment of awareness in relation to time has significant clinical implication. Timing and sensitivity to the client's capacity for awareness is cruial. However, once a client is willing and able for awareness, by opening one door of awareness most certainly can have a positive knock on effect

4.7 Category 4: Relationality

The category of relationality was discernible in the data set. Participant's relationship between manifestation and disappearance of a moment of awareness was evidenced in several ways. The correlation between a moment of awareness and its departure was understood by the participants as their lived experience of this phenomenon. A relationship between the two phenomena appeared to co-exist and was changeable.

4.7.1 Theme 5: Vacillation

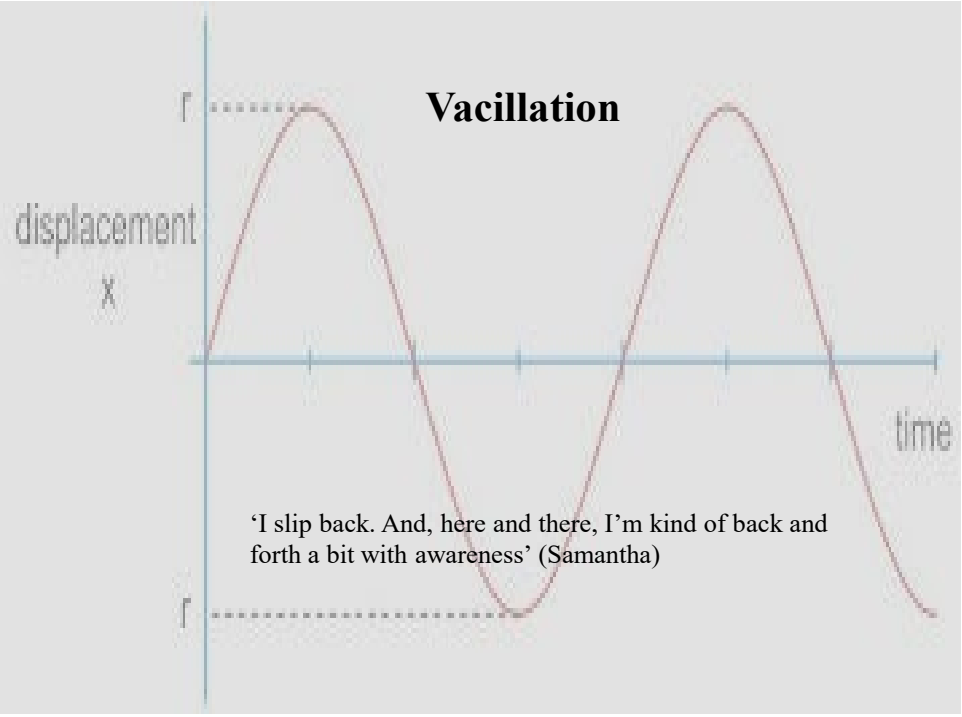


Fig.13 Image of 'Oscillating Awareness'

The theme of 'Vacillation' emerged from this category, which subsequently had three metathemes; 'Oscillating, vacillating awareness'; 'Levels and layers of blind spots'; and 'Self-other'. Vacillation represents therapists understanding of the incident as a wavering awareness. A moment of awareness was not always a stable occurrence and in fact was often in flux.

4.7.2 Metatheme 1: Oscillating, Vacillating Awareness

The first metatheme within the theme of 'Vacillation', presented as 'Oscillating, vacillating awareness'. In a number of cases, participants' lived experience of moments of self-awareness presented as a form of oscillating awareness: a rise and fall between moments of self-awareness and the absence of the experience meant it was fluid or unsettled in nature. The narrative below exemplifies the idea of changeability in awareness that was inconstant. It conjured up the idea of an ebb and flow of awareness (see Fig.13). In addition, a number of the participants were of the opinion that they could chose to come into consciousness. That it was a choice and a selective process. In Samantha's opinion her experience was a relationship of movement as moments of awareness were revealed and concealed in a vacillating active manner:

> I'm ready and able doesn't mean I always act on the awareness. Yes and no, I slip back. And, here and there, I'm kind of back and forth a bit with awareness. (Samantha)

The participant's understood the relationship of opening and closing awareness as fluctuating and not an all or nothing phenomenon but that it has the ability to become visible and invisible almost simultaneously. The proposal of a semi-awareness where one is divided between awareness and blindness of awareness was evident in the findings. Samantha spoke of a state of semi-awareness, which was confirmed by an encounter with a client:

> That client said something I had semi-awareness around already. She actually brought to my attention something I half knew. It was a truth, and it highlighted for me, 'how does this impact my work? And created a moment of insight. (Samantha)

Annabelle added to this notion of semi-awareness as an understanding of a moment of clarity:

> It was a surprise and not a surprise do you know what I mean?... like, semi awareness. (Annabelle)

4.7.3 Metatheme 2: Levels of Awareness-Layers of Blind Spots

The second metatheme under the theme of 'Vacillation', presented as 'Levels of awareness-Layers of blind spots'. Numerous participants believed that creating moments of awareness was not an 'all or nothing' phenomena but rather it was made up of levels and layers. This appeared to be many of the participants felt sense of the phenomena. Some participants experienced moments of awareness in stages and steps. Often the participant was triggered by something in the moment that upon reflection stemmed from something of old. This may have involved levels of awareness and layers of blind spots. Several therapists felt that the notion of self-awareness was made up of different phases of awareness. Some levels are deeper than others and therefore created an increased awareness.

Jacob used imaginative language to instil a picture of a multi-tiered cake, with levels and layers. This evocative illustrative language draws forthJacobs understanding of the phenomenon which is not singular but a complex tiered classification of awareness.

> Looking at the blind spots and creating moments of awareness which are layers in that cake, that multi-tiered cake layers. That depth of history I have... I'm seeing a kind of a, cake layering of these blind spots and moments of awareness that start off, as something perhaps trivial like a, messy neighbour or anxiety about a new client, that has all these layers and depths (Jacob)

Joe experienced this moment as a step by step process of unravelling of awareness. His experience of a moment of awareness consisted of 'stages and steps'. This alliterative use of language is poetic and imaginative which expresses the phenomenon with imaginative expression. This meets the objectives of hermeneutic phenomenology.

> That was the first step and for months I was the witness observer. The next step was a deepening of awareness. It was gradual step by step...it's like putting your attention on the field of awareness all the time. Like as we're speaking now you can observe and witness oneself speaking.... I asked myself what's doing the observing? What's doing the work- consciousness beyond awareness is consciousness, which is another level of awareness. So awareness progresses in stages and steps... And there's layers there isn't there (Joe)

4.7.4 Metatheme 3: Self-Other

Under the category of relationality, the meta-theme of 'Self-other' became apparent. This was where moments of awareness were brought to light through the reflection or discussion with others. Interpersonal communication or another gently questioning one's blind spot allowed for moments of awareness.Moments of awareness created by another were particularly of note within a clinical context either by the participant's personal therapists or supervisor. This has important clinical implications which are further discussed in chapter six. Lucy experienced her moment of awareness through both inter and intra-personal methods:

> From those moments, I am self aware, to blind spots which have been, relayed to me by others or by my another voice internally ... The moment of awareness came to me from reactions from others...and it had been reflected back as well, which was like a blind spot... part of having to remove myself from the job, I had to go into therapy awareness around interpersonal patterns came up. Reflection back from another professional was really important to enabling awareness about this topic ...this is important from a clinical perspective. (Lucy)

Furthermore, Annabelle created moments of awareness through the company of others such as her supervisor. She had a 'Light Bulb' moment when conversing with her dad. She respected and valued what they had to say and created the right environment for awareness:

> And I think that the conversation with my dad was really ..it was like that kind of (sighs) light bulb moment.... my supervisor and my dad, I suppose they're people that

> I value and respect. So I will respect what they have to say and that helps open the blind spots and create moments of awareness.... And so it was only when my supervisor suggested to me like, is there something going on here that is, really harmful, probably for both of you? and she was right. She was absolutely right. And I had been working with this woman for a really long time and I would tell you, like years, off and on, and I had never looked at it from that perspective. ... she could see something that I'm positioned somewhere, and that maybe I can move in a different direction. ...It was a great insight and moment of awareness. (Annabelle)

Similarly, Samantha's supervisor enabled a moment of awareness. She questioned her 'black and white thinking' and her non-conscious judgments. This helped break her way of thinking and see another angle on a situation:

> I was caught by what my supervisor said she was shedding a light on something I was blind to, And she said, you have to let go of the judgement because you don't ever really know the full circumstances. And she was right. It helps because my supervisor is directive so I'm told straight up. you're making a judgement there, she'll question my black and white thinking.....I had a lot of black and white thinking. I was quite rigid in what I would think. Both supervision and personal therapy questioned the origins of my conditioning and that then was a fulcrum to awareness. (Samantha).

4.8 Understandings of Psychological Blind Spots (PBS)

The main section under the heading of psychological blind spots is self awareness avoidance. The phenomenon of psychological blind spots can be understood through the presence of another or through deep introspective honesty. Similar to moments of awareness one may create awareness of their blind spot in a sudden or surprised way or in a more gradual subtle manner. The participants' experience of psychological blind spots was manifold and complex. Two main categories emanated from this section; 'Blind self' and 'Blind self-other'. On the basis of these categories, three main themes were uncovered under 'Blind self'; 'Eclipse of awareness', 'Safeguard self' and 'Automaticity'. From 'Blind self-other', two

main themes emerged namely; ‘Polarised perspective’ and ‘Familial opacity’ (see Fig. 14). In total 13 metathemes emanated from these themes (see Fig.15).

Fig. 14 Overview of main categories and themes of psychological blind spots

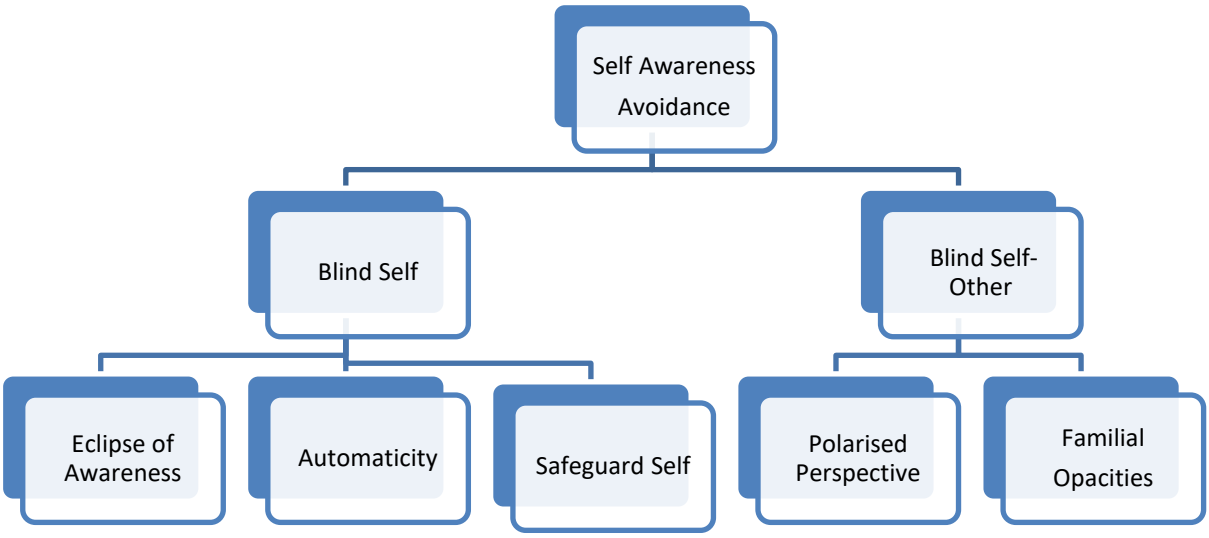
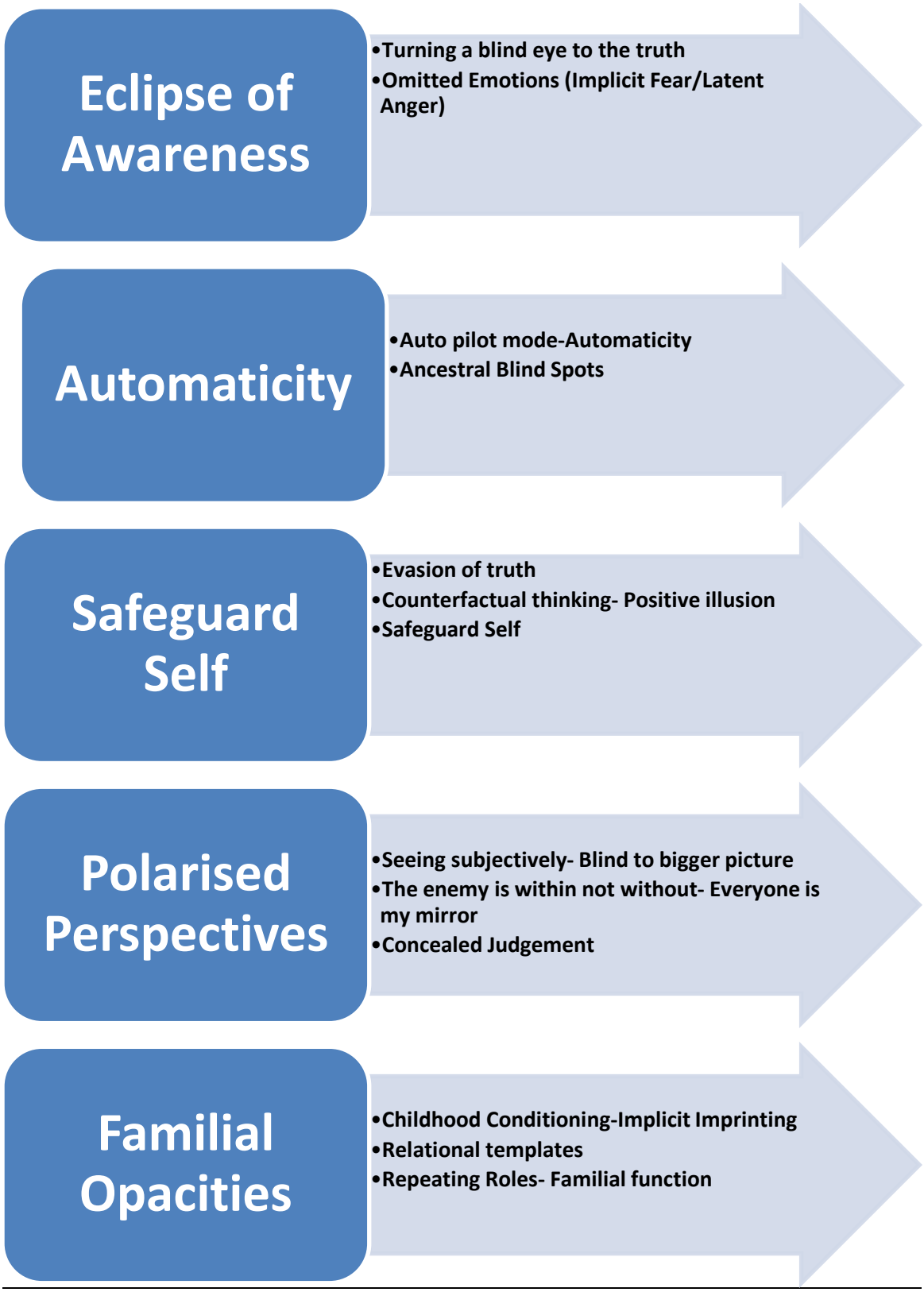


Fig.15 Overview of main themes and metathemes of psychological blind spots



4.9 Category 1: Blind Self

The category of 'Blind-self' emerged as therapists understanding of lack of awareness in relation to the personal self. This manifested in several ways; as an obstruction of awareness, or blockage of emotion; a non-consciousness way of living; or the act of self-protecting oneself from the full truth. The three main themes that was uncovered under 'Blind self' were; 'Eclipse of awareness', 'Safeguard self' and 'Automaticity'.

4.10 Theme 1: Eclipse of Awareness

The theme of eclipse of awareness produced two metathemes namely; 'Turning a blind eye to the truth' and 'Omitted emotions'. The research findings evidenced that many participants understood psychological blind spots as a 'block to awareness' or an 'area of unawareness' (see Fig.16 for a metaphorical image of an obstruction to awareness). Several participants felt sense of psychological blind spots included concealed or hidden awareness.

Fig.16 Metaphorical image of a block of awareness or obstruction of light or consciousness

4.10.1Metatheme 1: Turning a Blind Eye to the Truth

Fig.17 Imaginable picture of turning away from awareness

The findings revealed that the majority of the participants understood psychological blind spots as keeping the truth out of awareness. Some of them chose not see or understand the full truth. The lived experience descriptor (LED) of a psychological blind spot is described below as a block or hidden awareness within a therapeutic context. For Annabelle, it felt like her client's awareness was eclipsed and darkness was evident instead. He had an inability to see another perspective. His vision was obstructed and therefore he had no awareness of how he might be affecting his partner. This block of awareness was Annabelle's lived experience of a psychological blind spot:

> I try to have multidirectional partiality ... And sometimes I can see where somebody is completely unaware that they've absolutely hurt the other party. When they can't see it, they do it repeatedly out of awareness, And the other person is really hurting and the person cannot see how their behaviour or what they've said has affected this person so much (Annabelle)

Susanne experienced a psychological blind spot as ‘keeping what is going on out of awareness’, to a point where this practice becomes habitual in one’s life. Her experience of a PBS is therefore an area of unawareness:

> Keeping what is going on out of awareness. And then that becomes a kind of pattern for us in our lives. So when we're adults, then we also keep things out of awareness.... my understanding of blind spots is that it's an area out of awareness. (Susanne)

Similarly, Roisin experienced her client’s ability to hinder his own growth through lack of awareness. This blockage of awareness or blind spot impacted his progress and personal development:

> This was actually blocking his growth for so long, so I think that really did highlight how powerful awareness is when it does come to light. And similarly the massive blind spot when he wasn’t aware that was completely blocking his progress and growth. (Roisin)

The majority of the participants understood psychological blind spots as keeping the truth out of awareness. Several therapists chose not see or understand the full truth. Susanne understood a psychological blind spot as a choice to keep one’s full awareness outside the confines of one’s consciousness. In a time of a challenging situation Susanne chose to ‘turn a blind eye’;

> So I kept the truth out of awareness... I turned a blind eye to the truth and to the behaviours, until it became so bad; I couldn't do it anymore that was a breaking point, or my tipping point into awareness.... I stayed ten years with this abusive man, and eventually had to walk away and leave everything behind. .....I turned a blind eye to the truth (Susanne)

4.10.2 Metatheme 2: Omitted Emotions

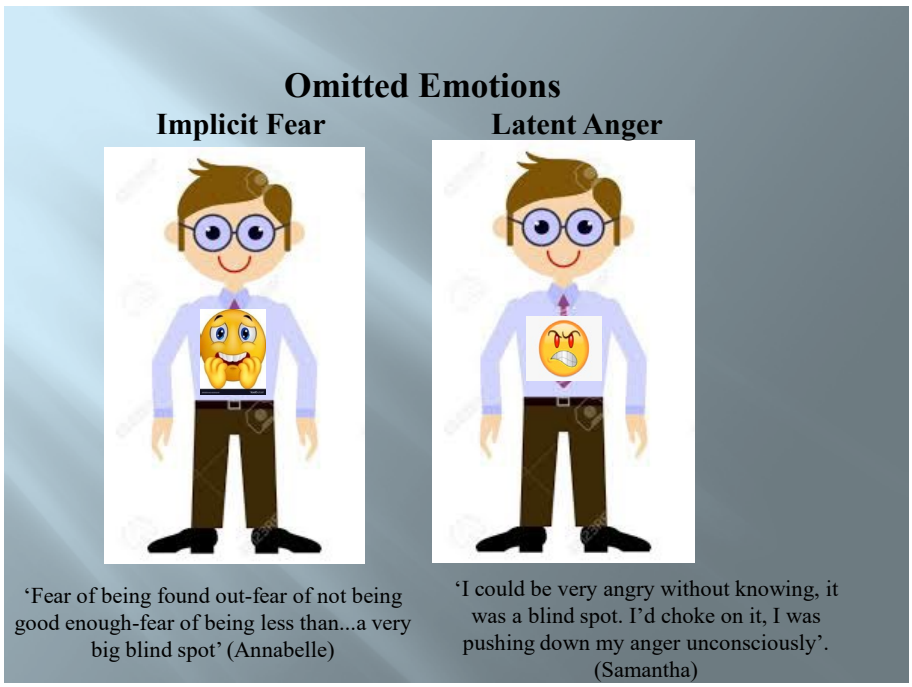


Fig.18 Image depicting omitted emotions

The second metatheme to emerge within the theme of 'Eclipse of awareness' was 'Omitted emotions'. Omitted or absent emotions manifested in several ways for all of the participants. Some 'pushed down' or 'locked down' their emotions, and others froze or abandoned emotions (see Fig.18). Implicit fear and latent anger manifested within this metatheme. Unconscious jealously, envy, guilt and shame were further mentioned under this metatheme but to a lesser extent.

Susanne experienced a PBS as keeping feelings out of awareness. This developed growing up where emotions were not tolerated. 'So by degrees' she forgot how to connect with her emotions. These omitted emotions then presented as blind spots in her life:

> When I was growing up in a family, where emotions were not approved of, I actually didn't know what I was feeling. So by degrees, I forgot how I was feeling. I kept it out of awareness and forgot how to feel. (Susanne)

Similarly for Lucy, there was a closed communication style at home. Her experience of 'locking down' emotions is evocative use of the imagination and depicts a PBS with phenomenological insight:

> I never grew up in an open environment...everything was locked down and we didn't talk about things.... not being able to give that space. I suppose my mother wasn't able to listen to her own bit so she didn't give us that space. (Lucy)

Samantha used the phrases to 'push down'or 'choke' down her emotions. The use of imaginative language helps to elicit that feeling of misplaced emotions:

> The choking when somebody says something, you know that choking feeling and pushing it down and, you know you're hardly able to breathe when somebody says something hurtful and yet I portrayed an impression of I don't care. When in fact I do care. I'm actually very hurt and very angry. (Samantha)

Jacob used his hands to display how an urn contained and bottled his emotions. This was his experience of a PBS that he later became aware of. This felt like a secure way for Jacob to manage his emotions.This use of metaphorical and creative language to describe the therapists understanding is the basis of my methodological choice.

> And I'm thinking of the teenager where the emotion is charged.. And, you see my hands, for some reason, the image I'm creating for myself is that I've an urn or a container.. the emotions were safe to some degree. Bottled, you might also say but nonetheless. (Jacob)

All of the participants experienced the concept of hidden or unconscious fear at different stages in their lives. They suggested that unbeknownst fear was their felt sense of a psychological blind spot. For some this fearful blind spot was perennially present, for others it presented as a fearful thought that one became aware of latterly. Many understood psychological blind spots as a form of underlying fear that was ubiquitous in nature. For Annabelle fear pervaded every aspect of her life:

> Fear of being found out-fear of not being good enough-fear of being less than...such a big blind spot (Annabelle)

Joe's experience of a PBS manifested in relation to his mother. He created awareness how unconscious fear and guilt effected her outlook. This fear impacted her life and behaviour:

> She was afraid of purgatory. A huge blind spot..., she's surrendered to God with two feet in heaven and two feet here in fear, ..I had a moment of realisation it was her parents that thought her that. They had instilled catholic fear and guilt and she was afraid and was passing that fear onto me..... (Joe)

Jacob created insightful awareness around how a 'no-show' client triggered a 'fear of being rejected' unwittingly. This fear was a blind spot until reflection created awareness of the trigger something innocuous can cause.

> I have a sensitivity unbeknownst to me more often than not that goes back to an absence at another time. An early time in my life, yes. A rejection, which of course was, no one's fault, yet, there was an absence.... I created awareness around something that say is as trivial as an appointment, and how something of old can be triggered when we take the moment to look at self, and have a moment of awareness around fear of rejection..that was the blind spot. (Jacob)

Samantha understood a PBS as a hidden or latent anger that had impacted them. Samantha shared how her internal anger affected her without her full awareness. The notion of latent anger was elucidated by both these therapists. Samantha felt she was 'holding'or 'pushing down' her anger unwittingly and this affected her behaviour:

> I could be angry without knowing it was a blind spot that was related to me acting out defensively as passive aggressive. Something could trigger me or stir something in me. And I'd get angry but didn't know how to manage it, so I'd act out defensively. I had a moment of awareness of, I can't remember exactly when or how, but it came to me that I'm being passive aggressive because I'm holding all this angry emotion unwittingly and I can't be authentic in my family. ....I'd be quite annoyed... but unaware... the anger didn't come till much later... there would have been a lot of anger

> stored up. It came out later...I'd choke on it, I was pushing down my anger unconsciously ... people closer to me have said, but you don't show it. And that's a bad way to be because I was suppressing it and acting out defensively (Samantha)

Roisin's experience of a PBS was a learnt behaviour of omitting angry emotions. This then became a blind spot which was to discount angry feelings and not voice how she was really feeling in the moment:

> I had definitely developed unwittingly a very negative opinion of anger, from my parents views ....I grew up with the thought that anger shouldn't exist...when I got the awareness in that moment during a creative exercise, I think I figured out that the blind spot that I wasn't aware of was, I was carrying someone else's opinion and belief on anger for so long ...it was an important point or moment in my life. .....So then I was able to figure out that it actually is okay to express your anger and it's not all negative (Roisin)

This finding confirmed a personal assumption I held in relation to blind spots. Fear was an unconscious motive for many of the choices I made in my early life. I was unaware of how implicit fear shaped my decisions in relation to career and romantic choices. I acknowledged how my personal experience may have influenced the interpretation process.

4.11 Theme 2: Automaticity

The second theme to emerge from the category of 'Blind-self' was 'Automaticity'. Two metathemes emerged from this theme; 'Auto pilot mode-Automaticity' and 'Ancestral Blind Spots'.

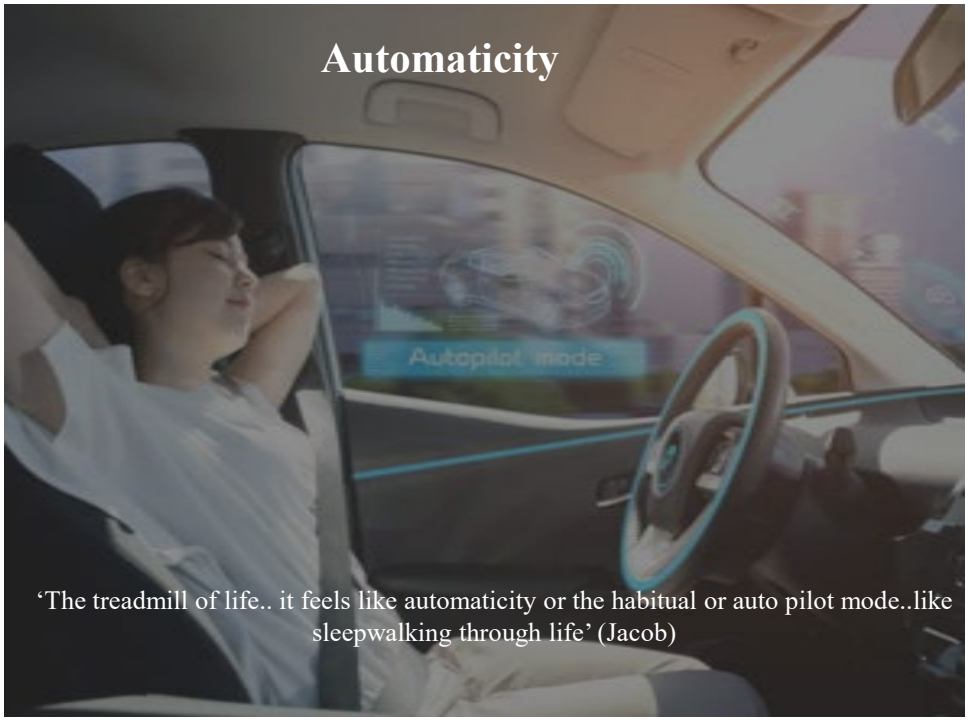


Fig.19 Metaphorical image of 'Auto-Pilot' living

4.11.1 Metatheme 1: Auto Pilot Mode-Automaticity

Various participants understood psychological blind spots as a form of automaticity. A number of therapists used the terms 'recurring blind spots' or 'repetitive behaviour' to describe their sense of routine reactions. Many participants likened their blind spot to the notion of being 'on a treadmill'; 'sleepwalking through life' and in 'auto-pilot mode' (see Fig.19 for metaphorical image). Jacob disclosed his understanding of psychological blind spots as a form of 'auto pilot living'. This suggests repetitive behaviour in unawareness. This lived experience description (LED) engenders an image of constant movement in one direction where life continues to be predictable and routine. The repetitive practice manifested as a blind spot. Consequently Jacob created awareness about his client when he came 'off the treadmill'. This finding adds to the clinical implications which are further discussed in chapter six.

> The treadmill, I like that metaphor or that image because it feels like the automaticity or the habitual or the auto pilot of life that when we have a break or we stop, we can be a little bit more mindful... and step off the treadmill and have this fresher sense of understanding of the client. (Jacob)

Annabelle describes her clinical experience of PBS as stuckness in one's behaviour. She uses the words 'ruts', going 'round and round' and 'stuck' to describe her client's blind spots. There is a sense that this act is performed without volition or conscious control:

> I see people in ruts. They have so many blind spots that they cannot see a way to get out of the rut that they find themselves in... I think that people get themselves into financial ruts and then have to really figure a way out. Or into a relationship ruts as well where they're exercising the same dynamic around and around and around, without the awareness. (Annabelle)

Joe expressed his idea of a blind spot as a form of automaticity. He felt most people just go through life not in awareness and this manifests as a form of 'sleepwalking'. This metaphorical use of language aptly describes the notion of unconscious automatic living:

> The biggest blind spot I think is ignorance and lack of awareness....a lot of people just go through life,they're sleepwalking. I was sleepwalking. I had no idea what I was (Joe)

Similarly, Roisin felt a blind spot was a recurring habitual unconscious behaviour:

> It could be, a blind spot if it keeps recurring and they possibly don't see that there's a link (Roisin)

4.11.2 Metatheme 2: Ancestral Blind Spots

Within the theme of 'Automaticity' the second metatheme was 'Ancestral blind spots'. Four of the participants interpreted psychological blind spots as being inherited from previous generations unconsciously. The idea that blind spots can be handed down from ones ancestors was understood as a blind spot. Samantha felt sure a PBS had the potential to be passed down 'through generations':

> And I think these blind spots carry through generations. It's very important to break that. I became aware that intergenerational blind spots played a huge part in my life. (Samantha)

Joe understood the phenomenon as handing down learnt behaviours through generations. He felt emotions and ideologies could be passed on from his forefathers unbeknownst to him:

> I had a moment of realisation it was her parents that thought her that. They had instilled catholic fear and guilt and she was afraid and was passing that fear onto me. Programmed by family, from previous generations, I feel I took on a program from perhaps my forefathers (Joe)

Similarly, Annabelle experienced a PBS as a learnt way of being modelled from previous generations. Annabelle felt this can influence behaviours including career choices unwittingly:

> It's nearly as if these blind spots are carried down through generations, this is the way you'll do this, this job or this role or way of being, or, what's modelled generational behaviour of working a certain way and a child swallows it down. (Annabelle)

This was an unexpected finding that I had not previously considered. It ignited ruminations on such an idea.

4.12 Theme 3: Safeguard Self

The final theme that was established under the category of 'Blind-self' was 'Safeguard self'. The three metathemes that emerged under this theme were 'Safeguard Self', 'Evasion of truth', 'Positive illusion- Counterfactual thinking'. All participants observed psychological blind spots as a coping mechanism or a survival skill that ameliorated challenges in one's life. This helped to protect the participant at various times in their lives. Several participants equated the term blind spot with the Freudian concept of defence mechanisms.

Fig.20 Illustration of 'Safeguarding Self'

4.12.1Metatheme 1: Safeguard Self

Four of the participants understood a PBS as a form of coping or self-protection from emotionally challenging environments. This was described as a protective instinct to negate what otherwise would be a painful experience. For Samantha this act felt necessary and a means of coping. Upon reflection she witnessed herself in a challenging role at home that she was unconscious to but that protected her:

> I had a role in my home.... my family of origin if you like... And (clears throat) it wasn't a good role, it wasn't a healthy role, but it was necessary, it was coping with a certain situation. I feel it was necessary...It felt like survival or this was the only way to live as such.... those blind spots were my way of coping and were necessary. Blind spots have protected me but have also stilted my growth. (Samantha)

Annabelle shared her clinical experience of a blind spot. She experienced it as a client's ability to cope. She stated that it can be 'valid and vital'.

> Sometimes clients need blind spots to survive or to live or to cope. It can be as a coping mechanism that people choose to avoid or suppress or whatever that might be, that is valid and vital too. Opening blind spots is not necessarily a good thing for everybody (Annabelle).

Both Jacob and Samantha understood their PBS in relation to the Freudian concept of ego defences, as a means of coping or protection:

> When I think blind spots, I still think of defence mechanisms. (Jacob)

> Now I'm in a place of awareness of it, whereas previously it was a blind spot, or some sort of a defence mechanism. (Samantha)

Susanne felt the simple need to keep things out of awareness that she couldn't handle. This acted as a form of safeguarding:

> And I feel that people need to have blind spots, particularly growing up, I needed blind spots to keep stuff out of awareness that I would not be able to handle. (Susanne)

4.12.2 Metatheme 2: Evasion of Truth

The metatheme of 'Evasion of truth' was noted under the main theme of 'Safeguard self'. Occasionally participants' felt sense of psychological blind spots included avoidant behaviour. Avoidance of truth or evading awareness was evidenced in the narratives in five of the participants. Roisin's understanding of a PBS was experienced in relation to a client who displayed avoidant behaviour in many aspects of his life. This blind spot presented within a clinical context and formed her belief of the phenomenon:

> I feel upon reflection that his blind spot was that he didn't realize that lack of trust was affecting other areas in his life...especially the avoidance around relationships...he had a lot of avoidance dealing with issues related to his mother especially when he was younger. He since grew aware that he was very avoidant, and did not want to open up

about becoming vulnerable. .....his anxiety was stemming from a trust issue which was creating avoidant behaviour. (Roisin)

Lucy reflected on her blind spot as presenting as a form of avoiding silences. It was a 'defence', or a 'barrier' to prevent deeper awareness. This affected her clinical work with clients.

> That moment of self awareness presented as avoiding silence. By being an interrupter I was blocking other self awareness because I was jumping in and filling the silence all the time I was blocking deeper self awareness that was a defence, or a barrier. ....On a professional level too, I was just filling the space, and I was not able to sit with the silence or whatever the person might want to deepen into, blocking, potentially, now that I'm aware of it, the therapeutic work of deeper awareness for the client too. (Lucy)

4.12.3 Metatheme 3: Counterfactual thinking-Positive illusion

'Counterfactual thinking- positive illusion' was the third metatheme that emerged from the theme 'Safeguard self'. Three of the participants experienced a PBS as a rejection of truth or a denial of information from awareness. Some participants used the language 'yes, but' to describe their way of creating a positive illusion and rejection of the real situation. Susanne experienced a blind spot in relation to people's illnesses where it was safer to keep the truth out of awareness. This form of counterfactual thinking acted as a coping mechanism which gave her friend optimism and hope:

> I have a friend; he has cancer for the last number of years. He's really not going to recover. He has a complete blind spot about this. He does not want to know, he doesn't want to know whether he's going to die or not. He just keeps that out of awareness. And he's really getting weak now, in the last number of months, and he told his wife the other day, he said, well, there's this other new treatment now that they're going to try and maybe in another 10 years, there'll be something for me...Its denial. It's a coping/ defence mechanism. He just doesn't want to know. And the research is now showing the people who don't want to know the prognosis are better

> off not knowing...In that situation it's helpful because it keeps you having hope. (Susanne)

For Susanne the counterfactual thinking supported her when she wasn't ready or able to walk away from her marriage. This blind spot supported her at the time by keeping the truth out of awareness

> I had a lot to lose when you walk away from something. When you walk away from a house, a garden, friends, in laws, all that, you have an awful lot to lose. So you don't want to lose it so you keep it out of awareness. (Susanne)

4.13 Category 2: Blind Self –Other

The category of 'Blind self-other' emerged as therapists understanding of lack of awareness in relation to others. This presented in several ways; through a brief encounter with others or within a dynamic relationship. A psychological blind spot manifested in the context of the family or through the mere presence of another. From this category two main themes were established; 'Polarised perspective'; and 'Familial opacities'.

4.14 Theme 5: Polarised Perspectives

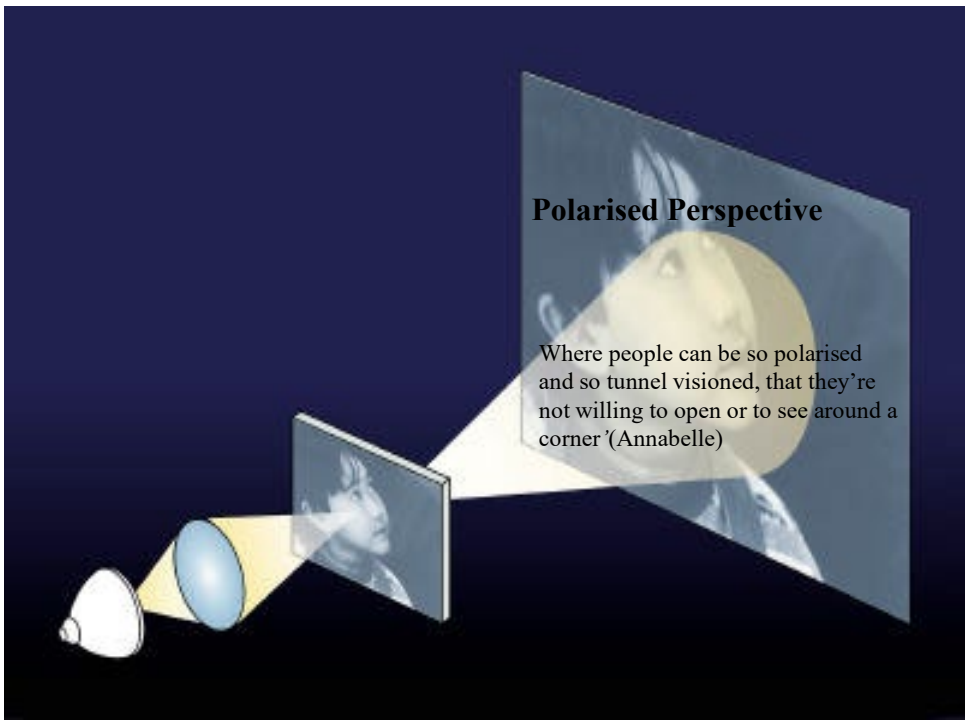


Fig. 21 Image of 'Polarised Vision'

From the theme of polarised perspective emerged three metathemes; 'Seeing subjectively-Blind to bigger picture'; 'Concealed Judgement' and 'The enemy is within not without-Everyone is my mirror.' The findings disclosed participant's experience of psychological blind spots as a 'particular perspective' or 'polarised vision' (see Fig.21). The theme of 'Polarised perspectives' represents therapists understanding of a PBS as having certain opinions without considering alternative points of view.

4.14.1 Metatheme 1: Seeing Subjectively-Blind to Bigger Picture

Participants described the blind spot as 'seeing in one direction' which gave a slanted, subjective view. Four of the participants understood a psychological blind spot as one's biased or skewed version of reality. Annabelle experienced a blind spot as a form of tunnel vision. This manifested as a narrow sense of reality that was closed to challenging another way of seeing:

> It's like I'm coming from a particular perspective that I believe to be a fact or truth or obviously the only way to think or see a thing.. Cause there's ego, I think as well that we believe in what we believe and we're right,...if we can all endeavour to be open to challenging what we think is one way that perhaps there is another way. ... people can be so polarised and so tunnel visioned, that they're not willing to open or to see around a corner (Annabelle).

Lucy understood a blind spot in relation to the way institutions and culture can be blind sighted or have tunnel vision. This may block one's awareness leading to a narrower sense of truth. The use of evocative language and metaphors, such as 'tunnel vision' and 'blind to the bigger picture.' help bring the phenomenon to life:

> A lot of people have blind spots, but also those institutions have blind spots themselves..They encourage that culture in a way....Which is, kind of closed or tunnel vision....Blind to the bigger picture...(Lucy)

Samantha experienced her PBS as a form of 'black and white' thinking that was closed or 'rigid' to seeing another way. Supervision and personal therapy challenged her perspective and way of seeing things. This was an important finding that had clinical implication (See chapter six).

> My supervisor was the instigator to help open my blind spots. She gave me the space to question and create awareness or challenge thought patterns...I had a lot of black and white thinking. I was quite rigid in what I would think. Both supervision and personal therapy helped challenge that. (Samantha)

4.14.2 Metatheme 2: Concealed Judgement

The second metatheme to emerge under the theme of 'Polarised Perspective' was 'Concealed judgement'. Various participants noted how 'preconceptions', 'ignorance' and 'subjective opinions' presented as blind spots that people were not aware of. 'Social prejudice' and 'narrow mindedness' were noted as participants' understanding of obvious blind spots. Three therapists experienced psychological blind spots as implicit attitudes and a non-conscious

resistance to a different perspective. The narrative below illustrates Samantha's experience of a blind spot that presented within a clinical context. She made an assumption or latent judgement on a client. In this case her supervisor was fundamental to bringing awareness to the blind spot she was acting out of unwittingly. Her lived experience descriptor of concealed judgement was a real experiential example of what a blind spot was for her at that time and how it influenced her work and relationship with her client:

> It has come up in my work with a client where there was parental abuse. And I could not understand how the other parent was blind to that, and my supervisor said, you can't judge, and I suppose this is where the judgement piece came up for me. My supervisor said, you know there's a judgement there, you're judging. ...I was caught by what my supervisor said she was shedding a light on something I was blind to, And she said, you have to let go of the judgement because you don't ever really know the full circumstances. And sure enough, as weeks unfolded, the other parent was as much a victim of that abuse as the child. And it took a long time because the client didn't open up to me initially..It helps because my supervisor is directive so I'm told straight up you're making a judgement there, she'll question my black and white thinking. (Samantha)

Susanne experienced a prejudice against her from a client. This was her experience of her client's blind spot:

> She had a prejudice against me because of my age. I felt that. She didn't say it now, but I just picked up that she thought I didn't know what Instagram is! (Susanne)

Comparable to Susanne, Samantha felt prejudices and discrimination in relation to others was a blind spot in our society:

> I think we need to hear the other person... that's definitely a blind spot for people. As a society we all need to take responsible to open our blind spots and prejudices and learn to listen to others opinion. (Samantha)

4.14.3 Metatheme 3: The Enemy is Within not Without- Everyone is My Mirror

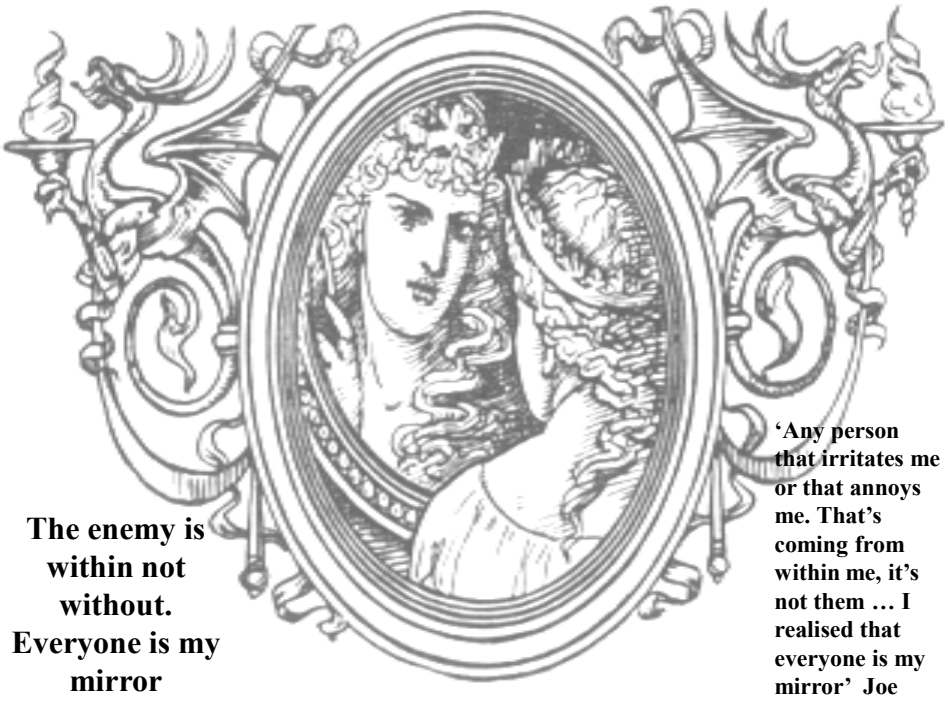


Fig.22 Metaphorical image of seeing one's reflection in other people

The final metatheme to emerge under the theme of 'Polarised Perspective' was 'The enemy is within not without- Everyone is my mirror'. The findings evidenced participant's awareness of blind spots as a form of 'projection' or attributing one's own traits onto another unconsciously. 'Implicit world projections' and the idea that 'everybody is my mirror' was portrayed by the participants. Five of the seven participants felt that projections were a very 'obvious and prevalent' blind spot. Numerous participants experienced this blind spot as 'attacking another as opposed to dealing with self 'or' ascribing something of self onto another inadvertently'. Joe aptly elucidates his lived experience of a blind spot. He uses imaginative, metaphorical and poetic language to describe the phenomenon of projection. This nuanced language is symbolic and creative that gives the reader a new depth of insight into a PBS:

> The enemy is within not without…. I had deeper awareness and realisation that any person who irritates me or annoys me. That's coming from within me, it's not them … I realised that everyone is my mirror, this was a major blind spot (Joe) (see Fig.22)

Roisin experienced a blind spot as a form of projected jealousy that had stemmed from another time in her life. She realised that her work colleagues were jealous of her and that they were ascribing jealousy on her unwittingly. They were attacking her instead of dealing with the issue themselves:

> Work colleagues were projecting what felt like jealousy when I was promoted at work. It felt like they were using a defense mechanism like projection as they felt a bit threatened... I had a moment of awareness that I recognized jealousy projected from people in the past. ... girls who bullied me previously. From self-reflection, I came to the realization or awareness that it was them that had issues. So it was like a blind spot to attack the other and not deal with what was going on with themselves possibly (Roisin)

Jacob experienced this blind spot within a clinical setting. His client's fear and criticism were projected onto another unwittingly. This was a very obvious blind spot for Jacob to witness. He also feels projections are very prevalent in our society:

> I'm thinking of a client who would have no real, capacity to reflect. And it's as bright as, it's as obvious as daylight, that she projects onto, the world at large...she projects her own stuff.. it is fear that she projects and caution certainly, criticism. Show criticism onto others... I think projection is very prevalent in our society I think it's part of the course among others. (Jacob)

I found the metaphorical use of the words 'everybody is my mirror', to describe the way one may project onto another most potent. I have reflected on this concept several times since and used its powerful language within my clinical practice.

4.15 Theme 5: Familial Opacities

The second theme under the category of 'Blind self-other' was 'Familial opacities'. Three metathemes emerged from this theme; 'Childhood conditioning-implicit imprinting', 'Repeating roles-Family function' and 'Interpersonal templates'. The majority of participants experienced psychological blind spots as a type of familial opacity. This lack of awareness within the family unit engendered many blind spots. All the participants exampled lived experience descriptors (LED) of the blind spots connected to their family of origin. However, not all blind spots were negative. On the contrary some were very positive. The metathemes describe values, ideologies and behaviours within a family unit influenced the therapists unconsciously.The participants' understanding of blind spots presented as a familial impersonation which was often an imitation of a family members' traits or disposition.

4.15.1 Metatheme 1: Childhood Conditioning-Implicit Imprinting

All participants experienced implicit imprinting, within a family context, as a form of psychological blind spots. All participants gave several examples of such experiences. This manifested as learnt behaviours, traits, dispositions and mannerisms one took on unwittingly. The therapists felt they absorbed or 'introjected'certain learnings within the family unit unbeknownst to them. Sometimes these were positive traits and other times not so much.

> A very brief example was in a session, I directed my gaze towards an empty seat, ...And I heard myself say may I, rather than looking at the therapist....And later on that evening I had a moment of awareness about my language. And I was reminded of my dad, my father..., he would have risen and said to my mother in that old fashioned, polite way, may I go out? And I was reminded of that, because I would have seen that, I would have witnessed that and heard that every day of my childhood almost. He had this, may I? ...And, here was me, as a 59 year old man, and I'm using the language of my father. ...it's old fashioned and there's an introjection so deep of a learned behaviour. So, not all learned behaviour is wonderful, but some learned behaviour there is just great (Jacob)

The above example elucidates accurately how Jacob as a child took on his Father's trait or behavioural penchant unconsciously. This learnt behaviour happened gradually and subtly over time. Jacob understood a psychological blind spot as a mirroring of his father's mannerism that was outside of his awareness. Now in his adult life he could reflect back and see the situation with a deeper understanding. He can see his mannerism as mimicry of his father. As an adult he not only repeats the same use of language as his father but also the tone and manner of his disposition. This psychological blind spot presented as a form of childhood conditioning. Jacob being of a psychoanalytical modality uses the term introjection to explain his meaning. However, from a hermeneutic phenomenological stance I was interested in his actual lived experience as opposed to using old familiar terminology.

In the narrative below Annabelle explains her experience of a blind spot as taking on a learnt behaviour of caregiving with the family unit. This learnt behaviour then informed her career choice unwittingly. That modelled behaviour became a childhood conditioning:

> I'm from a long line of reliable caregivers. And all of my siblings are in care giving profession (laughs). Well I know how to do it really well 'cause I've seen it. ...I'm the youngest of seven so they all had me doing their bits and bobs and...I had learnt it blindly what I see happening with other people that I know now, and to be honest with you, I've landed in a job that I really enjoy, and I really get great satisfaction out of it probably 'cause that was what was modelled for me too.(Annabelle)

Similarly, Joe learnt to empathise from within his family milieu. This implicit imprinting had energy of sacrifice which in the end did not help them to support themselves. Joe grew aware of his blind spot:

> My mother would be an empathiser. It was a blind spot. I grew into awareness of how my family took that on, were all empathisers. All my sisters, including me It's like an energy of sacrifice. They would keenly get up in the middle of the night for you, they'd do anything for you. (Joe)

Lucy utilised creative language to describe her understanding of a blind spot as 'swallowing' down somebody's else point of view or belief. This innocent, ingenuous and trusting disposition didn't encourage questionings or wondering. Now through awareness she sees the

truth. Lucy is aware some of her clients also take on what they see or hear without questioning:

> Swallowing it down.... If you had opened that up for me, I would have swallowed it down. Because, go back to childhood, everything that was in the paper, or in the book I believed , but, I remember my husband at one stage, there was an article written about him, and it was not all true...since then I question how the media operate. .....the clients come in who have been affected by social media or something they have read, I was the same where I believed or took on everything I heard. (Lucy)

Similarily, Samantha's lack of autonomy as a child had implications on her as an adult. This learnt behaviour also influced her clinical work:

> Because I would say my conditioning growing up, and I don't want to make things sound all bad,.. but there was a lot of times I would have been conditioned to behave in a certain way. I wasn't autonomous... and so that was affecting my work as well. ...This rigidness. (Samantha)

4.15.2 Metatheme 2: Interpersonal Templates

Within the theme of 'Familial opacities' the metatheme of 'Interpersonal templates' emerged. Participants disclosed that 'relationship patterns were a big blind spot' and how many 'parallels between past and present relationships' existed without their awareness. Five of the participants experienced this learnt relational style unconsciously.

Lucy created a moment of awareness around her interpersonal style of communicating. This influenced her unwittingly and affected the way she then related to people of a similar disposition. This lived experience of a PBS, lucidly describes Lucy's experience of coming into awareness of how a relational style with her mother, informed other relationships. She allowed for others mistreatment of her simply because this was normal in her primary relationship with her mother. Lucy became aware of how she behaved in a similar manner withher work colleague as she did with her mother. She was very grateful to open this blind spot and create awareness:

> I had a moment of awareness that my reactivity, to people who were controlling, unempathetic, harsh or hostile was related back to my mother.... She was unempathetic...She was harsh and hostile with no softness at all. ...And I would have reacted to people with that personality type in both my personal and professional life. ... Years ago, I would have worked with a person of that controlling, harsh nature. She presented with similar traits to my mother.... And I went along with it, said nothing, put up with it and made excuses for that person ... I had a complete blind spot around their behaviour.. this person would have been an authority, just like my mother, who would have used an authoritarian parenting kind of style, and I'd swallow everything she'd say..... I went along with her scenario's,...the woman at work was like a mother figure in the sense, I'd go off then and reinvent whatever it was, or mould myself to fit...thankfully I caught that blind spot, a moment of awareness of the similarities between my mother's controlling behaviour and this woman's at work (Lucy)

Similarly, Samantha experienced this blind spot in relation to clients. She came into awareness how she let clients off the hook when it came to alcoholic behaviours simply because that was the learnt way of relating to her Dad at home. Samantha made the connection that the way one relates with their family of origin will translate to other groups. This finding has implications for clinical work:

> I gained a moment of awareness through further education how I judged clients..says they were dishonest with alcohol or they did something through alcohol....Then I reflected and came into awareness that it was old... I was letting someone off the hook and making acceptance for bad behaviour... I might not challenge the person who had drink taken ...as a child I never challenged my alcoholic father and that's where my blind spots were around letting clients off the hook when they misbehaved with drink taken... I am now more aware that there are huge parallels in how I am with family and with other groups. Well as they say your family are your first group. (Samantha)

Roisin, also experienced a psychological blind spot as a type of learnt relational style. Her client presented with many trust issues. After many sessions he had a moment of awareness and made the connection that the lack of trust stemmed from his primary relationship with his mother:

> A client was coming for a good few sessions with anxiety,..... slowly, he became aware that he had a lot of trust issues with everyone that was currently in his life... but the biggest person he had the trust issue was with himself. ....he eventually, after many sessions, made a connection that his trust issue formed from his bond and relationship with his mom. He didn't have any trust with his mum at all.. (Roisin)

Joe's experience of a blind spot was in relation to every romantic relationship he had he was drawn towards people similar to his mother. This was done unconsciously:

> I had no awareness that every relationship I ever had, I'd picked my mother. (Joe)

Annabelle succinctly put it in lucid language:

> People live their interpersonal patterns out of that modelled behaviour and that becomes a blind spot. (Annabelle)

4.15.3 Metatheme 3: Repeating Roles-Familial Function

'Repeating Roles-familial function' was the third and final metatheme under 'Familial opacities'. Four of the participants described blind spots as repeating roles within the family unit unbeknownst to them. Participants shared how unwittingly they had taken on a function at home and continued to repeat it throughout their lives. Samantha's understanding of a blind spot manifested in relation to client work where she found herself preferring to work with younger people. She believed this developed unconsciously from her sibling position:

> Since I have started working, I've created awareness in supervision of a blind spot of how I prefer to work with younger, or more my own age. Not older people. That's from my sibling role... I took a lot on unwittingly to be responsible for the younger, and to please the older siblings or to fit in. ..it was a learnt behavioural style, or was conditioned, and when I went out into the workforce or engaged with the people, that same taking responsibility, being a pleaser or those learnt traits from home were acted out on unconsciously (Samantha)

Similarly Susanne experienced her blind spot as a sibling role she took on unconsciously. She was the eldest in her family and this influenced her behaviour within her family domain and in other areas of her life. Being the eldest she took on a responsible role even when it came to her adult son:

> Being the eldest I became a mother figure to the younger ones and that really has influenced me a lot in other areas of my life of trying to look after people and be generous to people... This was absolutely a blind spot ….And it's only even in, the last few weeks that I have really realised, pull back from that. … there was a part of me being the eldest who had taken that responsible role. …And was almost a mothering figure. ..And I was doing it for my adult son too. (Susanne)

Annabelle's experience of being the youngest in her family of origin informed her sibling role of not being reliable and this subsequently influenced her role or function in other areas of her life:

> In my family of origin... I'm the youngest of eight siblings so I would say when it comes to reliability I'm not reliable.....I think that would have been in relation to a lot of my psychotherapeutic work too. (Annabelle)

This was the most prevalent finding and one that resonated with me the most in relation to PBS. Within the context of my family unit several blind spots developed. Unbeknowst to me I took on my family's values and mores and equally played out my sibling position of the youngest within different social contexts. Through awareness these PBS were challenged.

4.16 Reflexivity Data Analysis and Interpretations

> By engaging in reflexivity, that is, proactively exploring our self at the start of our research inquiry, we can enter into a dialogue with participants and use each participant's presentation of self to help revise our fore-understanding and come to make sense of the phenomenon anew (Shaw, 2010, p. 235)

My own experience of the phenomena arising from both my personal and professional experience informed my research enquiry. It was important for me to acknowledge how these experiences may have informed my assumptions, beliefs and attitude towards the interpretive process and research at large. Levitt, et al., (2017) warns that researchers should not engage in data collection seeking only to confirm their own perspective but instead strive to be open to all responses. However, I rejected the possibility of being a "neutral investigator" (Du Plock, 2016, p.86). I was acutely aware that I was limited by my fore-understanding and previous learning. Although it was good practice to think critically on how my personal biases and agendas were likely to influence the findings, identifying these processes, especially those that were not obvious to me or conscious, presented an obvious challenge. Firstly, it was important for me to be open to what these biases or blind spots might be and to engage in proactive reflexivity both alone and with my academic advisors. However, the notion of exposing my personal perspective instilled much fear in me. To ameliorate this, I initially kept an active reflective journal to create a dialogue between my personal lived experiences of the phenomena. Later, I found the courage to explicitly layout my pre-understandings of the phenomena so as to identify my assumptions on the phenomena and further how this may have influenced the data.

When I considered psychological blind spots, although I am of an integrative perspective, I initially thought of the Freudian or psychoanalytical concepts of the unconscious. I felt certain that ego defenses were the archetypal psychological blind spot. Because I had witnessed and experienced clients' blind spots in therapy, such as projections, introjections and avoidance this grounded my belief in the make-up of their nature. This attitude influenced my research and manifested as an obvious bias, that became evident in year one of the doctorate. This was critically reflected back to me by academic colleagues, which I graciously accepted. As a practicing phenomenologist I did not attempt to bracket such a large bias or belief, however I was acutely aware of how this may have influenced many

aspects of my research, most importantly the interview process and analysis. An important teaching from hermeneutic phenomenology was that I could not detach my personal worldviews from my research. Therefore, I identified my own bias through a functional reflexive stance to allow for the analysis and successive interpretation at diverse levels. This included relative, figurative, metaphorical, past/present tense and theoretical interpretation of the data (Smith, 2004). However, although I owned my assumptions, I remained conscious not to allow them guide the interview or data analysis process. This was an obvious challenge for me throughout the interview and data analysis. It demanded a great depth of insight, honesty and vigilance on my part. Nevertheless, it was important for me to acknowledge how these implicit assumptions including latent attitudes might creatively feed into the research.

However, although I had an understanding of how a psychological blind spot may present I remained, open, patient, and present throughout the interviews (see Appendix III) and stages of analysis. It was important from a hermeneutic perspective, that I did not hold a dogmatic belief or dogmatic disbelief about blind spots or moments of awareness but remained open. I neither accepted nor rejected meaning based on my prior knowledge but remained attuned to the therapist's lived experience. I switched off my internal dialogue of superimpositions and simply encouraged the lived experience of the phenomena to emanate. Thankfully, through great awareness and rigorous honesty I was able to remain open and unfasten any attachment I had to the results. This demanded surrendering to the material and valuing my participant's experience.

> One of [meditation's] richest fruits can be a deepening of the quality which is essential for the good-enough practice of psychoanalysis; I refer to something ofwhich there is no one exact word, but it has to do with patience, with waiting, with 'negative capability'…(Coltart, 1993(b): 173)

I did not attempt to create certainty concerning the interpretations of the data. At the core of this research project was the idea of dwelling in uncertainty, engagement with texts and interpretation of meaning. Such texts cannot be understood easily. I struggled with uncertainty but avoided premature labelling of the experience. It was only through the process of hermeneutics - the cycle of interpretation and re-interpretation, and deep reflection that insights were achieved. This was a laborious and drawn-out process of several months that took up to, at times, twelve iterative cycles until a phenomenological term of truth that resonated with the experience emerged. A high level of discipline, patience and perseverance

was demanded on my part. A sense of saturation and a sense of reduction delivered the true phenomenological essence. It is worth noting that different interpreters may have found different meaning in the questions and replies.

The need for transparency was important throughout the study. To secure high quality in my research, I demonstrated rigor by following the code of ethics applicable, I used an established methodology, I presented a transparent analysis for future scrutiny and I made use of my research network and academics to review my work. I now realise that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). By making my process transparent, the reader is able to observe my biases and to assess how I arrived at my interpretations.

4.17Chapter Conclusion

The lived experience of both moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots is complex, multifaceted and at best arduous to describe or categorise. Through constant fidelity to my methodological choice of hermeneutic phenomenology I continuously attempted to evoke the fundamental essence of each participant's unique experiences. As is lucidly visible from the data set, the finding cannot be merely condensed into a few themes. This is a reflection on the depth and breadth of the data rich narratives. The therapist's reflections offers nuanced and thought provoking insight into the phenomena which has aided the methodological integrity of this study and further shed new light on my topic of interest. Commitment to the inclusion of phenomenological expression such as poetic, metaphorical, rhetorical and hybrid language was obvious in the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

The aim of this discussion chapter is to interpret the qualitative primary research findings from the seven interviews conducted as part of this study, with the intention of engaging in an analysis of the findings and setting these against the established research literature. This study confirmed the findings of the literature, but also, importantly, it yielded new information. The narratives encapsulated the participants' unfolding and unique understanding of the phenomena. The phenomenological nature of the research was interpretive, and therefore, the goal was to reveal the inherent, transcendental nature through the methods of phenomenological reduction (Sanders, 1982; Cohen et al., 2000). From a phenomenologist's perspective, I was not solely interested in the individual's subjective account of the phenomena. The goal was to discover the universals underlying the inter-subjectively experienced phenomena (Creswell, 2009). The findings produced a prolific data set which, through arduous reduction, yielded a wonderfully rich perspective of the phenomena. The aim of this research was addressed by qualitatively exploring experienced psychotherapists' lived experience and understanding of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots. Through the use of qualitative narratives, several categories were highlighted. Many themes were immediately apparent across the data set, and each of these carried a number of metathemes. The research findings align with the research efforts aimed at understanding the essence of the phenomena.

This study is the result of over five years intensive study of psychotherapists' understanding of psychological blind spots including moments of awareness. Considering the theme of my research topic I have obviously tried to challenge my own professional and academic blind spots in relation to every aspect of this research. I honestly enquired about my lack of awareness related to the choices I made and the interpretations that were formulated. This is evident in the write up. However, the reader may perceive that this study, is still in a state of growth. New understandings of such phenomena are ever evolving and will inevitably give rise to further interpretations. I have done my upmost throughout this study to avoid the reader any confusion by the mass of facts and opinions. Due to the fact this research has aroused such universal interest, and is further closely connected with many contemporary

problems, the participants felt this research topic has significant clinical implications. In today's world we are faced with many intricate problems, whose solution requires a depth of understanding of the human mind. In our lives many uncertainties and personal challenges should make us eagerly welcome more insight which may throw light on the hidden depths of our mind. I hope this research will add new knowledge to our growing interest in the working of the mind and further lead to increased practical results.

Clinical implications

This study has evidenced the synthesis of a vast array of material and that specialist therapeutic knowledge has been acquired. This study offers new perspectives on moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots as experienced by psychotherapists, which thus far has limited exploration. These phenomena were explored by psychotherapists from various clinical modalities, including existential, humanistic, integrative and depth psychology. This has developed a more integrated framework for both understanding psychological blind spots and moments of awareness and tackling them. Furthermore, the integrative nature of the literature review and the findings chapter means this is a project that can be potentially utilised by therapists from different theoretical backgrounds. Therefore, this study differs from previous research in placing emphasis on the phenomena from various clinical perspectives, reaching an original and appreciative line of thought with a distinguished interdisciplinary outlook. This promotes an integrative pluralistic approach to exploring these phenomena in therapeutic practice. Therefore, the findings are significant to the field of psychotherapy (see Chapter Six).

New language-Original meaning

The greatest contribution this study offers the current literature is the immense depth and breadth of varied findings evidenced in chapter four. The findings encapsulate the psychotherapists' understandings of the phenomena with fresh insight that is expressed in a contemporary language. The language is unique, evocative and iconic in its entirety. This deepens our fore understanding of such phenomena, which to date has primarily being explored through a psychoanalytical lens or with religious connotations. The therapists have used novel language to express their personal and professional experiences of the phenomena and this has added to the literature fresh and original meaning. Furthermore, the use of hermeneutic phenomenology revealed a nuanced understanding of the phenomena eliciting its essence in true phenomenological style.

The reflective analyses of this demographics' lived experiences were arduous and demanding. In designing the research question, consideration was given to the subjectivism and the epistemology embedded in the overarching study's theoretical perspective, embracing interpretivism, which has an established history in the caring professions (Cohen et al., 2000; Garfat, 1998; Yalom, 1989; Austin & Halpin, 1987; Schon, 1983). Phenomenological assumptions hold that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences directed toward certain objects or things. This study sought to shed light on psychotherapists' lived experience of the phenomenon and to further highlight the implications for psychotherapy research, training and practice. The findings both confirmed and supplemented the current literature in a varied and complex manner.

Participants' communication about their understanding of moments of awareness and psychological blind spots was of note. Certain categories emerged from the data, and the following chapter will outline a critical discussion with the findings which are synthesised in accordance with the current research from the literature review. The discussion will be centred on the four existential categories of "Spatiality", "Corporeality", "Temporality" and "Relationality" within self-awareness manifestations. These lifeworld themes are universal to all human beings irrespective of their history, cultural background or social situation (Heinonen, 2015). They are universal themes that are constantly present but which one governs in different situations; they include lived space, lived body, lived time and lived relations (van Manen, 2006a; Adams & van Manen, 2008; van Manen & Adams, 2010, as cited in Heinonen, 2015). The findings revealed that, for therapists, moments of self-awareness encompassed five major themes: "Spontaneous clarity –a new reality dawns"; "Cross the conscious threshold –makes the truth much bigger"; "Inner knowingness manifests"; "Tipping point"; and "Vacillation". The types of moments of awareness that manifested for the therapists presented as a deeper understanding, cultivation and a heightening of consciousness, including a connection with and opening into innate bodily wisdom (McGovern, 2021). This moment of clarity invited an alternative lens through which to view life. Furthermore, it occurred for the therapists in an unexpected or an oscillatory manner and culminated at a certain point in time. It offered new knowledge and increased awareness. A further discussion, including the categories of "Blind self" and "Blind self-other", viewed through a theoretical lens, will be formulated under self-awareness avoidance. From psychological blind spots, five main themes emerged: "Eclipse of awareness", "Automaticity", "Safeguard self", "Polarised perspective", and "Familial opacities".

Participants understood their experience of a psychological blind spot as an obstruction of self-knowledge that encumbered awareness. It presented as a polarised perspective or omitted emotions that manifested automatically, and often within the context of family or another. It was further understood as a form of safeguarding.

Van Manen's existential themes and lifeworld concepts will precede a discussion on the dominant themes found within psychological blind spots. I will explore how the key findings from therapists' lived experience compare with findings from other empirical studies, psychotherapeutic literature and relevant writings in phenomenological philosophy (see Appendix XXV & XXVI for comparative findings) including my own personal and professional experience. I will conclude this chapter with a critical discussion on the strengths and limitations of this study. I will commence with a discussion on the findings in relation to the philosophy of existential duplicity.

Moments of Awareness

The findings established that a moment of awareness may manifest in one's sense of space, body, time or in a relational way. Therapists understood this moment as a dawning of "a new reality". In an instant the therapist's experience of reality was altered. This had positive consequences and challenged their previously formulated beliefs. The term "new reality" adds to the literature a novel understanding of the elusive moment of awareness. Furthermore, the findings add to the literature through the use of metaphorical and imaginative language, such as "cross the conscious threshold-makes the truth much bigger". This finding highlights the therapists understanding of a moment of awareness as a cultivation of consciousness by entering a new spatial dimension which consequently amplifies one's perception of the truth. This heightens our understanding of the phenomenon with original insight. The workshop confirmed my research findings which established that moments of awareness often presented for the therapists from bodily awareness. This augments the literature's knowledge of the phenomenon. Therapists understood this moment as an "inner knowingness" that is pre-verbal and almost intuitive. The participants stated the importance for clinicians to remain "open", "listen" and "connect" with bodily wisdom to incite moments of awareness.

The findings revealed the importance of timing in relation to a moment of awareness. Subjective time as opposed to clock time was crucial for several therapists when uncovering moments of awareness. This was described under the term "timing is everything". The

therapists further understood it as a "tipping point of awareness" that may "kick start" further awareness. This sense of time is a novel interpretation of a moment of awareness and has clinical implications when working with clients (see Chapter Six). The findings established that there was a sense of movement within a moment of awareness. The participants understood this moment as being fluid or changeable in nature. The idea of wavering or vacillating awareness which fluctuates between self-awareness and lack of awareness is new to the empirical literature. Furthermore, the findings add to the literature therapist's experience of a moment of awareness occurring in "stages" and "levels" that was gradual in nature.

Psychological Blind Spots

The use of metaphorical language akin to "eclipse of awareness" and "turning a blind eye from the truth" was the therapists understanding of a psychological blind spot. This supplements the literature knowledge through the use of hermeneutic expression which reveals this phenomenon with fresh meaning. .The findings further add to the literature's specific understanding of a psychological blind spot. The research indicates how "omitted emotions" such as "implicit fear" and "latent anger" may present as a blind spot. This may affect many aspects of the therapeutic work. This finding confirmed my personal experience of a psychological blind spot. Much of the decisions I made in my early years where motivated by fear unbeknownst to me. Through awareness I have grown more cognizant of how these fearful motivations did not support my growth. I owned this bias in the research.

This study has added to the existing empirical literature by indicating how the concept of "automaticity" presented as a psychological blind spot. Several therapists understood their professional experience of a blind spot as a client's habitual behaviour which was causing them to "sleepwalk through life" as if on a "treadmill" of "repetitive behaviour". Furthermore, the notion of an ancestral blind spot adds new qualitative understanding to the empirical literature on blind spots and has clinical implications. The findings disclosed participants' experiences of psychological blind spots as a "polarised perspective", or "seeing in one direction" which gave "a slanted, subjective view". This is accurately expressed through the metathemes that emanated from this theme, including the following; "seeing subjectively– blind to the bigger picture", "concealed judgement" and "the enemy is within not without– everyone is my mirror". This metaphorical language adds to the existing empirical research by demonstrating how various participants noted that "preconceptions",

“ignorance” and “subjective opinions” presented as blind spots of which people were not aware (McGovern, 2020).

The findings further add deeper understanding of a blind spot to the empirical literature by emphasising the formation of blind spots within one’s family milieu. The therapists experienced a blind spot as a development of character and how certain traits and deficiencies are connected to earlier influences and historical learning. ”Familial opacities” such as “childhood conditioning”, “implicit imprinting”, “repeating roles” and “interpersonal templates” highlight our understanding of the nature of a psychological blind spot. Although this is not new to the literature, the findings heighten the understanding of how learnt behaviours in childhood can influence many areas of our adult life including the therapeutic relationship unwittingly.

5.1 Existential Duplicity

> Psychological language is a way of speaking in the gap between meaning and the absence of meaning, a way of speaking of meaning as a presence that is haunted by absence [...] It is a language that bridges that gap between the meaning that is present and whose fate is to be undone, and the one that is absent, whose task is to undo the meaning that has been made. (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 29)

Numerous participants reported that the experience of a moment of awareness unveiled a blind spot and, equally, revealed how blind spots had the power to eclipse awareness. The therapists revealed interconnectivity between moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots where they experienced the phenomena as existing on the "opposite sides of the same coin". The relationality between moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots appeared to be of a symbiotic nature, where a duality of latencies and manifestations were interconnected and co-existed. The findings established how the symbiotic relationship appeared to be mutually benefitting and dependent. Therefore, when a moment of awareness was created, a blind spot was opened, and a blind spot was experienced as a closure of awareness. Similarly, the literature states that the ontological constitution of being is a fundamental characteristic of the existential duplicity of both showing and hiding oneself (Craig, 2008). An unconscious belief has a psychological reality that could, in principle, be brought to consciousness in any moment (Searle, 2013). The current research evidenced that blind spots preceded a moment of awareness and that blind spots could only be understood belatedly upon awareness and reflection. This dialogue between what is revealed and concealed is known as *alethiea* (Heidegger, 1993).[48]

> The phenomenon of darkness conditions the possibility of light, which reflect what light and darkness are (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 168).

[48]For Jung, areas of unawareness is that absence which nevertheless calls for appropriation and self-reflection in the light of a personal consciousness and it continually attempts to correct the one-sidedness of the personal accepted and known (Jung 1938/54) so that the limitations of consciousness may be compensated (Jung 1921). As cognitive and linguistic symbolization gradually replaces dissociation, increased self-reflection fosters the illusion of something emerging that, though always known, has been previously warded off (Bohleber, et al., 2017).

The findings yielded details of participants' understanding of a psychological blind spot through the use of metaphorical language such as an "eclipse of awareness", with the potential for a moment of awareness to reveal a "new reality". The former manifested as a blockage of awareness, in contrast to a moment of awareness, which presented for the therapists as a new perspective. In the philosophical literature, Heidegger used "the metaphor of light for consciousness" (Heidegger, 1927, pp. 62-51). However, other aspects of our worldview become hidden (Heidegger, 1927/1962 as cited in King, 2021). Romanyshyn (2013) states that the language of psychology is a metaphor that reveals and conceals the soul. [49]

The findings elucidated therapists 'experiences of moments of awareness as involving "Spontaneous clarity", which stood in contrast to participants' understanding of a blind spot in the form of "opacity". The former emphasises the notion of instantaneous knowingness, which differs from the lack of clarity that an "opacity" may offer. This finding resonates with Brooke (2015), who states that self-understanding is never absolutely transparent to oneself, as the impersonal opacity of the lived continues to be the existential ground of reflective consciousness. Similarly, Sokolowski (2000) affirms that evidence brings things to light, but every piece of evidence emerges out of absence and vagueness, and the focus on one aspect of an object usually means that other aspects lapse into obscurity. The following quote from the current findings explicate the clinical implications of this research and the ideology of existential duplicity. Lucy understood the phenomena in a therapeutic context as being interrelated and unified: "And it's certainly something that I might bring more into my work […] how blind spots block the moment of self-awareness, and how one has to precede the other [...] it's certainly something that I'll bring in a lot more now in my work as a therapist[...] And, myself, I'll be more aware. Previously, I wasn't aware how big it is".

The findings revealed how truth and falsehood were understood by the participants as expressions of the phenomena. Therapists understood a psychological blind spot as "turning a

[49]Broad, (1968) states that there is something which is called unconscious awareness, and that an animate being can be unconsciously aware of certain things and in any given moment can gain clarity. The unconscious conceals, whereas awareness reveals. Evidence brings things to light, but every evidence emerges out of absence and vagueness, and the focus on one aspect of an object usually means that other aspects lapse into obscurity (Sokolowski, 2000).

blind eye to the truth", whereas a moment of awareness manifested as "makes the truth much bigger". Furthermore, "evasion of truth" was one participant's understanding of a psychological blind spot. This contrasted with a moment of awareness as "devotion to truth, introspective honesty". The line between truth and falsehood seems delicate, and it represents different sides of the phenomena for therapists. This finding added to the literature, which found that the unconscious has been articulated as a multitude of latent incarnate intentionalities (Brooke, 2015), a fundamental hiddenness out of which everything comes into being or awareness (Boss, 1975). Sokolowski (2000) stated a moment of awareness is truth actualised.

The research findings established that therapists understood a psychological blind spot as a form of "safeguarding self"; this opposed their understanding of a moment of awareness as "An opening within". Jacob articulated his understanding of the co-existence of a moment of awareness and a blind spot: "What I'm talking about is the body being in some ways both a blind spot and revelatory space [...] and the potential for both". This finding confirmed the current literature, which states that in our physical or bodily presence, we reveal and conceal things about ourselves simultaneously (van Manen, 2006a; Adams & van Manen, 2008; van Manen & Adams, 2010). Many appropriate examples emerged from the research findings. A lived experience of a moment of awareness was experienced as a cultivation of consciousness. This manifested as "cross the conscious threshold". The opposite of this moment of awareness could be viewed as the therapist's understandings of a blind spot that presented as a form of "Automaticity" or "Auto-pilot living"[50]

My own experience of a blind spot co-existing with a moment of awareness has manifested several times within a clinical and personal context. A moment of insight cameduring therapy, regarding how I relate to others. This interpersonal blind spot had impeded my personal development but, ironically, through relating honestly with a therapist, was brought to light in an instant. It felt as if the line between awareness and short-sightedness was slight.

[50]Further to this, blind spots manifestedas "seeing subjectively", whereas a moment of awareness was described as: "listen the body speaks, drop in and reconnect". Ontological characteristics of the concealment of beingness are both visible and invisible (Craig, 2008).

5.2 Spatiality

The findings indicated that a moment of self-awareness manifested for the therapists within a spatial domain. This was imaginatively expressed as “a new reality”, “a drop of awareness in an ocean of blind spots” and “a releasing revelation”. Participants felt that a sense of space created a gap that had the potential to foster awareness. The literature suggests that lived space is “felt” space, the feeling provoked by the space in which one finds oneself (Heinonen, 2015, p. 37).Therefore, spatiality is more than “mathematical dimensions of length, height and depth” (Heinonen, 2015, p. 37).

5.2.1 Spontaneous Clarity

> Clarity and consciousness are one. (Commins, 1999, p. 70)

The findings revealed a moment of awareness as a sudden emergence of comprehension comingled with a sense of the dawning of a new reality or outlook. Participants understood this moment as “a spontaneous clarity”, “an uncovering” of awareness and “a sense of understanding something more”. The literature points to the concept of suddenness or an unplanned awakening in relation to a moment of awareness. This finding confirmed that of Schwartz’s (2011) study whereby epiphanic experiences were described as “seeing for the first time”. Schwartz (2011) further explained that epiphanies offer intense moments of insight that make possible the juxtaposition of facts, factors or theories in arrangements previously thought impossible. The research findings demonstrated participants’ understanding of a moment of awareness as “a dawning of a new reality”. In the current research findings, the moment presented for one therapist as a dawning of awareness: “That moment of awareness, the clouds parted [...] it dawned on me” (Joe). The use of Joe’s metaphorical and poetic language heightens the understanding of the lived experience. This is a novel interpretation of a moment of awareness which increases the knowledge base of the current literature. Furthermore, this finding has clinical implications for within that moment of awareness a client may spontaneously gain new clarity on their situation and further view their understanding of reality in a fresh light. The therapists felt this may offer a client an alternative perspective on their situation and further engender optimism. This finding resonated with my personal experience of a moment of awareness that presented

spontaneously and further challenged my habitual way of thinking. For the first time in my life I could see another way to interpret my situation in relation to my chosen career. This offered me hope, freedom and positivity.

The literature established that a moment of awareness engendered clarity and was described as an awakening; it was characterised as an experience that triggered personal exploration of one's self. They concluded that personal experience/observation-type epiphanies increase clarity and awareness (Neville & Cross, 2016). Neville and Cross (2016) described an epiphany as a sudden insight spurred by an event or experience that leads to personal and enduring transformation with respect to one's core understanding, where many viewed their predicament in a different way. McDonald's (2008) findings identified six main characteristics of an epiphany experience. These included transformation of one's identity; increased clarity and awareness; increased insight and meaning making. One participant in McDonald's (2008) study described it as though a veil was lifted. Participants in his study experienced a significant insight, which had the effect of illuminating elements of self-identity that had once remained in darkness (McDonald, 2008). Further to this, one participant in Murray's (2006, pp. 259-261) study described an instant in which it became "absolutely, totally powerful, totally clear".

The findings indicated this phenomenon to be of a surprising nature. One participant described it as a surprise, and referred to understanding something more about himself: "I suppose for me it was like coming to a sense of understanding something more about myself. Something that is new, something that surprises me. Something that can delight me as well as awaken curiosity" (Jacob). Similarly, McDonald (2008) established that epiphanies were an acute awareness of something new and to which the individual had been previously blind to. The findings confirmed those in the literature, where 58% of participants claimed that their experience took them by surprise (Miller & C'de Baca, 1994).

The majority of participants tended to understand their moment of awareness as being similar to a "light bulb moment of clarity" that "pops up" or "bubbles up" and "out of the blue, a drop of awareness in an ocean of blind spots", akin to "finding the missing piece of the puzzle"."A moment of clarity", "bingo", or "aha!" moments were described by the participants through the use of symbolic language which hermeneutic phenomenology prizes. This nuanced figure of speech increases our understanding of the phenomenon. Similarly the literature offers other metaphors to describe moments of intense awareness, such as "things

just clicked", "it was a spark of inspiration", "a bolt of lightning", "a slash of insight", "an epiphany" and "suddenly, I saw things in a new light", to describe the experience (Kounios & Beeman, 2015). All these expressions refer to what is commonly called a "eureka" moment (Kounios & Beeman, 2015, p. 5). Kounios and Beeman, (2015)continue to state that it is a sudden experience of comprehending something that was not previously understood or of thinking about the familiar in a novel way. The current study added to the literature through imaginative expressive language, such as Jacob's description: "that moment of clarity, like drawing back the curtain, giving a reflective space, objectively looking at self and catching self, and that aha!". In a similar way, in Miller and C'de Baca's (2001, pp. 18-19) study, a participant stated, "It was really this bubbling up – like a bubbling and the words just sort of popped".

In addition, the data set indicated that the participants' understanding of moments of self-awareness was similar to a "release" of information or new knowledge, which engendered a "realisation" or "revelation". Annabelle described this moment and its clinical implications: "That moment of awareness was just, like, a revelation, revolutionary, and has actually impacted the way that I work since". The current research findings concurred with the empirical research in Chapter Two which stated that a form of realisation was expressed as if it represented "coming out of darkness" (Wellington Kunaka, 2016, p. 200). Wellington Kunaka's (2016) findings evidenced how a moment of awareness emerged for the trainee therapists when a blind spot was revealed. This realisation manifested itself upon the discovery of the cause of the issue that had been evoked (i.e. the blind spot). My own experience of a moment of awareness corresponded with this finding, which was one of revelation that proved revolutionary in my life's trajectory. Similarly, one participant in McDonald's (2008, p. 99) study compared this moment to a "realization". Another participant in Ilivitsky's (2011) research used the terms "a new realisation" and "a new way of thinking or understanding". This is "distinctly different from ordinary reasoning processes" (Miller & C'de Baca, 2001, pp.18-19). Loder (1981) describes it as a sense of relief and release.

5.2.2 Cultivating Consciousness

> As soon as a psychic content crosses the threshold of consciousness, the synchronistic marginal phenomena disappear, time and space resume their accustomed sway, and consciousness is once more isolated in its subjectivity the bridge between matter and mind. (Jung as cited in Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 32)

The current research established that a moment of self-awareness was similar to crossing a conscious threshold and entering into a new and different spatial realm. This presented in the findings under the theme of "Cross the conscious threshold-makes the truth much bigger". The cultivation of consciousness was encouraged by stepping back, paying attention, looking objectively and seeing another perspective. The therapists understood this moment as crossing a threshold and entering into a new spatial dimension of consciousness, which consequently illuminated the truth. This finding is an original understanding of a moment of awareness. It adds to the empirical literature with imaginative terms to measure the findings of a hermeneutic phenomenological study. The merit of this hermeneutic phenomenological approach lies in its close attention to language, notably to patterns of metaphor and imagination which exemplify textual opaqueness. The findings in the current study described the creation of consciousness as an expansion of truth. Annabelle understood the moment as "it made the truth bigger". Further interpretations included the following descriptions: "wider field of vision", "see around the corner" and "detour of understanding". The philosophical literature states due to conscious ability within any immediate moment, one has the potential of awareness of the environment around him/her (Searle, 2013). Sokolowski (2000) spoke about the moment when something enters the sphere of reason and truth discloses itself. The truth is actualised. It is evidenced. This finding echoes Miller and C'de Baca's (2001) study, where 87% of participants reported that during the experience, an important truth was revealed.

The research findings suggest that consciousness is achieved through increased mindful living. Jacob likened this moment to "coming off a treadmill of life", which was interpreted as transforming a state of non-conscious existence to conscious living. He experienced this within a clinical context as "a fresher sense of understanding the client". The literature states, that a moment of self-awareness occurs when "something unknown over-whelms us from

within and pushes its way into consciousness" (Von Franz, 1975, p. 7). This brings a blind spot into conscious awareness (MacIntyre, 2004).

The research yielded a moment of awareness as a felt sense of deepening below a superficial or external layer of consciousness. This finding described understanding the shadow or unconscious side of oneself to foster a moment of awareness. Metaphorical phases such as "deeper than the surface", "more than meets the eye" and "invites us into our shadow" were interpretations by the participants which presented as the metatheme "Deepen beneath the surface, dip into the shadow". This emphasises the literature in a nuanced manner. Samantha experienced it as a deepening: "I think it's the deepening of everything". This finding was new to the empirical literature, and it added to the philosophical literature where Merton described this moment as a piercing through the surface that went beyond the shadow (Commins, 1999). Similarly, Easthope(1999) states that the unconscious is submerged like a submarine and can be brought to the surface, readily creating immediate awareness.

Numerous participants experienced moments of awareness within the spatial context of "A mindful moment" in nature. The potency of nature invited and encouraged a mindful moment of awareness. It fostered a space for the therapists to slow down, notice more and pay attention. The research yielded by engaging in simple mindful activities that a space was fashioned for the mind to be silent, allowing the potential for new awareness. Joe experienced this moment when: "Having a shower, going into the sea. They're leaving this space for the mind to be silent [...] that's where a moment of awareness can bubble up". Similarly, Lucy disclosed,"I suppose it's through my own mindful living [...] through gardening baking, swimming, practising mindfulness [...] that brings me to those moments that I become self-aware, personally". These findings concurred with the literature, which found that a mindful moment engendered eureka insights for Sir Isaac Newton in the theory of gravity and the melody of ballads written by Sir Paul McCartney (Kounios & Beeman, 2015). The findings further added to the literature, stating that this moment presented as "a heightened self-awareness", "an opening of blind spots" and a "gift to pause". Similarly, May (1980) affirmed that it is in the pause that people learn to listen to silence and create a moment of awareness.

Many participants struggled to describe their lived experience of a moment of awareness. This was interpreted under the metatheme of "Ineffable". Joe stated, "It's difficult to explain it in that it can only be experienced as an experiential reality". This finding developed the

literature which evidenced what happens within oneself when one integrates previously unconscious contents with the consciousness is indescribable in words (Jung, 1961/, 1995). Miller and C'de Baca (2001) found that 58% of participants had experiences that were very difficult to explain in words. One participant in Murray's (2006) study expressed the epiphany as indescribable. Furthermore, participants in Amos's study seemed to experience difficulty articulating their felt sense, consistently referring to the existence of an inexpressible quality, which they strived to capture (Amos, 2019). This resonated with my own experience of such a moment, which hasbeen most challenging to articulate accurately.

5.3 Corporeality

The findings yielded therapist's understandings of moments of self-awareness relating to the body. This evidenced a sense of tangibility that included intuitive moments of a visceral nature. The literature states, where the lived body refers to the phenomenological fact that we are always bodily in the world (Heinonen, 2015). Heinonen (2015, p. 37) states that in "our physical or bodily presence, we reveal and conceal things about ourselves simultaneously".

Several participants experienced some physical or emotional bodily sensations attached to their original moment of awareness. This presented under the theme "Inner knowingness manifests". These moments were experienced as an "internal shift" of awareness which engendered a "pre-verbal knowingness within". The findings supplement prior research outlined in Chapter Two. Similarly, Fletcher's (2008) study disclosed physical body sensations and emotions surrounding the original epiphany experience. In the current findings, one therapist described his experience thusly: "It's beyond doubt. It's just an inner knowingness. The mind will only take you so far,so […] out of the silence arises an inner knowingness that's non-verbal [...]As one evolves spiritually, the understanding and moments of awareness arise as an inner knowingness" (Joe). This finding adds a depth of knowledge, including a nuanced understanding to the phenomenon in the current literature, which 6% of participants experienced a moment of awareness as an inner wisdom that was "rarely remembered as volitional" (Miller & C'de Baca, 2001, p. 14). Similarly, Ilivitsky's (2011) study revealed that this moment transpired from a deep inner wisdom. One participant in Miller and C'de Baca's (2001, p. 18) study avowed the following: "I knew – I mean I knew,

not believed, not thought". Furthermore, in the current study, Samantha confirmed her moment of awareness that emanated from within: "The moment of awareness came from within". The literature states that if something emerges from the unconscious, it emerges as a newly revealed world as much as an embodied felt sense (Brooke, 2015).

As stated in the previous chapter, my workshop findings indicated that moments of awareness were harvested in and through bodily awareness. This research adds to the literature, emphasising the clinical importance of creating more bodily awareness to gain insight. The findings revealed that through openness, a space was created within the body that fostered moments of clarity. Narratives included "opening of awareness", "openness to challenge one's perspective", "to be open to view another possibility" and the sense that there is always "a choice to be open". This manifested itself under the metatheme of "Be open to an opening within". This finding adds to the literature by exposing the phenomenon with greater hermeneutical insight. It has important clinical implication when working with clients not only to practice being open as therapists but further to encourage a sense of openness within the sessions. The sense of openness creates the image of unlocking a felt space within the body. According to the literature, the best way to create awareness in practice is to try to "attain an open conscious attitude which allows the unconscious to co-operate instead of being driven into opposition" (Jung, 1954, p. 178). An attitude of openness was one of the key traits necessary to this hermeneutic phenomenological study (King, 2021), which enabled the findings to unfold naturally. Jacob described his moment of awareness as: "openness, that opening within [...] Mind, body, heart and soul type of a break, so that's clarity". Similarly, Neville and Cross (2016) found that the majority of their participants described moments of awareness as epiphanies or awakenings, characterised as experiences that triggered personal exploration and the opening of one's self.

The current research findings further evidenced how body psychotherapy and general connection with the physical and emotional body encourage moments of awareness. One participant felt that connection with the body enables one to disconnect and alter one's state of awareness. The narratives included the idea of "listening", "connecting" and "dropping into the body". This was interpreted under the metatheme of "Listen, the body speaks, drop in

and reconnect". The findings supplement the literature, highlighting the clinical importance of body attunment to encourage new depths of awareness.[51]Similarly to Wellington Kunaka's (2016) findings, one participant in MacMahon's (2020) study created awareness by listening closely, tracking the patient's responses and relating in a non-defensive, open way while having a clear sense of what was appropriate. Samantha realised the importance of connecting with her body, which had clinical consequences: "Getting to know your body is big as well, with clients [...] the more I do body psychotherapy, I realise my body's telling me everything [...]I need to protect myself, depending on the situation. Even how I hold my hands, I wouldn't have that awareness, maybe a year or two ago, but now, I realise, if I listen to my body, I know what's going on, and that's really connecting with the blind spots, and opening a moment of awareness".

> For deep insight only the therapist who has himself undergone a thorough analysis, or can bring such passion for truth to the work that he can analyse himself through his client. (Jung, 1954, p. 137)

All of the participants in this study alluded to the notion that where there is reflective honesty and truth, there is potential for moments of awareness. The idea of looking within and demanding rigorous honesty of self was a prevailing metatheme amongst the therapists, which presented as the metatheme "Devotion to truth– introspective honesty". This finding resonated with my own personal experience and evidenced how numerous participants found that moments of awareness appeared to bring clarity of truth, and this was encouraged through rigorous honesty with oneself. Asking truthful questions of oneself appeared to be a worthy exercise in terms of initiating moments of awareness. This has important clinical implications for both therapist and client. The finding confirms the literature which state that individuals differ in their ability to create self-awareness, depending on their tendency to engage in self-reflection (Lu &Wan, 2017). It is important for consciousness to reflect, from which all higher consciousness emerge (Von Franz, 1975). Careful self-criticism and detailed comparison are needed if we are to frame our judgments on a more universal basis (Jung, 1954). As an evolving congruent therapist, I aspire to maintain high ethical and moral

[51]"Access to the client's unconscious is found as often as not, while reflecting on one's own bodily presence and responsiveness" (Jung 1929d, p.71).

standards thorough introspective honesty in all aspects of my life. This has most certainly created heightened moments of self-awareness.

Samantha honestly avowed the importance of a "willingness to look at self"to potentially foster awareness: "Well, I think I took the same family role in other groups that I did at home. However, I did gain a drop of awareness in an ocean of blind spots along my studies […] I was also contributing to that as well. I had to be very honest and introspective to create that awareness. I had to very much look at how I contributed to situations [...] willingness to look at self. That was a moment of awareness within itself". Similarly, participants in MacMahon's (2020) study were not fully aware of these processes until they were confronted with what was the "other" in themselves through their surprising or frustrating behaviours. Objective self-awareness (OSA) theory assumes that the orientation of conscious attention is the essence of self-evaluation (Silvia & Duval, 2001). Focusing attention on the self brings about objective self-awareness, which can initiate an automatic comparison of the self against standards (representations of correct behaviour, attitudes and traits) (Silvia & Duval, 2001).

5.4 Temporality

> Awareness has its own ways of revealing what is designed in a human life just at that moment when it is ready to be integrated. (Von Franz, 1975, p. 120)

The concept of creating a moment of self-awareness at a particular point in time was established in the findings. Lived time is our temporal way of being in the world. It is our subjective time, rather than clock time. "The dimensions of past, present and future constitute the horizons of a person's temporal view" (Heinonen, 2015, p. 37). Timing was everything for several therapists when uncovering moments of awareness. Moments of awareness appeared to have an idiosyncratic time and manner in which they disclosed themselves into consciousness. Various participants felt there were choices to allow awareness to arise at a safe time when they were resourced to manage it. Other therapists experienced this moment as a more gradual process or accumulation of smaller revelations that created a "tipping point of awareness". This finding adds to the empirical literature and has clinical implications when working with clients. It reminds me as a therapist to encourage awareness however small and remain hopeful that a client may create an insightful moment of awareness at a tipping point.

The literature stated that “change may occur continuously, but at some point this change is manifested in an apparently dramatic manner” (Bien, 2004, p. 494). For Jung (1961/1995, p. 339), the process is like what happens in the “individual psyche: a man may go about for many years with an inkling of something, but grasps it clearly only at a particular moment”. Similarly, McDonald (2005, p. 17) found that “it is the result of an accumulation of personal processes that take place outside of conscious knowing, that suddenly and abruptly burst into awareness as a meaningful and life changing event”. Hawkins (2019) stated that as the years goes by, one accumulates energy of a certain emotion. The energy behind this emotion increases the pressure, and when it reaches a certain point, it is as though a needle has reached a red line on the dial, and the pressure of this emotion now begins to express itself into awareness (Hawkins, 2019).

The current research discovered this moment to be akin to a turning point or breaking point in one’s life. It was the precise time of change from an unconscious state to a moment of awareness. This finding is mirrored in the literature. Fletcher’s (2008) co-researchers outlined the way in which the epiphany experience consisted of a turning point where change was not confined to the session but had a quality of durability about it and went on to shape their life and identity more generally. Furthermore, Ilivitsky (2011) states that the adjective “sudden” does not imply that change occur all at once, with no previous circumstances. Various participants outlined the way in which their personal experience consisted of a tipping point where the moment of awareness went on to shape their life and identity more generally. For Susanne, it felt similar to a “breaking point into awareness”: “I turned a blind eye to the truth and to the behaviours, until it became so bad I couldn't do it anymore. That was a breaking point, or my tipping point into awareness. But it feels like that moment was a tipping point, and that was the moment of awareness, which was, I have a choice!”.The literature further emphasises how little measures of awareness can create a cumulative or snowball effect whereby larger moments of awareness are disclosed. This finding is echoed in Neville and Cross’s (2016) study. It is among the few empirical studies to provide a discussion of triggers of self-awareness. For many, these changes were spurred by either an “aha!” moment (epiphany) or a series of events (encounters) that led to increased insight and reinterpretations of meaning. They found that each participant described this awakening as a process (Neville & Cross, 2016).

The narratives demonstrated the concept of moments of self-awareness as having a gradual spreading effect or influence. This dissemination of awareness can be caused by a single moment of awareness that then begets further awareness. Therapists understood this moment as an unravelling of further awareness as a consequence of a profound moment. Imaginative language to meet this research's methodological integrity was expressed through metaphorical terms such as, "kick- start awareness", "ripple effect" and "domino effect". This finding confirmed my own personal experience of how one moment of truth unravelled layers of awareness and triggered further personal development. Similarly, Roisin lucidly elaborated on her experience: "by opening a smaller blind spot, or by creating a smaller moment of awareness, it has a kind of a ripple effect on other parts. I suppose you could say that awareness creates more awareness". This finding is an original insight into a moment of awareness. This imaginative language enables us to understand the phenomenon with greater depth and further encourages us as therapists to "kick-start" the awareness process. The literature revealed that the threshold for the unencumbered moment is still a mystery that requires further investigation (Murray, 2006, p. 296).

The findings indicate that a moment of awareness appears to be dependent on how well one is resourced and able, at a certain time in one's life to open blind spots. "Timing is everything" and "appropriate timing" were two of the therapists' interpretations. According to the literature, awareness can only be manifested at the right time (Sokolowski, 2000). Jung accurately observes that there seems to be unlimited knowledge available, but it can be comprehended by consciousness only when the time is ripe for it (Jung, 1961/ 1995). My clinical experience was confirmed in the research findings which illustrated that a moment of awareness was connected with timing. Annabelle disclosed the following: "It's a timing thing, and it's an inner resource thing [...] and this idea of you can't handle the truth, you have to be in a position to be able to manage what you're going to find out for yourself, because those blind spots are not always beautiful; like, finding out the person you're in love with is in the throes of an addiction is not a wonderful truth to become aware of". This finding added to the empirical literature and confirmed the philosophical literature which stated that people are incapable of being introspectively discriminative at certain times in their lives (Broad, 1968).

5.5 Relationality

The therapist's experience of a moment of awareness is connected with the existential theme of relationality. A central theme in all therapists' accounts was the recognition that moments of self-awareness often occurred within an intrapersonal or interpersonal exchange. This was noted under the metatheme of "Self-other". The relationship between manifestation and avoidance of awareness for each participant was further evidenced through expressive metathemes such as "Vacillating, oscillating awareness" and "Levels and layers of blind spots". To explore the relational aspects of the phenomenon is to ask how things or people are connected (Van Manen, 2014).

> The life of reason is not a matter of one simple evidence, one illumination. Rather, the life of reason is a push and pull between presence and absence, and between clarity and obscurity. (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 165)

The idea of wavering or vacillating awareness which fluctuates between self-awareness and lack of self-awareness emerged from the data. The participants had an understanding of moments of awareness as being fluid or changeable in nature. King, (2021, p.38) perceived the process of "experiencing the world as being much like looking through a fog; those elements in the foreground of awareness take on striking prominence, while background elements remain unknown". The concept of a semi-awareness where one is divided between awareness and blindness was evident in the findings. In addition, some of the participants were of the opinion that they could chose to come into consciousness that it was a choice and a selective process. The therapists experienced this moment as an "ebb and flow of awareness", "semi-awareness" or "selective-awareness". This use of language describes the phenomenon with hermeneutic phenomenological sensibility, which supplements the current literature. Jung (1961/1995) has described it as the pendulum of the mind, which oscillates between clarity and obscurity, between truth and falsehood. Samantha's experience involved the movement of awareness in a"back and forth" manner: "I'm ready and able, doesn't mean I always act on the awareness. Yes and no, I slip back. And, here and there, I'm kind of back and forth a bit with awareness [...] my client said something I had semi-awareness around already. She actually brought my attention to something I half knew. It was a truth, and it highlighted for me". This finding adds to the literature a deeper sense of understanding the phenomenon. Sokolowski (2000) states that concealment can occur in two forms, either as

absence or as vagueness. Out of vagueness, the object can distinctly come to light. Once an object has been evidenced, it is possible, and even inevitable, for it to move back again into vagueness, which allows for something other to come to light (Sokolowski, 2000). When we focus on the newer evidence, the original evidence recedes into darkness (Sokolowski, 2000).

Numerous participants believed that creating moments of awareness was not an "all or nothing" phenomenon, but rather was made up of "levels of awareness and layers of blind spots". This was experienced in "stages and steps", and it was gradual in nature. This finding adds to the above literature on existential duplicity, which states that it was worth speaking of a moment of self-awareness along specific dimensions rather than a comprehensive self-awareness (Duval & Wicklund, 1971). Furthermore, Rochat (2003) claims that an instant of self-awareness is not singular, but multiple. Its development is a continuous and dynamic process that can be divided into gradual levels (Rochat, 2003). Often, the participants were triggered by something in the moment that, upon reflection, stemmed from something in the past. Joe experienced a moment of awareness in "stages and steps": "I wouldn't say it was deep awareness; it was more being the witness observer. That was the first step, and for months, I was the witness observer. The next step is deepening awareness. It was gradual, step by step [...] it's like putting your attention on the field of awareness all the time [...] consciousness beyond awareness is consciousness, which is another level of awareness, so awareness progresses in stages and steps [...] and there's layers there". Legrain et al.'s (2010) research concluded that the notion of self-awareness consists of a complex ability that involves several levels of awareness.

The research findings established that moments of awareness were brought to fruition for several of the therapists through reflection or discussion with others, such as a personal therapist or a supervisor. The findings evidenced that interpersonal communication which gently questioned one's lack of awareness fostered the potential for moments of truth. According to the literature, it is the immediate social environment that causes a person to assume an objective view of her/himself, and without social contact and the opportunity to examine one's self from another's point of view, the self remains the subject, rather than the object, of consciousness (Duval& Wicklund, 1971). Lucy and Annabelle both described how interpersonal communication with their therapist and supervisor opened a blind spot which consequently created a moment of awareness: "from that moment, I am self-aware to blind spots which have been relayed to me by others or by another voice internally" (Lucy); "My

supervisor and my dad, I suppose they're people that I value and respect, so I will respect what they have to say, and that helps open the blind spots and create moments of awareness"(Annabelle). Similarly, one participant in MacMahon's (2020) study shared how she recognised a personal blind spot and created a moment of awareness through a casual comment offered by her therapist when she was in personal therapy. Therefore, unconscious processes are co-constructed and present themselves when relating with significant others throughout personal development or in therapy, by interpreting enactments (Bohleber et al., 2017). These findings confirm my professional experience of witnessing moments of self-awareness within a clinical capacity. The clinical implications of the findings are further discussed in Chapter Six.

5.6 Blind Self

The findings indicated that the participant's experience of psychological blind spots was complex and layered. Participants understood their blind spots as a form of "Blind self" where, whether through conscious volition or unconscious behaviours, one evaded the truth of what presented at a given time in his/her life. This presented in the form of emotional, cognitive, behavioural and interpersonal evasion. Similar to moments of awareness, therapists gained awareness of their blind spot in a sudden or surprising way, or in a more gradual subtle manner. Themes that emanated from the category of "Blind self" manifested as "Eclipse of awareness", "Safeguard self" and "Automaticity". The literature revealed how all participants' accounts of blind spots in one study disclosed the complexity of the phenomenon (MacMahon, 2020). Relational psychoanalyst James McLaughlin has described therapists lack of awareness thusly: "When at work we bumble, stumble, and get lost, we know we are into mixes of not yet knowing (our dumb spots), not being free to know because of acquired biases and preference for theory and technique (our hard spots), or having lost, for reasons of intra-psychic conflict, our hold on what we know or thought we knew (our blind spots)" (McLaughlin, 2013, p. 188). One participant in MacMahon's (2020) study described it as a myopic spot – an area of vulnerability that needed particular attention.

5.6.1 Eclipse of Awareness

The research findings evidenced that many participants understood psychological blind spots as "obstructed awareness" or an "area of unawareness". The majority of participants felt a sense that psychological blind spots included concealed or hidden awareness. Annabelle shared her clinical experience of an eclipse of awareness: "And sometimes, I can see where somebody is completely unaware that they've absolutely hurt the other party; they can't see it; they do it repeatedly out of awareness, and the other person is really hurting, and the person cannot see how their behaviour or what they've said has affected this person so much". This blockage of awareness impacted Annabelle's client's relationship with his partner. The literature disclosed the concept of mental operations that kept painful emotions beyond awareness, which Freud labelled in his early papers as "defense mechanisms"

(1894/1966). Sokolowski (2000, p. 165) states that it may be necessary and positive that things experience an “eclipse” and obscurity at different stages in one’s life.

The findings revealed that the majority of the participants understood psychological blind spots as keeping the truth out of awareness. Some of the therapists chose not to see or understand the full truth, to “keep the truth out of awareness” and remain “blind sighted”. This was interpreted as the metatheme, “Turning a blind eye to the truth”. The literature revealed that turning away and repressing awareness is the manipulation of the perception of an internal event (Kahn, 2002). Susanne shared her private experience of a psychological blind spot which kept the truth out of awareness: “you have a lot to lose when you walk away from something. When you walk away from a house, a garden, friends, in-laws, all that, you have an awful lot to lose, so you don't want to lose it, so you keep the truth out of awareness”. The literature, as Erdelyi (1985) affirms that techniques are developed for distorting or rejecting from consciousness some features of reality, to eject the unbearable psychological pain (anxiety) from consciousness. The metaphorical language of “turning a blind eye from the truth” supplements the literature knowledge through the use of hermeneutic expression which reveals this phenomenon’s quintessence lucidly. This has therapeutic repercussions. As a therapist my aim is to enable a client unveil his/her truth and therefore an obstruction to truth may hamper their growth.

The findings established that omitted or absent emotions manifested as psychological blind spots. The use of expressive terms such as “pushed down” and “locked down” emotions described the essence of this phenomenon with a keen sense of hermeneutic phenomenology. Susanne described her experience as follows: “when I was growing up, emotions were not approved of I actually didn’t say how I was feeling, so, by degrees, I forgot how I was feeling. I kept it out of awareness and forgot how to feel”. This finding concurs with the philosophical literature, which found that emotions and desires tend to recur and that if one at first deliberately averts his/her attention from them, he/she will very soon come to do so habitually (Broad, 1968). Broad (1968) believes that what are called unconscious emotions are often simply emotions which we habitually ignore, misdescribe or become dislocated. This habit, like any other, may eventually become so strong that it cannot be overcome by deliberate means (Broad, 1968). The phenomenon is described in the literature as a form of suppression. As a blind spot is unobservable, we can only infer that the memory has been suppressed (MacIntyre, 2004).

All of the participants experienced the concept of hidden or "implicit fear" as a felt sense of a psychological blind spot. Interpretations from some of their narratives included "perennial fear", "projected fear" and "unbeknownst fear". Annabelle described her understanding of a blind spot in the context of fear: "there was definitely fear at the time [...] Imposter-fear of being found out-fear of not being good enough-fear of being less than [...] such a big blind spot". This finding adds to the literature with heightened understanding of how a psychological blind spot may present. The findings establish how "implicit fear" may present as a blind spot and affect many aspects of the therapeutic work. The participants stated the importance for a therapist to identify this psychological blind spot and create awareness for the client of how implicit fear may be motivating their decisions and choices unwittingly. Elements regarding fear of failing emerged as a blind spot from Wellington Kunaka's (2016) study. The participants were fearful of the dangers of not seeing or knowing what was in the blind spot (Wellington Kunaka, 2016). Similarly, MacMahon (2020) concluded that all of the blind spot themes could be conceptualised within the context of fear. However, this fear was related more to being vulnerable due to unresolved personal conflicts (MacMahon, 2020). Furthermore, Hawkins (2019) alludes to the fact that we are not even aware of certain fears. The fear is simply pushed out of our awareness and quickly suppressed so that we do not even realise it is there (Hawkins, 2019). If we do not examine it with honesty, we will believe that fear is coming from the world and that we have nothing to do with it (Hawkins, 2019). Kahn (2002) states that the clinical implications of the unconscious are not merely important as a tool in therapy, but also as a way of understanding the self, as unconscious fear and guilt can influence daily motives.

This study has added to existing knowledge by demonstrating similar effects specifically relating to the suppression of anger. Latent anger became apparent in the transcripts as "passive aggressive" and "concealed or invisible anger". Samantha related the following: "I'd be very hurt, but I could be angry without knowing; it was a blind spot that I gradually realised was related to me acting out defensively as passive aggressive". This supplements knowledge in the empirical literature in relation to the manifold forms of how therapists understand their blind spot. One participant in MacMahon's (2020) study reflected on unacknowledged feelings of anger at her therapist alongside her reluctance to address fears of loss and abandonment in her own life which were affecting her therapeutic work. MacIntyre (2004) concludes that a lack of self-knowledge in an angry person could be the result of two

unconscious desires, the aggressive desire that is anger and the desire not to recognise the aggressive behaviour

5.6.2 Safeguard Self

> Unconscious processes are survival skills necessary to deal effectively with the world. (Hawkins, 2011, p. 8)

The findings revealed the participants' experience of blind spots as a coping mechanism or a survival skill that ameliorated stress or challenges at a certain time in their lives. A blind spot acted as a form of protection for many of the participants. Numerous therapists equated the term "blind spot" with the Freudian concept of defence mechanisms. This finding is strongly supported in the literature. According to Wagas et al. (2015), in order to maintain mental homeostasis and protect the conscious mind from the effects of inner conflicts, the ego utilises miscellaneous defence mechanisms. "Developmental, personality, and social psychologists have all found evidence for defense mechanisms that explicate psychological functioning" (Cramer, 2000, p. 637). However, the literature states that coping mechanisms or defences are related more to "adaptation to life than with Freud's psychoanalysis" (Vaillant, 2011, p. 367). The current findings articulate how a blind spot as a form of coping was "vital" to one participant. According to Annabelle, "Sometimes, we need blind spots to survive or to live or to cope. It can be as a coping mechanism that people choose to avoid or suppress, or whatever that might be; that is valid and vital, too, so opening blind spots is not necessarily a good thing for everybody". Samantha concurs with this understanding of a blind spot as something necessary: "It felt like survival, or this was the only way to live, as such [...] those blind spots were my way of coping and were necessary". The current research findings highlight the literature and add nuanced knowledge of the therapist's qualitative experiences. Similarly, Hoyer and Steyaert (2015) state that unconscious ego defences allow people to deal with paradoxical experiences, while still protecting the self. According to Vaillant (2011), defences have many properties; they diminish the distressing effects of both emotion and cognitive discord; they are unconscious; they are distinct from one another; they are dynamic and reversible; they can be adaptive, creative as well as pathological; they can also be invisible to the individual and can appear strange to the observer. MacMahon's (2020) supervisor reminded her of the wider context of blind spots, which may simply arise out of stresses in a therapist's current situation, such as problems in his/her personal life.

> The theory of motivated avoidance of awareness as an exclusive explanation of why things are outside awareness needs to give way to an appreciation of the evolutionary value of being able to think fast enough to cope with and get through life. (Galatzer-Levy, 2017, p. 209)

"Evasion of truth" was evidenced in the findings as therapist's experience of a blind spot. This manifested in the findings as avoidant behaviour and evasion of thoughts or emotions. Roisin's experience of avoidance as a blind spot manifested itself in a clinical context with a client: "l feel, upon reflection, that his blind spot was that he didn't realise that lack of trust was affecting other areas in his life [...] especially the avoidance around relationships [...] he had a lot of avoidance dealing with issues related to his mother, especially when he was younger. He has since grown aware that he was very avoidant [...] anxiety was stemming from a trust issue which was creating avoidant behaviour". This finding evidenced the psychological blind spot as an impediment to the clients' self-awareness. The finding further supports the literature, which states that reducing a discrepancy and avoiding self-focus are equally effective ways of reducing the negative affect resulting from a discrepancy (Duval &Wicklund, 1972; Silvia & Duval, 2001). Avoidance effectively terminates comparisons, and hence all self-evaluation (Silvia & Duval, 2001). In addition, MacMahon's (2020) findings have established that a blind spot for therapists presented as avoidance in the form of implicit shame, which subsequently created awareness of the underlying motivations and feelings that impacted their ability to maintain a therapeutic stance. Their experiences converged in terms of how they shared "avoidance" as a way of coping with feelings of vulnerability (MacMahon, 2020). Most participants' accounts in this study showed how avoidance rather than engagement with their clients' issues manifested itself as a blind spot (MacMahon, 2020).

> Hermeneutics has taught us "concealment is also preservation". (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 166)

A further finding that was evidenced in the data was the notion of a blind spot presenting as a form of "counterfactual thinking". This is where therapists understood their experience as a form of "positive illusion" or "denial". They experienced it as a rejection of the full truth of the situation. The literature in the field of social psychology has continued to rediscover the existence of processes by which humans deceive themselves, enhance self-esteem and foster unrealistic self-illusions (Cramer, 2000). Denial is the failure to see, recognise or understand

the existence or meaning of an internal or external stimulus (Cramer, 2015). It involves protecting oneself from anxiety by failing to perceive or misperceive something in the world outside of one's own thoughts or feelings (Kahn, 2002). Susanne experienced her friend'spositive illusion in relation to his illness: "I have a friend; he has cancer for the last number of years. He's really not going to recover. He has a complete blind spot about this. He does not want to know,whether he's going to die or not. He just keeps that out of awareness". This finding adds to the literature in the use of alternative and imaginative language to describe the notion of denial. The latter is a defence that functions by ignoring or misrepresenting thoughts and experiences that would arouse anxiety if accurately perceived (Cramer, 2012). This distortion of reality may be accomplished through misperception, through language (e.g. "I am not angry") or through assuming a Panglossian "life is for the best" attitude (Voltaire, as cited in Fellows, 1946).

5.6.3 Automaticity

This study has added to the existing literature by indicating how the concept of automaticity presented as a psychological blind spot. Symbolic terms such as "recurring blind spots", "repetitive behaviour", "sleepwalking through life "and "the treadmill of life" were used to elucidate the therapists' sense of automatic responses to everyday life (McGovern, 2020). The findings expressed the therapist's understanding of blind spots as automatic, unconscious and habitual behaviour. This adds nuanced understanding to the empirical literature, which states that attention typically operates automatically; we follow familiar habits (Palmer, 1998). Palmer (1998) states that our placement of attention determines how we perceive the world however, the sobering reality is that the assignment of attention is largely habitual. Furthermore, previous studies have shown that low self-focus was associated with automaticity (Silvia & Duval, 2001).

The current research has established that a client's blind spot is a "recurring" behaviour which exists beyond awareness. A fitting quote shared by a participant disclosed his understanding of psychological blind spots as a form of "auto-pilot living". This image creates the notion of repetitive behaviour in a state of unawareness: "It felt like I stepped off the treadmill [...] it felt like coming off the walker,the treadmill. I like that metaphor or that image, because it feels like the automaticity or the habitual or the auto-pilot of life"(Jacob).

In the broader field of social cognition, research provides evidence that mental processes are relatively automatic and implicit and that meaning is made on the spot as people try to make sense of their current experience (Miranda & Anderson, 2010). Our implicit knowledge of how to do things and our habitual performance of various tasks informs our daily activities (Galatzer-Levy, 2017). [52]

Participants interpreted their understanding of psychological blind spots as being hereditary. Several therapists felt that a blind spot was inherited from previous generations (McGovern, 2020). This finding was interpreted as an ancestral blind spot. This adds new qualitative insight to the empirical literature and confirmed my understanding of a blind spot in my personal and professional life. Therefore, it is important for therapists to remain open as to how this might affect the client and consequently influence their process including, behaviours, thoughts and interpersonal relations. One participant in the current study understood blind spots as a way of dealing with anger passed on from previous generations: "It obviously was a deeper blind spot, coming from generations [...]Since I've grown more aware, I can see in my parents, both of their parents, and how they would deal with anger as well, or with conflict and certain emotions. I do feel it's been generational waves, of dealing with that stuff" (Roisin). Freud believed in genetics and the preserving of memories that were experienced by our ancestors (Easthope, 1999). In addition, Jung affirmed that the mind is an active principle involved in inheritance (Von Franz, 1975). Wellington Kunaka's study, provided evidence that, in certain situations, some of the trainees had an awareness of how some of their "own historical factors predisposed them to certain anxieties or areas of unawareness" (Wellington Kunaka, 2016, p. 66). Similarly, Sokolowski (2000, p. 167) speaks of the genetic constitutions that lie within the "categorical formations we inherit". The above findings supplement the research on blind spots with the addition of in-depth qualitative understanding of a blind spot.

5.7 Blind Self –Other

[52]It is obvious that most of what human beings do occur without conscious attention to the activity and day-to – day living (Galatzer-Levy, 2017).

The findings evidenced therapists' experience of a blind spot in relation to others. This manifested under the category of "Blind Self –Other". This blind spot manifested in several ways, be it through a brief encounter with others or through a dynamic relationship. A psychological blind spot within the context of the family was noted. A "Polarised perspective" was an emergent theme under this category.

5.7.1 Polarised Perspectives

> If the world is always revealed according to the way one stands within it, this self-disclosure as a world is especially apparent when that revealed world is uncluttered with social platitudes and empirical literalism. (Brooke, 2015, p. 136)

The findings disclosed participants' experiences of psychological blind spots as a "particular perspective", "polarised vision" or "seeing in one direction" which gave "a slanted, subjective view". This is accurately expressed through the metathemes that emanated from this theme, including the following: "Seeing subjectively– Blind to the bigger picture", "Concealed Judgement" and "The enemy is within not without– Everyone is my mirror". Annabelle imagined what a blind spot might be, stating: "what I imagine a blind spot to be is, it's like I'm coming from a particular perspective that I believe to be a fact or truth or obviously the only way to think or see a thing". This finding adds to the empirical literature in a hermeneutical manner through the use of metaphorical language that heightens the understanding of this phenomenon. As a clinician this finding will encourage me to question one's perspective and seek the "bigger picture" in a situation. This is recognised in the literature, where Duval and Wicklund (1971) state that in subjective self-awareness, the focus of attention is directed outward. The person will neither be aware of the view-points of others nor even cognisant of him/herself as a distinct entity to be compared against standards (Duval & Wicklund, 1971). This further supports the findings of Pronin's et al., (2002) study, which concluded that one sees events and issues through the distorted prism of his or her worldview, and therefore often sees themselves in a skewed manner.

> Since there can never be absolute freedom from prejudice, even the most objective and impartial investigator is liable to become the victim of some unconscious

> assumption upon entering a region where the darkness has never been illuminated and where he can recognise nothing.(Jung, 1954, p. 168)

According to Jung (1961/1995, p. 33) prejudice cripples and injures the full phenomenon of psychic life. The current research findings add to existing research by demonstrating how various participants noted that "preconceptions", "ignorance" and "subjective opinions" presented as blind spots of which people were not aware (McGovern, 2020). "Concealed judgement" presented as a form of "tunnel vision", "social prejudices" and "narrow mindedness". Several therapists experienced psychological blind spots as implicit attitudes and a non-conscious resistance to a different perspective. Through the use of metaphorical language this finding adds to the literature, which found that blind spots are easy to detect in others' behaviour, but that when people introspect, they largely fail to detect the unconscious processes that are the source of their own blind spots (Ehrlinger et al., 2005; Pronin et al.,2004; Wilson, 2002). Jung (1954) has suggested that private and hypothetical prejudices are the most serious obstacles in the way of psychological judgment. Samantha's supervisor invited awareness regarding a blind spot within a clinical context: "It helped because my supervisor's clinical style is directive, so she told me straight up, 'You're making a judgement there' ". My own latent judgements have been questioned in supervision, where awareness of a blind spot in relation to a client enabled further professional development. However, Sandeen et al. (2018) state that it is important to normalise the idea that implicit bias is part of being human. They add that it is important to recognise bias as a natural and universal part of being human, and to differentiate bias from malicious intent (Sandeen et al., 2018).

The research findings exposed therapists' lived experience of a blind spot as a form of attribution. It adds further depth of knowledge from new qualitative information manifested through the use of metaphorical language, such as "The enemy is within not without– everyone is my mirror". This metatheme emphasised therapists' understanding of a blind spot as viewing aspects of other people which are an unconscious reflection of themselves. This metaphorical language encourages deep reflection and honesty for one to contemplate how others may reflect something hidden from their awareness. This has important clinical implications as we consider a client's narrative that points unconsciously to another all the time. This finding is echoed in the philosophical literature, where projections are acknowledged as a motivational barrier to awareness. According to Jung, our ordinary life

contains abundant projections (Jung, 1934). These occur in the form of newspapers, books, rumours and ordinary social gossip. “All gaps in our actual knowledge are filled out with projections” (Jung, 1934, p. 83). Jung, (1954, p. 198) further states that “a person realizes that he himself has a shadow and that his enemy is in his own heart”.

> Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves. (Jung, 1961/1995, p. 275)

Therapists experienced this blind spot as “attacking another, as opposed to dealing with self” or “ascribing something of self onto another unwittingly”. Joe realised: “that any person who irritates me, or annoys me, that’s coming from within me; it’s not them [...]I realised that everyone is my mirror”. This noteworthy finding encouraged the therapist to engage with deeper introspection and ask honest questions of self. The finding adds to the literature, which states that “projection is an involuntary transposition of something unconscious in ourselves into an outer object” (Von Franz, 1975, p. 77). It refers to protecting oneself from anxiety by repressing a feeling and misperceiving another person as having that feeling (Vaillant, 2011). In addition, projection is attributing to others, one’s own unacceptable thoughts, feelings or intentions (Cramer, 2015). What one is not aware of in himself, he or she may recognise in another (MacIntyre, 2004).

The metaphorical, imaginative use of language to describe this concept aligns with the intentionality of this hermeneutical study, which prizes the use of rhetorical language. However, Adams (2016) states that we may use various terms to describe projections, depending on our training and whether or not we are analytically minded or humanistically oriented. In the current study, blind spots were portrayed as “implicit projections” by many of the participants. Similarly, existential-analytic psychotherapists have used the phrase “implicit world projection” to state the ways in which one projects his or her world designs from meaningful fore-structures and backgrounds in his or her life (Tratter, 2015). Furthermore, the cognitive processes involved in the defence of projection were taken into social psychology and researched under the name of attribution or, later, the false consensus effect (Cramer, 2000). My personal experience of the withdrawal of a projection, especially when it involves negative contents which are attributed onto other people, is a worthy moral achievement (McGovern, 2020).

5.7.2 Familial Opacities

> Kierkegaard demanded that we check ourselves for self-deception and that we aim to face the abyss of the ultimate rather than live in comfort of our temporal life, or with values that have been handed down to us by our parents. (as cited in Van Deurzen, 2019, p. 11)

All of the participants experienced psychological blind spots as a type of familial opacity. The findings provided rich lived experience descriptors (LED) of therapists 'blind spots connected to their family of origin. These blind spots were not all negative. The notion of "taking on somebody else's behaviour" or "swallowing down others' beliefs or values" emerged in relation to the therapists' understanding of blind spots within a family context. Their interpretations included the theme of "Childhood conditioning", where one took on another's beliefs or values unbeknownst to him or her. The use of alliteration adds to hermeneutic lyrical sensibility of this finding. Annabelle understood her experience of a blind spot as taking on a learnt behaviour of care giving within the family unit. This learnt behaviour became a childhood conditioning unwittingly and further informed her career choice:"I'm from a long line of reliable caregivers, and all of my siblings are in caregiving professions (laughs). Well, I know how to do it really well,'cause I've seen it. [...] I'm the youngest of seven so they all had me doing their bits and bobs and [...] I learnt it blindly […] probably'cause that was what was modelled for me, too". Implicit imprinting was understood as a psychological blind spot where participants internalised familial voices or behaviours and took on another's opinion unwittingly. The therapists felt that parental voices informed their narratives, which led them to take on aspects of others unconsciously. This finding concurs with that of Cramer's (2012) study, which found that parents are our first and most powerful objects of identification. Identifications or introjectionsinvolve taking on another's attitude, thoughts, belief, values or behaviour as one's own (MacIntyre, 2004; Cramer, 2015). By taking on the qualities, attributes, opinions and values of others, the individual gains a sense of belonging, and thus avoids insecurity, bolstering self-esteem (Cramer, 2012). Similarly, the literature uses the example of the "identification with the aggressor", which explains why a person who has been aggressed against may begin to act like the aggressor (Kessler, as cited in Cramer, 2012).

One participant in the current study described her blind spot as a form of introjection: "if somebody said something in the past, I'd swallow it; I'd believe it; I wouldn't question" (Samantha). The research findings further add to the literature in the way it offers a depth of awareness on the quality of therapists' experiences of blind spots within a family context. MacMahon (2020) realised how she related most of her experiences of being caught in a blind spot to patterns of behaviour connected to childhood scripts. The unconscious provides an explanation of the way in which early childhood events shape our adult life. Freud explicitly acknowledged the influence of introjections on the formation of character (i.e. the ego) (Heimann, 1952).

Philosophical research and more recent research have highlighted this phenomenon. The literature found that cultural guides influence behaviour, including language, beliefs and values. These are developed in early childhood development from the behaviours of those closest to us (Bargh & Morsella, 2008). There are many aspects of this in behaviourism and neobehaviourism, such as classic conditioning, operant conditioning, habituation and imitation (Murray, 2000). My personal experience of blind spots manifested within my family milieu, where value systems and certain core beliefs were formulated in my formative years and later influenced my adult life. Erikson (1968) echoes my experience, stating that identification with parents or other important figures means taking on the characteristics of others, including their beliefs, values and mores. Von Franz (1975) confirms this, stating that we take on our values from the outside world. When the ego receives stimuli from the outside, it absorbs it and makes it part of itself; it introjects them (Heimann, 1952).

> The unconscious ego consists of a set of programs which operates through a complex, multilayered conditions wherein thought follows certain decision trees that are weighted by past experience, indoctrination, and social influence. (Hawkins, 2011, p. 11)

The findings highlighted the literature further, with therapists' understanding of a blind spot as an interpersonal template. Participants disclosed that "relationship patterns within the family unit were a big blind spot" and that many "parallels between past and present relationships" existed without their awareness. The therapists viewed an interpersonal relationship through the lens of principles by which they have learned. This finding resonates with that of Kahn (2002), who states that themes and templates are formed at childhood and that the rest of our lives are variations and developments of those themes. All perceptions can

be reasonable or distorted, and they are influenced by templates (Kahn, 2002). The findings in the current study reveal that relational models developed in one's formative years influence many subsequent relationships. Joe experienced his blind spot in romantic relationships: "I had no awareness that[in] every relationship I ever had, I've picked my mother". Relationships in childhood have a lasting impact, especially resolving the Oedipus complex (Kahn, 2002). Stern et al. (1998) and Lyons-Ruth et al., (1998) have been central in drawing our attention to "implicit relational knowing". Drawing on clinical observations, Stern acknowledges that interactional processes from birth onwards create a form of procedural knowledge regarding how to relate to others. According to Lyons-Ruth, the constructof "implicit relational knowing" encompasses normal and pathological knowing, integrating behavioural an d cognitive dimensions (as cited in Boston Change Process Group, 1998).

The findings heighten the knowledge base of the current literature and add to the clinical implications of unveiling a blind spot. One participant avowed how her learnt relational pattern with her father influenced her clinical relationship with a client: "I never challenged my alcoholic father, and that's where my blind spot was around letting a client off the hook when he misbehaved with drink taken" (Samantha). Awareness of how significant relationships influence the self could result in a relationship self-awareness that could be relevant to adjustment and wellbeing in the relationship domain (Lu&Wan, 2017). According to Kahn, (2002) a person's maladaptive beliefs and attitudes are acquired from interpersonal interaction, and therefore, they must be altered in that same context. People unconsciously adopt the physical and behavioural habits of people with whom they interact with (Bargh& Morsella, 2008). Kahn (2002) further states that it is important for one to understand the templates one is using which antagonistically distort perceptions of the present moment, as they are replaying some aspect of one's earlier life with peers and work colleagues.

Comparable with the literature, the findings established therapists' experience of a blind spot as repeating roles taken on within the family unit unbeknownst to them. Participants shared how they had unwittingly taken on a function within the family unit and continued to repeat it throughout their lives. Numerous participants understood the phenomenon as "repeating sibling roles" or "familial function". One therapist understood how the sibling role she unwittingly took on at home had clinical implications: "Since I have started working, I've created awareness in supervision of a blind spot of how I prefer to work with younger, or

more my own age, not older people. That's from my sibling role" (Samantha). This was recognised by Carl Rogers, who wrote about a client who, as a child, was dependent on other people's opinions and, therefore as an adult,was completely removed from her own autonomous self (Yalom,1980). Furthermore, if a child learns that it is wrong to be assertive with his or her parents, assertiveness is repressed in future encounters (Kahn, 2002). One therapist in the current study shared how her role within the family milieu influenced her adult life: "being the eldest, I became a mother figure to the younger ones, and that really has influenced me a lot in other areas of my life of trying to look after people and be generous to people" (Susanne). According to Hawkins (2011), what varies from individual to individual is the degree to which one is enslaved by pre-formed programmes developed in their formative years. The findings indicated how therapists took on value systems, learnt interpersonal skills and familial roles unwittingly. These represented many blind spots for the therapists. This finding supports the philosophical literature and adds to the empirical literature through a depth of knowledge that exposes the essence of this phenomenon in a new light.

5.8 Limitations and Strengths

An obvious limitation of this research from the offset was the conceptualisation and definition of a psychological blind spot. This limitation was shared with several previous studies. Semantics and the interpretation of the meaning of a psychological blind spot varies within different clinical modalities. Therefore, a psychological blind spot can be presented under a diverse range of terms such as unconscious processes and areas of unawareness. This was one of the seminal challenges in the research. Therefore, it was pertinent to consider the definition with great circumspection and seek academic advice. This took much time to formulate. An operational definition of a psychological blind spot is evident in chapter one and furthermore, in chapter two, the conceptualisation of such a phenomenon was considered within the various clinical modalities.

A significant challenge in relation to every aspect of this research was the lack of word count to engage with the material at a greater depth. This is evident in the literature review and methodology chapter where the word count did not permit my desire to analyse and critique the more philosophical or theoretical aspects of this research. Therefore, a limitation of the literature review was the lack of space to trace back these phenomena to their philosophical and religious roots. Furthermore, the modest word count given my chosen topic impeded my scope to critique the notion of the unconscious itself.

Hermeneutic phenomenology was interested in the lived experience. However, I was limited by the participant's ability to deepen into their lived experience. The therapist's pre-formed understanding of a blind spot including the use of technical language at times took away from the pre-reflective lived experience of the phenomenon. Therefore, the process of "reduction" and capturing the lived experience was at times quite arduous. This was overcome by an ardent commitment on my part to focus on the therapist's lived experience and avoid familiar clinical terminology. Tolerance, persistence, and numerous iterative reflective cycles were required to support the process of "reduction". This was successfully achieved in chapter four where the findings evidenced, iconic language that is new, metaphorical and evocative to enable a fresh understanding of the phenomena. However, due to my adherence to the lived experience of the phenomena, another limitation that may be levelled against this research is the lack of information on the types of blind spots. Future research may well challenge this limitation.

An obvious limitation of this thesis was the time line that coincided with the ubiquitous COVID 19 virus. This disabled me from certain supports and heightened the sense of isolation that is inevitable when completing such a piece of work. Completing a doctoral thesis in the midst of a pandemic was no mean feat and halted my intentions for engaging with further group training, workshops including conferences. However, due to internet platforms such as Zoom connectivity and dissemination of my research findings were made possible and brought with it other opportunities.

Methodological issues related to objectivity, contamination of research data and validity are emphasised with qualitative research (McCosker et al., 2001). Overcoming the challenges related to qualitative research was achieved by taking key measures in aspects such as preparation, approach, reflexivity and interpretation. I was acutely aware that through lack of adequate reflexivity or awareness, the findings could be subject to bias (Robinson, 1996). "Unconsciously making wrong assumptions about the research process based on my prior knowledge" could be considered a bias (Unluer 2012, p. 2). However, fidelity of this study was enhanced through remaining transparent (Levitt et al., 2017). Therefore, I rigorously reflected and acknowledged the impact I may have had on the quality of the data, including any potential bias, such as allowing my pre-formed integrative approach influence the interpretations of the data. My intention was to interpret the data in an impartial manner to the best of my ability. Furthermore, I enlisted the guidance of critical friends and professional academic supports in order to minimise the impact of biases whilst also clarifying the research process.[53] These supports enabled me to exam my findings from a position of relative impartiality and evaluate the research findings competently**.** Reflexivity further encouraged me to consider how my personal blind spots may have influenced the research process. Perfectionist tendencies, a need for certainty and at times impatience with

[53]To aid the trustworthiness and van Manen's expectations of a hermeneutic phenomenological study, self-reflection was central to establishing procedural integrity (Yardley, 2000; Willig, 2013; Morrow, 2005). With regard to the influencing aspects of insider research, greater familiarity can lead to a loss of objectivity (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). In this regard, participants may have assumed that the researcher was already aware of their information or opinions. Insider researcher bias was offset through clinical supervision and professional feedback commensurate with doctoral level. Looking forward, within a larger time frame, the research could be carried out in an agency that is unfamiliar to the researcher.

my work rate were all reflected back to me as blind spots from peer support and academic colleagues. These blind spots halted my progress and caused me great pain. Awareness of them allowed me to move past them.

A potential limitation of this research was my brief acquaintance with three of the participants prior to the research. However, this was in a purely professional capacity at training days and conferences. Nevertheless, I was acutely aware of the ethical boundary and my need to remain professionally impartial to all participants during the interviews. This ensured I did not unconsciously sway the interview process and further remained detached enough to interpret the data in an unbiased manner. Both supervision and honest reflections challenged any blind spot I may have had in relation to my interpersonal communication style.

Furthermore, the validity of the research was limited to the collection of data at a single point in time. Nevertheless, member checking will have accommodated any changing views or attitudes of the participants after the time of interviewing (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010; Langdridge, 2007). It was an important part of feedback that the therapists recognised the language as their own (Sandelowski, 1996). Furthermore, Hillman (1983b, p. 57 as cited in Drob, 1999) describes hermeneutics as "monotheistic", meaning that phenomena are interpreted in terms of concepts with a single meaning. However, as is visible in Chapter 4, this drawback was overcome through a comprehensive analysis process that revealed nuanced meaning of the phenomena with multiple interpretations.

A further limitation levelled against this study may be found in the lack of a specific method or guide for hermeneutic phenomenology (Finlay, 2011). This caused me much anxiety at the early stages of the research. Being of an exact nature, I depended upon an unambiguous means of analysing the data. The lack of clarity related to this obstacle augmented my disquiet. However, the incorporation of van Manen's (1990, 2014) hermeneutic phenomenology offered a complete approach to support the methodological integrity of this research. Nevertheless, it demanded of me to let go of certainty and engage in a creative way with the data. Therefore, I needed to learn how to trust this approach and support myself with ample academic feedback.

Non-probability sampling limits reliability and generalisability (Schutt, 2016).[54] Therefore, the results of this study do not have empirical generalisability. It is an issue that is frequently associated with qualitative research in connection with interviews, due to the frequently small sample sizes involved (Saunders et al., 2012). To help resolve this issue, I related the questions to existing theory, which evidenced that the work has a broader theoretical significance. The findings in this thesis are not generalisable, but generalisability was not the aim of the research. As Ilivitsky (2011) points out, the relevance of research can be assessed by those who apply its findings elsewhere. Ultimately, it is for the reader to appraise the trustworthiness of the findings and the degree to which they might be applicable in other contexts. Future research could address this issue through "increased participant numbers and/or more complete sampling in a smaller area rather than nationwide" (Hennigan & Goss, 2016, p. 155).

This study offers new perspectives on moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots as experienced by psychotherapists, which thus far has limited exploration. The research provides a detailed, rich description of the phenomena on the basis of participants' lived experiences. As Smith (1997, p. 80) notes, such descriptions may "enable one to connect with the experience of all of us collectively". Finlay (2006) states that, due to the variety of criteria by which their research could be judged, qualitative researchers should not leave evaluative comments to the end, but must make them explicit from the start. Therefore, the concept of integrity, and its constituents fidelity and utility, strengthened all aspects of the research (Levitt et al., 2017). The fidelity of this study was ensured through the "intimate connection" (Levitt, et al., 2017, p. 10) that I obtained with the phenomena under investigation. I structured the data collection to capture the *Erlebnis*– the lived experience of the phenomenon – reaching verisimilitude through substantial descriptions (Ponterotto, 2006). The strength of this study was further enhanced by incorporating diverse sources of data collection (e.g. participants' reflective texts, personal reflections and interview transcripts). This generated rich findings which illuminated the variations and

[54]Generalisability in research is the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to other situations/settings. Conducting qualitative research utilising non-probability sampling, as noted by Miles and Huberman (1994a), does not provide representation of the larger population. Rather, it was carried out for conceptual and theoretical reasons.

comprehensiveness of the phenomena which were relevant to the study's goals (Levitt et al., 2017). Rigour was further evidenced through the attention to theoretical sampling and the quality of the interviews undertaken (Smith et al., 2009). Furthermore, I was acutely aware of how the angle at which I entered the space of inquiry would determine what was illuminated and what remained in the shade (DuPlock, 2016). Therefore, the phenomenological questions which guided this research were driven by personal experience, including my reflections and pre-conceived assumptions, and they were supported by a comprehensive literature review. In addition, to aid the strength of this research, prior to conducting these interviews, the questions were piloted with an individual who was knowledgeable on the phenomena to ensure that the questions were suitably phrased, reliable and aligned with the research aims and objectives (Kelley et al., 2003).

Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology is primarily a philosophical "method of questioning not a method for answering or drawing determinate conclusions" (van Manen, as cited in Heinonen, 2015, p. 35). The purpose of choosing van Manen's method and the main objective of this study were to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning of the therapist's lived experience of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots. Hermeneutic phenomenology was an appropriate method through which to reveal the complex realities of therapists' understandings and to seek greater meaning. This was achieved through the use of the two main phenomenological tools, namely epoche (bracketing) and reduction. The former was achieved through freeing myself from the pre-conceived suppositions I held and by maintaining an open attitude throughout this study. The latter was achieved by returning to the original source of the therapist's experience in terms of revelation. This was a detailed process which incorporated rigorous data analysis, including numerous iterative cycles of interpretation to reveal the essence of the phenomena. The findings were described and interpreted to fully grasp their essential message. Reduction was further achieved by bringing meaning that belongs to our life-view whilst eliciting the uniqueness of the phenomenon (Heinonen, 2015). The depth and richness of the findings elucidated in Chapter Four express such meaning, lifeview, lived experience and uniqueness to equal the fundamental qualities essential to that of a hermeneutic phenomenological study. Furthermore, appropriate ethical measures were thorough and considered throughout this study, with particular attention paid to the issues of recruitment, written consent, confidentiality, anonymity, feedback and safety measures. Utility was achieved by meeting the aims and objectives (Levitt et al., 2017) of this study.

5.9 Conclusion

> Evanescence of all earthly things, should take account of psychic changes. Eternal truth needs a human language that alters with the spirit of the times. The primordial images undergo ceaseless transformation and yet remain ever the same, but only in a new form can they be understood anew. (Jung, 1954, p. 196).

The findings from the current study echo prior research. However, the research has yielded a depth of understanding that has brought to light new meaning to the phenomena and engendered fresh thoughts and reflections. It has extended the knowledge base of this topic within a clinical context,as further discussed in Chapter Six. The mystifying experience of a moment of truth is understood through the therapist's imaginative and unique use of metaphorical language. Similarly, the therapists' understanding of psychological blind spots adds to the limited empirical literature and the traditional philosophical literature on this topic with an originality of meaning and intensity of understanding. The findings bring the core essence of these phenomena to the surface with the undeniable truth of a lived experience. Furthermore, the findings have increased translatability to our modern world, 150 years post Freud,to engage in depth psychology with a fresh lens and unsullied eyes. This study was not seeking to find new theories that may replace older theories, but was interested in the consideration of older theories and assumptions which, through a contemporary lens and hermeneutic phenomenological exposure, may reveal a depth of essence that may enhance the research literature.

The potency of a moment of self-awareness is too great to be dismissed. In such a moment of spontaneous clarity, one may view reality from another perspective and become conscious of entering a new space, a fresh temporal dimension. Suddenly, blind spots or previously hidden areas of one's being may become illuminated. In an instant, there is the possibility of breaking through an impasse and seeing the world anew (McGovern, 2021). Psychological blind spots are much more than a coping mechanism. Obstinate blind spots which eclipse our awareness and impede our personal development ought to be challenged. We must confront our "auto pilot mode" of living, including our "polarised perspectives" and relational ways of communicating with the world, if we are to heighten our level of consciousness and break free from antiquated and outmoded ways of experiencing life.

Nowadays, the loss of systems of meaning and values, as well as feelings of insufficiency within a more closely intertwined, globalised, mediatised and technically dominated new world, is threatening our peace of mind (Leuzinger-Bohleber& Solms, 2017). Where are the answers to the spiritual needs and troubles of a new epoch following Covid-19? Where is the knowledge to deal with the psychological problems raised by the development of modern consciousness? We must always refurbish the lenses of this kaleidoscope in order to distinguish commonalities as well as differences in individual conceptualisations of blind spots and creating awareness to enable further discussion (Leuzinger-Bohleber& Solms, 2017). This is essential for any modern advancement of psychotherapy as an internationally acclaimed science (Leuzinger-Bohleber& Solms, 2017). It is my prerogative as a maturing therapist, phenomenologist and philosopher to challenge archaic beliefs, gain deeper understandings and progress in life with conscious awareness and new knowledge that support my ever-questioning mind.

> No one can give an adequate account of much of human thinking. It is, after all, probably the most complex subject ever submitted to analysis. We must remember that mentalistic explanations explain nothing. (Skinner, 1974, p. 246)

CHAPTER SIX: CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS AND PRODUCTS

6.0 Introduction

> It is not sufficient to develop a sensitive, thorough and plausible analysis, if the ideas propounded by the researcher have no influence on the beliefs of anyone else. (Yardley, 2000, p. 223)

In this final chapter, I intend to discuss the clinical implications of exploring psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness within a therapeutic context. I will outline the benefits of exploring this research topic within the field of psychotherapy, addressing the clinical implications of the research in relation to several dimensions, namely client awareness, therapist awareness and interpersonal awareness. This incorporates the importance of a self-aware therapist. I will further include the clinical challenges and benefits of opening blind spots, delineating the numerous products that have emanated from this research. A final reflection concludes the paper.

This research has been led by my personal experience which was further confirmed in a clinical setting. Personal therapy drew my attention to many blind spots, such as suppressed emotions, avoidant behaviour and interpersonal communication styles. These hindered my growth and affected my choices. The creation of awareness was not always pleasant but for me essential for growth. Awareness was the first step. Only then could I begin to address it, challenge it and change it. However, it was through my clinical work with clients that an empirical understanding of psychological blind spots engendered a fascination with this topic and continues to impassion me. This is where my interest on psychological blind spots manifested, particularly why and how we carry these blind spots and how they can affect so many areas of our lives unbeknownst to us. As an integrative therapist I am interested in what makes us react and behave as we do.

6.1 Clinical Implications

> The unconscious hold is weakened by acceptance, familiarity and compassionate understanding; in contrast, it is reinforced through repetition by self-criticism, condemnation, fear and shame. (Hawkins, 2011, p. 11)

The current investigation was designed to address the gap in the literature by gathering an updated perspective and a depth of understanding of psychotherapists' lived experience of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots. One of the aims central to this study was to highlight the implications for psychotherapy training and clinical practice. New understandings and awareness regarding clients' blind spots, therapists' blind spots and their inter-personal blind spots have been illuminated in this research, and its implications are far too great to be dismissed from a clinical perspective.

The clinical benefits of the findings are manifold. The findings evidence the crucial importance of psychotherapists creating personal awareness of the blind spots that may be blocking their own personal development and further influencing the therapeutic relationship unwittingly. From my own clinical experience I feel I have a duty of care to not only become aware of my personal mental impasses but to endeavour to overcome them. For me to become a congruent authentic therapist I emphatically feel by heightening my own level of awareness this subsequently offers a potentiality for the client to increase their levels of awareness.

This research emphases the need to understand blind spots and moments of awareness within a clinical context. The research findings have significant clinical implications on how psychotherapists self-monitor their clinical work. The experiential knowledge offered in a moment of awareness is considered particularly relevant to psychotherapists. This includes the creation of fresh awareness for the therapists, the client and their interpersonal relationship. The findings add to the literature the understanding that blind spots in psychotherapeutic practice are inevitable. Therefore, increased self-awareness about psychotherapists' own assumptions and biases are essential. However, the therapists felt this material needs to feature more on applied and supervisory work. The therapists suggested weaving experiential, self-reflective, and didactic content throughout training programs and supervision. This finding adds to the literature which suggests the need for therapists to

engage in personal development groups and classroom discussions that facilitate the identification of blind spots (Wellington Kunaka, 2016).

Neville and Cross (2016) conclude that more counsellors are needed to explore potential awakening moments with clients. All of the therapists in the current research felt the necessity to gain more awareness by challenging one's obstinate blind spots. Members of the caring professions are in a unique position to recognise heightened moments of awareness and to help individuals integrate this life-changing occurrence (Chilton, 2015). According to Taylor (2018), eliciting stories on moments of self-awareness can become a way of promoting change-orientation and therapeutic hopefulness amongst practitioners, whilst reinforcing neural and somatic pathways to inter-subjective healing and autobiographical change for the client. As the therapists in this current study are associated with various clinical modalities, they each offer an alternative perspective on the phenomena within different clinical contexts. This aids the clinical comprehension of a blind spot and the creation of a moment of awareness from a psychoanalytical, humanistic, existential and integrative standpoint. In addition, each participant had previously engaged in personal therapy. This heightened his/her level of awareness and willingness to expose persistent blind spots.

Moments of Awareness

The therapists felt it is important to encourage clients to perceive their situation through a fresh lens and offer them an alternative perspective or "new reality" to incite optimism. The findings disclosed a moment of awareness through nuanced language such as, "deepen beneath the surface, dip into the shadow". The clinical implication of this finding encourages us as therapists to gently probe beneath the surface or superficial layer of the client's story to engender further awareness. Asking truthful questions of oneself and encouraging a sense of openness appears to be a worthy exercise in terms of initiating moments of awareness. Connecting with bodily awareness was central to the therapist's experience of creating insightful moments. Therefore, it is important for therapists to invite clients to create bodily awareness in a safe and timely manner. The findings encourage "devotion to truth" and "introspective honesty" for awareness to unfold. These novel findings enhance the literature's understanding of a moment of awareness and have obvious clinical implications for both therapist and client.

The sense of timing is a new interpretation of a moment of awareness and has clinical implications when working with clients. It is important as a therapist to remain patient in knowing that the harvest of awareness may ripen for a client in their own subjective time. It may manifest in a gradual manner until a "tipping point" is reached and a moment of clarity is created. The therapists felt the creation of awareness is not static or an "all or nothing" phenomenon but one that had the potential to change or alter in an "ebb and flow" manner. Therefore, clients have the ability to enter into heightened levels of awareness and then retreat back into unawareness in "stages and steps" and for that reason patience and persistence are pertinent for therapists when encouraging awareness.

Psychological blind spots

A blockage of awareness such as an "eclipse" or choosing to negate the full "truth" disables a client from seeing the whole picture or allows a client to see only one aspect of their situation. In my clinical work I strive to move obstructions in the way of the client's truth to enable them push through falsehoods. Furthermore, decisions, choices and thoughts may be motivated by fear or anger that a client is not explicitly aware of. Cultivating more conscious living, may shine a light on a client's implicit motivations that are causing them pain or impeding their development. The therapists felt this has the potential to ameliorate the client's situation. It is important for therapists to remain open as to how one may inherit different ways of processing and relating to the world from previous generations. The therapists felt it is important to question and learn from ancestral blind spots.

The findings ask of psychotherapists to honestly contemplate if they may be "seeing subjectively" or holding "concealed judgements" and how might others be a mirror to reflect back what is in unawareness. These findings are important to remind therapists to simply judge less and reflect more. Furthermore, as a therapist it is firstly important for me to question my own "familial opacities" including learnt behaviours, narratives and beliefs that are integral to my being beyond what I might understand and then to gently probe clients on how familial opacities may have influenced them unconsciously.

Within a clinical context the findings are of paramount importance for therapists to first and foremost grasp an understanding of which blind spots he or she may take with them into the therapeutic space unwittingly. It is imperative for therapists to illuminate psychological blind spots akin to concealed judgement, interpersonal templates and omitted emotions for both the therapist and the client to grow in an unencumbered way. It may be of benefit for the

therapists to further consider what strategies they are using to safeguard themselves. Furthermore, the therapists emphasised the importance of encouraging conscious living as opposed to automaticity. They felt that the cultivation of consciousness was vital to create a new sense of reality and move away from narrow polarized perspectives to kick start awareness. Through deep introspective honesty and acute connection to one's body, innate knowledge may potentially be unleashed in stages and at the appropriate time.

6.1.1 Therapist Awareness

> A good therapist is not perfect but simply a person dedicated to on-going self discovery and lifelong learning. We continue to live and grow within and through our limitations. (Cozolino, 2004, p. 7)

As Cozolino rightly asserts, an informed therapist must continue to endeavour to discover greater understanding of the self. Equally, Jung, (1954) affirmed that therapists cannot do deep clinical work without gaining some insight into his/her own unconscious processes and having a reflective disposition is essential for this. The findings evidenced that, for psychotherapists, the opening of professional blind spots and encouraging of greater self-awareness are more than a basic duty of care. Moments of insight have facilitated further learning and have challenged the blind spots I had in relation to my cognitions, behaviours and communication style within a clinical context. I am certain that knowledge about such experiences can empower therapists to gain a deeper understanding of both themselves and their clients.

The therapists highlighted the importance of prompting one's own blind spots as we cannot know everything about ourselves. The research encourages us as therapists to penetrate new paths and fresh understanding of ourselves. This findings supplemented the literature, emphasising the need for therapists to engage in deeper self exploration and a constant commitment to the cultivation of consciousness. Van der Hoop, (1923) states the therapist's level of awareness including their personality is an important factor in therapy. The findings established the necessary action of a therapist to engage in rigorous reflection to unravel their own personal and professional blind spots. This further enables a therapist to not only lead by example but to grow more authentic and congruent as a therapist. Jung stated that anyone

who has insight into his own action, and has thus found access to the unconscious involuntarily exercises an influence on his environment (Jung, 1957). He further declares that nothing promotes understanding and rapprochement more than the mutual withdrawal of projections (Jung, 1957). However, my findings reveal this necessary corrective requires a certain level of self-criticism. The research established when the individual is willing to engage in the rigour of self-examination and self-knowledge, he/she will not only discover some important truths about him/herself but will also have gained psychological insight and an expanded sense of self-awareness.

According to Aponte and Kissil (2012, p. 4), therapists must "learn to master the influence of maladaptive or defensive coping strategies so that they can relate more effectively to their clients". This manifested for the therapists on different levels of experience, including cognitive, emotional, behavioural and interpersonal levels. Integrative therapist Samantha's conditioning was challenged and this created reflection and awareness:

> Personal therapy questioned the origins of my conditioning, and that then was a fulcrum to awareness [...] personal therapy, supervision, the client work, mindfulness [...] All of these places allowed me to create moments of awareness [...] I was challenged [...] they encouraged a reflective space. (Samantha)

The findings imply that one of the ways in which therapists may create further learning is through the discovery of blind spots that are evoked during personal therapy or supervision. Furthermore, the creation of awareness may be brought to light by different means of exploration during informal and formal reflection. This finding supported the literature, which found that therapists embraced opportunities for learning through reflecting on their blind spots (MacMahon, 2020). However, the findings supplemented the empirical literature stating how the therapists had a positive experience when acknowledging a blind spot, one that enabled them to create either new insight on a therapeutic situation or a clinical impasse. The findings established how the act of opening a blind spot enabled them to make new associations and to put previously unformulated experiences into words.

[55] Integrative therapist Roisin disclosed that:

> Moments of awareness and uncovering blind spots have given me different insight and a different perspective, but it's also given me a freedom. (Roisin)

[56]Furthermore, the findings evidenced the importance of supervision to create moments of awareness by questioning the therapist's blind spot. The therapists felt that supervision challenged their unconscious judgement, bias, tunnel vision or opinions that were influencing the therapeutic relationship. Integrative therapist Samantha, for example, made an assumption or latent judgement on a client. In this case, her supervisor was fundamental to bringing awareness to the blind spot affecting her behaviour unwittingly. Her lived experience descriptor of concealed judgement was a real experiential example of what a blind spot was for her at that time, along with how it influenced her working relationship with the client:

> My supervisor said, "You know, there's a judgement there; you're judging". [...] She was shedding a light on something I was blind to, and she said, "You have to let go of the judgement, because you don't ever really know the full circumstances". And sure enough, as weeks unfolded, the other parent was as much a victim of that abuse as the child [...] my supervisor is directive, so I'm told straight up, "You're making a judgement there"; she'll question my black and white thinking (Samantha).

For the therapist, it demanded both the challenge from another and also a personal willingness to examine oneself honestly. This finding adds to the literature and evidenced how therapists may judge without awareness and, consequently, how this blind spot may

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[55]Similarily, existential therapist Lucy shared her positive experience, which encouraged further insight. She altered the direction of her life towards the process of self-actualisation, and consequently this influenced her clinical work: "With this moment of awareness, I've created awareness that I'm now getting the chance to follow the career I was always interested in psychology [...] now, I've chosen my own career, my own path, truly listening to myself [...] Not looking for my mother's approval [...] with that awareness, I'm fully coming into my own, and I'll bring that into the clinical work as well". (Lucy)

[56]This was especially apparent in the creation of awareness regarding "omitted emotions" and "familial opacities". The findings evidenced therapists' blind spots regarding unconscious motives such as "implicit fears", "latent judgements" and "polarised perspective" within a clinical context. However, through a moment of insight into the therapist's unconscious processes, the work was influenced in a positive direction.

impact on the therapeutic relationship. This has important clinical implications and highlights the need for objective self-awareness and the importance of feedback to incite further awareness. One therapist in MacMahon's (2020) study described how discovering that her blind spot was fear of anger enabled her to develop a firmer grasp of the ways in which it was influencing her behaviour. This created awareness about how she related to anger. Badger-Charleson states that the importance of "relational supervision, is to enable the therapist explore blind spots and encourage therapists to recognise their own defensive processes or unprocessed data" (as cited in Goss & Stevens, 2016, p. 65). Humanistic therapist and doctor of psychotherapy Annabelle stated that she had "real trust and confidence" in her supervisor's insights, to which helped create moments of awareness:

> My supervisor suggested to me, "Is there something going on here that is really harmful, probably for both of you?", And she was absolutely right. And I had been working with this client for a really long time, years, and I had never looked at it from that perspective. It was a great insight [...] That moment of awareness was just, like, a revelation,revolutionary,and has actually impacted the way that I work since. (Annabelle)

This finding further adds to the literature by stressing the clinical importance of challenging the therapist's narrow perspective within a therapeutic context. The participants have urged a new level and depth of introspection and to be open to questioning with great honesty-to break through resistance or defensiveness and be willing to learn more of self. An important clinical implication for all the therapists in this study was the idea that reflective honesty was a useful channel by which to foster moments of awareness. This was a prevailing metatheme amongst the therapists, which presented as "Devotion to truth–introspective honesty". Wellington Kunaka's rationale for the undertaking of the study was the need for therapists to view blind spots as a "regular strategy of self-monitoring" within a clinical context (2016, p. 150). As an ethically responsible psychotherapist I engage in regular supervision and practice daily honest reflections via many mediums. I emphatically agree with Jung (1954) who astutely stated that all therapists must examine self for what one can put right in oneself can one hope to put right in the client.

Furthermore, when participants face their vulnerabilities and acknowledge how avoidant behaviours, such as implicit shame, impact on their therapeutic work, it leads to new insights and an expanded sense of self-awareness that is empowering (MacMahon, 2020). "Opening

blind spots and creating awareness was expressed through aspirations to achieve competences, be effective in the therapeutic intervention skills and to develop as professionals" (Wellington Kunaka, 2016, p. 223).

6.1.2 Client Awareness

> Each new case is pioneer work that has the potentiality for creating more awareness where every trace of routine then proves a blind alley. (Jung, 1954, p. 178)

Previous research asked successful clients to rank 60 factors of therapy in order according to the degree of helpfulness (Yalom, 1968; Lese & McNair, 2000). The research concluded that the single most frequently chosen item was, by far, "discovering and accepting previously unknown or unacceptable parts of myself" (Yalom, 1968, p. 354). As previously indicated, my own clinical experience of witnessing the unveiling of clients' blind spots, and hence creating moments of self-awareness, has engendered much constructive growth with regard to the client's thoughts, behaviour and inter-personal relations. This clinical experiential knowledge was the bedrock of my doctoral research. Observing such moments within a clinical setting and the consequences of such moments, which offered the client an alternative perspective, has led me to believe the clinical importance of unleashing blind spots.This confirms Chilton's (2015) finding that a moment of awareness has the potential to create a transformative experience which may encourage behavioural change that can impact wellness.

The research findings evidenced how blind spots can block a client's growth and equally how a moment of self-awareness can promote a client's development. Integrative therapist Roisin explained how her client's blind spot was hindering his growth and revealed that creating awareness encouraged growth in a positive direction:

> It was actually blocking his growth for so long; I think that really did highlight how powerful awareness is when it does come to light, and similarly, the massive blind spot when he wasn't aware that it was completely blocking his progress and growth [...] awareness actually gave him some kind of belief in himself that he could trust, [so] that he could choose to be more focused on positivity. (Roisin)

The findings elucidate the clinical potency of opening a blind spot that could potentially engender trust, belief and positivity in the client. This augments the literature's knowledge on the clinical implications of unveiling a blind spot by elucidating the therapist's qualitative experience. MacMahon's (2020) study evidenced the therapeutic benefits of talking about

blind spots and how it stimulates new insights. Similarly, May (1969) states that therapy involves an uncovering of blindness that has blocked one's desires and wants from awareness, and thus seeks to oppose and alter a passive and apathetic attitude toward life that the client has chosen

The findings revealed that opening blind spots had an empowering effect on the client's sense of self-awareness. Humanistic and existential therapist Lucy felt that, by illuminating a client's blind spot, insight was incorporated into his or her maladaptive behaviours. Consequently, the choice to behave differently manifested itself:

> Because the client then is more aware, there is a choice not to practice bad behaviours, and that creates more space for building oneself as a person and moving in a positive direction with life. (Lucy)

The creation of choice amplifies the knowledge base of the literature, which suggests that self-knowledge is necessary to identify one's unconscious desires, with the necessity to recognise that one's responses are inadequate or inappropriate so that one can correct them (MacIntyre, 2004). Furthermore, Cramer (2015) states that once a client consciously becomes aware of unconscious behaviour, the probability of changing it increases. It is only through self-awareness and self-knowledge that one is able to redirect his or her intentions and alter his or her behaviour (Kahn, 2002).

The findings disclosed the potential for client change and the notion of liberation from a moment of awareness. One participant emphatically stated that a moment of awareness had a positive effect on her clients:

> I think that's a key point: becoming aware leads to positivity [...] most clients feel a release of something and feel freer […] it definitely leads to positivity in the long run.(Roisin)

This long-term experiential understanding of a moment of awareness in therapy presented as increased "freedom" and a "release" for the client. The findings supplement the literature, which states that clients who experience a heightened moment of awareness tend to be able to make rapid, positive changes, which could lead to better health outcomes (Chilton, 2015). According to Amos (2019), identifying particularly meaningful moments in psychotherapy can assist with the identification and cultivation of distinct opportunities for client change.

Furthermore, Fletcher (2008) outlines how eliciting stories on moments of acute awareness can assist clients with uncovering and articulating theories of therapeutic change, thus reinforcing resilience.

In addition, the findings evidenced that "moments of self-awareness allow for deeper growth, which creates more attunement to self". One therapist felt that through awareness of one's blind spot, the client can know him/herself better:

> Now, he is more able and comfortable to get to know himself better, all the while by trying to heal his relationship with his mother as well. (Roisin)

This has powerful clinical implications regarding the process of self-actualisation. May (1967) asserts that the uncovering of blind spots, the creation of self-awareness and actualising the potentialities of one's being are the primary concerns of psychotherapy. Neville and Cross's (2016) study shows that personal experience of heightened moments of awareness increases clarity and awareness, and hence encourages greater meaning-making.

The research findings indicate that this awareness is the reward of therapy. Psychoanalytical therapist Jacob described the creation of a moment of awareness in therapy as a "gift" and a "good moment":

> The gift of therapy that gift of coming away from a personal therapy session and, occasionally, the (clicks fingers) "aha!", that's what that was about. Now, I understand deeper and see from a different perspective. They're good moments. (Jacob)

This experience was the ultimate prize of therapy, which allowed Jacob view his reality from an alternative standpoint. This heightens the literature's clinical understanding of the significance of a moment of insight in therapy. My clinical experience has discovered that by a client opening oneself to others, one has the potential to open onself to self. A competent therapist will enable a client to hear his or her internal and external dialogue to create awareness, thus learning to hear oneself as others would (MacIntyre, 2004).

The findings suggest that more counsellors should gently encourage the exploration of clients' blind spots, with the potential to foster awakening moments. The research has established that by unveiling a blind spot and creating a moment of awareness within a

therapeutic context, a client may formulate a sense of "belief" and "trust" innately. The option of "choice" may manifest itself, which consequently may enhance client "change". This may further create the feeling of liberation, with the potential to achieve self-actualisation, which is the definitive "gift" of therapy. Existential therapist Craig (2008) asks what one should do with what remains hidden from view and how one should address it in a therapeutic dialogue. As an integrative therapist, I need a working understanding of psychological blind spots to enable my clients augment awareness. The therapists in this research understood the importance of understanding their clients' blind spots to support them in achieving new insights and further learning. Theories on the unconscious, whether Freudian or post-Freudian, are worthy of further consideration. As MacIntyre (2004) states, no theory has to be accepted or rejected, but should simply be reflected upon for clinical purposes. Although my practice includes the descriptive psychologies of the consciousness, I agree with existential psychotherapist Craig (2008), who states that is not giving us an understanding of the complete client. As a maturing therapist, I feel my role is to explore beyond the explicit words (and their surface meaning) of my clients by endeavouring to empower new awareness.

6.1.3 Interpersonal Awareness

The findings disclosed how the therapist's former relationships may influence how they relate to another. This finding manifested as "interpersonal template". This finding, through the use of language, adds a nuanced understanding of how a learnt relational style can influence the therapeutic relationship unwittingly. This has significant clinical implications for both parties involved and is of paramount importance to be aware of. The findings reveal how a depth of rigorous and honest introspection will give one a certain level of insight. However, the interpersonal relationship is fundamental to unveiling some obstinate blind spots. The research established that the client/therapist dyad is capable of understanding the unobservable nature of psychological blind spots and moments of self-awareness and this is directly available to the experience of the observer in this case the therapist. The therapists further concluded that we can recognise our "prejudices" and "polarised perspectives" only from a broader psychological knowledge of ourselves and others. Jung (1957) stated we must

be prepared to doubt the absolute rightness of our assumptions and compare them carefully and conscientiously with objective facts.

The research confirmed that all therapists viewed an interpersonal relationship through the lens of principles by which they have learned. All perceptions can be reasonable or distorted, and are influenced by templates. The therapists recognized how interpersonal patterns developed in one's earlier life impact on later encounters including clinical relationships unbeknownst to them. Annabelle stated how therapy created awareness around her interpersonal patterns:

> I had to go into therapy [...] then a moment of awareness around interpersonal patterns came up [...] reflection back from another professional was really important to enabling awareness about this topic. (Annabelle)

Unconscious processes are co-constructed and come to awareness during the very processes of relating with significant others throughout personal development or in therapy, by interpreting enactments (Kahn, 2002). Metathemes that emanated from the findings such as, "interpersonal templates", "repeating roles" and "familial function" understood blind spots within relationships. These findings are important for therapists to contemplate and consider how they may influence their relational style unbeknownst to them. The findings further confirmed the literature, stating that the therapeutic situation is an ideal outlet for this material (Kahn, 2002). Samantha's understanding of a blind spot manifested in relation to client work, where her supervisor enabled awareness around her penchant for working with younger clients, which was a blind spot related to her sibling position:

> I've created awareness in supervision of a blind spot of how I prefer to work with younger, or more my own age, not older people. That's from my sibling role [...]I took a lot on unwittingly to be responsible for the younger[…] it was a learnt behavioural style, or was conditioned, and went out into the workforce [...] those learnt traits from home were acted out on unconsciously […]My supervisor was the instigator to helping open my blind spots and giving me the space to question and create awareness or challenge patterns.(Samantha)

The findings have established that opening blind spots fosters the ability to challenge an interpersonal pattern in relation to the therapeutic work. The findings indicate how a client's learnt relational style can impact the therapeutic relationship. [57]A person's maladaptive beliefs and attitudes are acquired from interpersonal interaction, and therefore, they must be altered in that same context (Kahn, 2002).

The research findings revealed that although the unconscious nature of blind spots makes them difficult to grasp, it is vital that therapists are open to exploring them. This clinical implication is echoed in the literature, where trainee therapists, by endeavouring to see their blind spots, fostered self-awareness that enabled them to identify the areas they needed to develop (Wellington Kunaka, 2016). Existential therapist Lucy reflected on her interpersonal blind spot within a clinical setting that presented as a form of "avoiding silences" and "being an interrupter", which had clinical implications. It was a "defence" or a "barrier" that prevented deeper awareness. This affected her clinical work with clients:

> That moment of self-awareness of avoiding silences. By being an interrupter created a deep awareness of how that awareness was blocking other self-awareness. Because I was jumping in and filling the silence all the time, I was blocking deeper self-awareness that was a defence, or a barrier [...]On a professional level, too, I was just filling the space, and I was not able to sit with the silence or whatever the person might want to deepen into, I was blocking it, now that I'm aware of it, the therapeutic work has deepened .(Lucy)

The therapist's awareness of her interpersonal process gave her insight into how she was "blocking" the client's growth. This finding demonstrates the positive clinical implications of opening blind spots in relation to the therapists communication style. Rousmaniere (2016)

[57]Roisin's client presented with many trust issues. After several sessions, he had a moment of awareness and realised that the lack of trust stemmed from his primary relationship with his mother: A client was coming for a good few sessions with anxiety [...] slowly, he became aware that he had a lot of trust issues with everyone that was currently in his life[...] but the biggest person he had the trust issue was with himself[...]he eventually, after many sessions, made a connection that his trust issue formed from his bond and relationship with his mom. He didn't have any trust with his mum at all. (Roisin)By challenging this client's blind spot, new insight was gained regarding his interpersonal patterns.

highlights the implications of a blind spot that impedes a therapist's ability to stay attuned to his or her clients while the therapist experiences discomfort.Adams, (2009, p. 49) astutely observes the following: "Our worth as therapists is determined by those patients who speak so profoundly to the unresolved and unknown aspects of ourselves". All participants in MacMahon's (2020) study spoke about ways in which a particular maladaptive coping strategy impacted on their client work, leading to collusions, ruptures or a therapeutic impasse.[58]

The findings also indicate that the manner through which one relates with his or her family of origin will translate to other groups. Integrative therapist Samantha came into awareness of how she let a client "off the hook "when it came to alcoholic behaviours simply because that was her way of relating to her father at home. This finding has implications for clinical work:

> I gained a moment of awareness through further education how I judged clients [...] a client did something through alcohol [...] Then I reflected and came into awareness that it was old [...] I was letting someone off the hook and making acceptance for bad behaviour [...] I might not challenge the person who had drink taken [...] as a child, I never challenged my alcoholic father, and that's where my blind spots were around letting a client off the hook when he misbehaved with drink taken [...] I am now more aware that there are huge parallels in how I am with family and with other groups. (Samantha)

This echoes Wallin's(2007) finding that states unless we become aware of our enactments of repeated patterns from our formative years, we are at risk of unconsciously repeating them within the context of the therapeutic relationship. Participants in McMahon's (2020) study stated that blind spots embedded in relational patterns were evident.

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6.1.4 Clinical Challenges and Benefits of Opening Blind Spots

> Psychological induction inevitably causes the two parties to get involved to create a third and to be themselves transformed in the process, and all the time the therapists knowledge (presence), like a flickering lamp, is the one dim light in the darkness and prays to God for illumination. (Jung, 1954, p. 99)

The findings indicate that illumination of one's opacities begets expansion of one's awareness, which engenders the potential for growth. However, the findings add to the literature the pitfalls of prematurely opening blind spots within a clinical context. The research established that there can often be resistance to any exploration of our hidden impulses. Freud stated in an attempt to draw a repressed memory into consciousness, a resistance had to be overcome (van der Hoop, 1923). Therefore, the therapists urge the importance of prudence and consideration of each client separately to decide whether the advantages of opening blind spots outweigh the drawbacks.

Annabelle shared her clinical experience of how a client's blind spot was a necessary coping mechanism. She stated that blind spots can be "valid and vital":

> Sometimes, clients need blind spots to survive or to live or to cope. It can be as a coping mechanism that people choose to avoid or suppress or whatever that might be; that is valid and vital, too. Opening blind spots is not necessarily a good thing for everybody". (Annabelle)

Samantha confirmed this finding stating: "you need to know your client, obviously; and you need to know if there was an area of risk before encouraging awareness". Furthermore, Roisin astutely stated, "It's important to judge the situation before opening blind spots, as it could bring up some kind of triggering trauma. Maybe it doesn't need to be [openly] challenged just yet [...] we don't need to open all blind spots". (Roisin)

However, in contrast, another therapist affirmed that "blind spots have protected me but have also stilted my growth". Similarily, Samantha stated:

> Awareness is good anyway [...] I don't think it can damage a person [...] I would say the benefits outweigh the risk when opening blind spots. Blind spots are worth opening [...] definitely worth opening. (Samantha)

For the most part, my clinical experience and the findings emulate the literature, which states that the opening of blind spots and creation of awareness generally result in positive outcomes for those who choose to embrace the opportunity (Chilton, 2015). However, the findings recognize that 'timing is everything', and not all client have the ability to 'listen', 'be open' and 'introspect with honesty'. Therefore, caution and understanding of the client's ability and resources are essential prior to delving into blind spots. Professionally, I perceive both the values and the risks of unveiling a blind spot. Blind spots are an important part of protecting oneself at a certain time in one's life. However, many are an impediment to long-term growth and development.

The persistence with my studies and research has been driven not only by my personal experience of creating a moment of awareness and opening obstinate blind spots, but also by witnessing the potency of unveiling a truth in clinical practice. This experience has supported my passion to unearth new knowledge. The clinical and psychotherapeutic implications are too great to be disregarded. The findings elucidate that fresh awareness may offer the client an alternative perspective from which to view life, which potentially could plant the seeds of choice, and ultimately change. A moment of awareness may create insight into a therapist's "omitted emotions", "polarised perspective" including "concealed judgements". Awareness may further challenge the therapist to confront interpersonal patterns of relating with a movement towards a more effective way of communicating. Furthermore, the therapeutic interest in the research was further confirmed in the workshop I developed to disseminate the findings to therapists.

> The unconscious is a dynamic presence in all aspects of life [...] we cannot nor should not ignore it. (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 139)

6.1.5 Clinical Training

The workshop I developed for psychotherapists as part of this research and with support from my academic consultant included deep reflective exercises. Three exercises encouraged the therapists to contemplate their personal and professional experience of psychological blind spots and moments of awareness in their lives. The workshop confirmed the research findings and further added to the findings the importance of bodily attentiveness to create new awareness and reveal blind spots. This workshop was awarded CPD (continued professional development) points by the professional therapeutic body IACP (Irish Association

Counsellors and Psychotherapists) which confirmed the usefulness of this training for clinical practice. Clinical benefits from the findings were discussed post workshop. Feedback forms offered further insight on the workshop (see Appendix XV). The therapists felt blind spots influences many areas of psychotherapeutic work and that critical self-reflection and on-going monitoring of one's blind spots was paramount.

Workshop Exercises for Psychotherapists

1) **Written reflective exercise on psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MOA);** The therapists were invited to reflect on a personal and professional experience of unveiling a psychological blind spot and creating a moment of awareness. The group was asked to write in a self-critical and reflective manner on this event. The therapists were further invited to contemplate the learning from it or consider any new insights gained. Deep introspective honesty was encouraged. The length of the exercise was 15 minutes. A practical clinical application of this written reflection is the use of PBS observations written and reflected in the therapists notes post client sessions. This will demand of the therapist to honestly reflect after every client hour and consider the blind spots that may have potentially existed in the session. This practice has become routine exercise for me in my reflective notes.

2) **Triad reflections;** A further exercise in the workshop involved the therapists breaking into groups of three (one speaker, one listener and one objective observer). Verbal expression of the therapist's lived experience of a blind spot and moments of awareness was encouraged. A gentle probing by the listener into one's narrative stimulated the potential to unveil psychological blind spots in relation to the therapist, the client and their interpersonal relationship. Ten minutes was allocated to speak, then a further ten minutes to listen and then finally ten minutes to observe. At the end of each ten minute session critical reflection and evaluation was considered. As the group leader I listened to each triad as they reflected on their lived experiences of a psychological blind spot and the creation of awareness. I offered critique and encouraged further reflection. This exercise was suggested as a useful tool in both training and supervision, where the supervisor/trainer may further probe therapist's lack of awareness or potential blind spot on a clinical encounter. This demands a level of openness from the therapist and courage from the supervisor/trainer.

3) **Group Work;** As a group we all then reunited and openly spoke of our learning and the insights gained from the written exercises and the triad discussion. Critique, feedback and openness were encouraged. Individually, each therapist considered if they had formulated new learning or understanding of a psychological blind spot and a moment of insight in relation to themselves, their clients or their interpersonal relationship.

6.2 Future Research

> Future work that explores poor self-knowledge is needed to help shed light on one's blind spots. (Gallrein et al., 2016, p. 2)

The rationale for pursuing this research topic was founded on the lack of qualitative studies uncovering blind spots and creating moments of self-awareness, which promote a perceived change in one's thinking and meaning-making. Furthermore, the lack of psychotherapeutic perspectives on this topic evidenced the need for advanced research within a clinical context. The immensity of the research findings illuminates the depth of this topic, and therefore, it clearly justifies future research on this subject. Future research could enlarge participant numbers and offer more comprehensive sampling in a smaller area rather than nationwide (Hennigan & Goss, 2016).A further focus for future research might centre on psychotherapy education and training. [59]This may include further elaboration on the types of psychological blind spots which exist and the means by which to foster increased awareness within a clinical context.This finding, as in Neville and Cross's (2016) research, may create insight to help inform future research in terms of identifying prototypic stories and therapists in eliciting further awareness within a clinical context.Additionally, despite the continual progress in self-awareness research, many theoretical issues remain ambiguous and unresolved (Silvia & Duval, 2001).Studies in this field are underdeveloped, although it remains a core topic of experimental psychology (Kounios & Beeman,2015).Taylor (2018)

[59]Jung felt it was the task of future research to investigate non-conscious processes within a clinical context (Von Franz, 1975).

agrees with this, stating that moments of heightened awareness have been overlooked in the field of psychology.

6.3 Products

A variety of products emanated from the research. The extensiveness and richness of the findings, including the clinical implications and general interest on the topic, invited several mediums through which to disseminate the material in a practical and functional manner.

March 2020– Workshop

- I designed and created a workshop for psychotherapists to help disseminate the research findings and receive feedback on my chosen topic. This workshop was supported by the largest national accredited body in Ireland, IACP. Ethical approval was granted, and CPD points were awarded following a rigorous application process(see Appendix XXXII). It was a three-hour workshop that facilitated learning, education, reflections and sharing. Upon completion, all therapists received a certification of attendance including CPD points (see Appendix XIV). Its objective, which was achieved, was to enable therapists to create more awareness regarding their blind spots within a personal and clinical context. It was well-received by the therapists, and it proved most insightful. A feedback sheet was filled out by each participant (see Appendix XV).

March 2020 – Poster Presentation

- To support the workshop, I designed a poster. This was displayed at the workshop to enable further learning and present the findings through key learning, imagery and metaphor. This represented with great accuracy a succinct overview of the research, including the chosen methodology and findings (see Appendix XIII).

June 2020– National Media Panel

- I was invited by the Irish Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (IACP) to join its national media panel. This involves representing the body of psychotherapists in Ireland in the media, which includes written, radio, TV and social media coverage. This is a further platform by which to help disseminate the research findings.

September 2020– European Conference for Mental Health 2020 (ECMH) Helsinki

i) Oral Presentation

- I presented the research at the annual European Conference for Mental Health. Due to COVID-19 confinement measures meant, this was held online. I designed a detailed PowerPoint presentation to disseminate my research and findings. A discussion regarding the methodological rigour and ethical issues in relation to the research was included. This was an oral presentation that was chaired by a committee of therapists and researchers. A questions-and-answers session at the end invited further discussion and feedback on the research. Upon completion a certificate of attendance was issued (see Appendix XVI).

ii) Online poster display

- I developed an online poster to present at the European Conference for Mental Health. This enabled further dissemination of the research findings. I gained valuable feedback and was awarded a certificate.

October 2020– Winner of IACP Research Bursary Award 2020

- I was awarded a national award for my research from Ireland's largest accrediting body– IACP. This was a rigorous process that demanded empirical evidence, academic support and clinical implications for my research. The IACP endorsed my research and offered financial support to the value of €3,500. I was awarded this honour at the IACP annual conference, where acknowledgement of my work and research was offered (see Appendix X).

December 2020– Published Academic Article

- I published an academic article in *The Irish Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*:"Psychotherapists' lived experience of psychological blind spots: Findings from a hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry"

- This article focused on the phenomenon of psychological blind spots within a cultural context. Upon publication, I received numerous emails from colleagues and previous academic lectures acknowledging how useful and insightful this research is for both personal and professional awareness. (see appendix XII).

December 2020–Book

- I am currently in communication with several publishing houses regarding a book proposal I drafted some months ago. My book proposal(see appendix XVIII) has been well-received to date and some are eager to pursue my proposal following doctoral qualification. This book's target market will include psychotherapists, psychologists, clients and general people with a certain level of awareness and an interest in psychology.

February 2021– Published Academic Article

- I penned an academic article on "moments of self-awareness" for the academic journal; *European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy (EJQRP):*"Spontaneous Clarity-A New Reality Dawns: Psychotherapists' Lived Experience of Epiphany Moments".

- This article went through a rigorous process and months of iterations. The reviewers' feedback was positive and supportive of both my chosen topic and the research's integrity (see appendix XVII). It was published in February 2021(see Appendix XI).

2021 and Ongoing – Website

- I have shared my articles and discussed several of the findings on pages I designed on my professional website. I further shared research findings on the blog.www.galwaycounsellingpsychotherapy.com.

2021 and Ongoing– Social Media

- I created imaginative photographic images to help disseminate my findings on the social media platform Instagram. This site has a large target audience and a large following.

- Podcast interview on my research to be finalised and aired late in 2021. Details yet to be confirmed.

September 2021– Winner of IACP Research Excellence Award 2021

6.4 Final Reflection

> Parting of clouds does not cause the sun to shine, but merely reveals what was hidden all along. (Hawkins, 2011, p. 80).

Awareness is omnipresent; however, it can remain concealed and shadowed beneath a myriad of blind spots if we do not take up the invitation to challenge and reflect on our outlook.I have highlighted in the preceding chapters and in the extensive appendices section abundant examples of reflexivity in relation to every aspect of my research journey. I have further elucidated my train of thought and considered the many decisions that informed this study. Reflexivity was the backbone of this project. I have remained transparent and cognisant of how every choice or interpretation reflected part of my process and influenced other areas of the project. This reflective temperament has become habituated, to the point that I am now not afraid to question life in a more honest and thoughtful way. Reflexivity means more than acknowledging personal biases; reflexivity encourages one to reflect on how one reacts to the research context and how one makes certain understandings of the data (Willig, 2013). It also involves acknowledging how the research has impacted or even transformed us as people and researchers (MacMahon, 2020).

A question that has been put to me many times is “has the doctoral work challenged your outlook?” The answer is simple: it has. To undertake such a prodigious task demanded tenacity, persistence and patience beyond what I had ever thought myself capable of achieving. However, the doctoral quest was simply another cog in my domestic, clinical and social wheel of life. Life made no exceptions for the doctoral work. Loss and life continued on their natural life cycles. A good and wise friend passed; my first child was born; and another is soon to arrive. A moment of truth amidst my studies revealed itself with some prudent words; constant and committed; patient and tolerant; perspective and vision. I was honest enough to challenge the obstinate blind spots that had often impaired my vision and impeded my growth. I was open to receiving feedback from colleagues, academics, therapists and my supervisor. No doubt, I am an altered person. I am a person of greater integrity, awareness, honesty and truth. These noble traits cannot, in my experience, be cognitively taught, but can be learned through a depth of questioning and a desire to be an improved version of oneself. I hope to example this enhanced sense of character within my clinical practice, family context and social milieu.

> "…in order to see clearlyone really needs to be pretty well blind – metaphorically and literally. It isreally a sort of positive lack of anything in one's mind, if one can put it likethat; that the darker the spot that you wish to illuminate, the darker you have to be – you have to shut out all light in order to be able to see it." (Bion & Mawson, 2014, p.13)

Bion borrowed Keats's idea of Negative Capability and coined the phrase 'without memory or desire' (Bion, 1970). For my research, in order for me to be able understand the phenomena afresh, I had to place my assumptions to one side and sit with uncertainty (see appendix III). At times this felt most uncomfortable and my need for definite answers dominated. However, the exploration of intangible research topics, such as psychological blind spots and moment of self-awareness, will always remain, in my opinion, slightly ambiguous and open to interpretation. Researching a phenomenon as monumental as "psychological blind spots" was no simple task; adding to it "moments of self-awareness" was even more daunting. It is visible from the findings that a profound depth of insight and knowledge has been exposed.

The methodological choice of hermeneutic phenomenology that guided this research taught me the intrinsic nature of true exploration, which manifested itself in a depth of discovery unique to each phenomenon. It encouraged and challenged my habitual way of experiencing the world. Hermeneutic phenomenology questioned my antiquated beliefs and sharpened my acuity. It taught me the process of immersion in my chosen topic. This engendered a profundity of understanding that would not have been possible with another methodological choice. Gaining insight into the phenomena required something more than additional theory or exact definitions. This qualitative research offered a way in which to explore individuals' authentic experiences and the meanings they construct from that through which they have lived. The richness of the participant's qualitative experience appropriately adds strength to the elusive nature of the phenomena. Moreover, I am grateful to the torchbearers of hermeneutic phenomenology, such as Heidegger, Ricoeur, van Manen and Sokolowski, who have taught me to question and be curious about all that I know and all that I can potentially learn. This research has emphatically highlighted and honoured all of the essential elements of a hermeneutic phenomenological study, such as, disclosure of essence, nuanced understanding and the use of imaginative, poetic and anecdotal expression of the lived experience.

Given the disparate nature of the empirical literature exploring moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots, the main strength of this study is its contribution of qualitative knowledge to a relatively unexplored area, along with the clinical implications emanating from this. I wish to credit the researchers who questioned this subject and sought to enhance knowledge of this topic. The research findings offer a glimpse into an alternative perspective on this subject. Freud himself, in spite of his moments of reductionism, held that no single metaphor or perspective could ever fully encompass the breadth of the human psyche (as cited in Drob, 1999).The disclosure of blind spots and creation of moments of self-awareness was an arduous process that demanded of me much introspective reflection and an openness to examine self. If each of us can attempt to create a morsel of awareness, by disembarking from the treadmill of life, be it through therapy or another means, and thus challenge the content of our polarised vision, it would be a worthy moral achievement (McGovern, 2020). For it is only through awareness that one has the potential to change and grow. Anybody who is brave enough to ask some honest questions of self and delve into the depths of their unconscious is unlikely to see life through the same lens. Hawkins (2011) observes that a moment of self-awareness creates a heightened sense of consciousness, which has the ability to completely alter a person's attitude to life, including one's goals, values and core beliefs.

As our modern material world moves forth in a rapidly changing technological era with ever-pervasive ego-driven motives, the resurgent need for honest introspective investigation is evident. At the present time, during the Covid-19 pandemic, we are seeking a heightened sense of awareness to enable a deeper understanding of the self. A process of focusing on that which resonates and inspires the researcher with passion is a way to listen to the deep call of the work, and is vital to sustaining the work (Kelly, 2019). Anderson calls it love (2011) Romanyshyn calls it a call of the soul (2006). I call it indefatigable enthusiasm to unveil the truth. Personally and professionally, I feel it is imperative not only to explore blind spots in a timely and appropriate manner, but also to encourage insight towards giving others the permission and opportunity to experience life with a fresh sense of awareness, greater clarity and a new inner truth. For as Chödrön(2001, p.10) states "we are only one blink of an eye away from being fully awake"

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Appendices

(Some appendices have been removed due to sensitive and personal content).

Appendix V Literature Search Strategy

There is a paucity of information in the field of qualitative enquiry on moments of awareness and psychological blind spots. In addition, limited empirical research from a therapist's perspective on their understanding is evident. Therefore a significant gap in the research for an updated original qualitative research was apparent. The literature review comprehensively analyzed not only contemporary researchers who attract interest today but also the forefathers who have researched this topic historically. I focused on psychotherapeutic areas of interest concerned with literature, media, culture and the arts. I located myself within the field of inquiry and identified the gaps in the literature (Kelly, 2019). I have included all that I know about the topic, through extant literature, my experience and dialogue with the text. The literature review was an orientating exercise it helped me identify key areas of interest. Through identification of gaps in the research facilitated a rationale for my study (Finlay, 2011). This comprehensive literature review invited great insight into my topic of interest and further guided my methodological choice. I specifically chose material that was most relevant and focused on the phenomena of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots. The present study aims to review the measures currently used to assess moments of awareness and blind spots.

In the analysis of different literature review methods, I did not rely solely on protocol-driven searches. I chose a comprehensive review, as this method aims to bring order and clarity to the volume of research that already exists and to review it in a critical manner. This review highlighted methods, indicated inconsistencies in findings across different papers and pointed towards areas for further research (Crombie and Davies, 1997). Furthermore, this literature review highlighted the pitfalls of previous research and areas where further research would be beneficial (Crombie and Davies, 1997). Details of the results and methods of the studies included were assessed in a critical manner (Bowling, 2010)

This comprehensive review included information on the methods and search strategies that were used in this study. I adhered to an example of a checklist for a literature review

recommended in Bowling's book *Research Methods in Health: Investigating Health and Health Services* (2010). Search classification helped assess the quality of the papers and academic books. The abstracts from peer reviewed papers and the introductions from academic books were reviewed to establish the value of each study and book for this study. Each were read and analysed critically. This included sub-headings, abstracts, research, and academic books that were examined against the criteria detailed in the search classification table.

a) First Phase of Literature Search

My own search approach was a multi-method approach. Initially, a broad search was conducted. In order to develop an understanding of the intellectual history of the phenomenon, an initial search was conducted by searching for moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots in historical writings. The broad search terms used at this stage were: self-*awareness/ epiphanies and blind spots.* The outcome of this broad search revealed that there was an abundance of research available, indicating that the search needed to be more specific. For the purpose of this review I sifted out all other terms that were not directly related to moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots. This initial search of historical literature also disclosed works in education, psychology, sociology, medicine, theology, and the arts that had blind spots and self-awareness as their focus of study. All methodologies were considered. My first searches explored the academic journals listed by Taylor and Francis, Routledge and Wiley Online Library, as well as sourcing material from the online catalogues of various publishing houses. Further academic databases, including ETHOS, academia.ie, and biomedical central were availed of. Relevant studies were also identified via, Pubmed, PsychINFO, science direct, Scopus, and APA. Narrowing my focus on psychotherapy, I followed up any relevant references which had emerged from this first wave of enquiry and conducted specific searches with the words *moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots* in '*Summon*' on Middlesex University's webpage. Both primary and secondary sources of literature were identified. As recommended by Greenhaulgh and Peacock (2005), I incorporated other approaches, such as following the references of references, electronic citation tracking and informal approaches such as "browsing" and "asking around" (p. 1065).

b) Second Phase of Literature Search

Given the significance of the frequent use of the word awareness and blind spots in various contexts, my initial searches were restricted to articles and books in which the word *blind spot* and *self -awareness* appeared in titles and abstracts. First, retrieved papers were reviewed by title, to select for lived experience studies. Abstracts were then screened to ensure that the studies contained subjective accounts. Finally, full text papers were screened. Time spent reading this body of literature was followed by a further review of literature in the references of these texts. As the phenomena of psychological blind spots and moments of self awareness has been a topic of interest through history and across disciplinary fields, my search process disclosed a range of different types of writing on the phenomena which not only resisted direct comparison but invited different critical review approaches. I conducted a thematic review along with a qualitative meta-synthesis, which focused on specific topic areas of moments of self-awareness and blind spots and engendered a more systematic appraisal of a set of qualitative studies (McLeod, 2015). Following the review method advocated by Randolph (2009), I searched all the references until I found that no new references of significance were emerging and the literature was referring back to sources I had already discovered. A number of articles were passed to me by colleagues who had heard of my research. At this point, I felt I had reached a point of sufficient saturation in understanding.

I was fearful that the phenomena, given their nature, could become uncontained and there was a high probability of going off course (King, 2021). In terms of organising this review, I grouped the literature into three main categories for analysis and synthesis. In the first category, my initial focus of attention was to gain an understanding of the status and debates within the literature of the phenomena of human lived experience, and how this experience has changed in nature or function over time. Given that my study is an enquiry into the experience of the phenomena in an area of psychology, the second section of this review critically engaged with the scholarly articles that explore the nature and function in applied contexts. Of particular relevance to my study are the few texts which offered a qualitative perspective on psychological blind spots and moments of awareness. A small body of qualitative studies was disclosed. I considered these texts in the third section of this review. The studies were then classified under two main headings for further exploration later on.

These were: psychological blind spots and moments of awareness. The papers included adult populations, which were written in English, and included all locations. Peer-reviewed academic publications were included as well as academic books. Irrelevant information was excluded; 49 papers and 24 academic books from 1960 to 2020 were included in this comprehensive literature review. For greater clarity about my topic the literature was sub-divided into manifold themes and supported with various primary and secondary sources, including published academic and peer reviewed papers.

Appendix VI Additional Literature

Background

> The activated unconscious appears as a flurry of unleashed opposites and calls forth the attempt to reconcile them or grow aware, so that the great panacea may be born (Jung, 1954, p. 182).

According to Lacan human beings are subject to desires informed by non-conscious thoughts (MacIntyre, 2004). It is hard to understand lack of awareness because it is consciously repressed actively unconscious, unbewusst (Easthope, 1999). John Rajchmann stated our bodies are moved by something beyond what in our soul might tend to be good (cited in MacIntyre, 2004). Lack of self-knowledge in an angry person could be the result of two unconscious desires, the aggressive desire that is anger and the desire not to recognize the aggressive behaviour (MacIntyre, 2004).One's behaviour is determined by unconscious desire but also the inability to recognize the behaviour by an unconscious desire (MacIntyre, 2004). The unconscious psychic life includes the study of repressed instinctual impulses, affects, and fantasies (Freud, 1966). Consciousness may be blocked by a blind spot obstructing the truth (Searle, 2013). Dr. Jones calls the primary process as the seed of the unconscious (MacIntyre, 2004). It is the omnipresent background to the consciousness. It influences thoughts and behaviour continually (MacIntyre, 2004). Freud published a series of masterful studies that clearly demonstrated that mental processes that are actively barred from awareness result in symptoms that differ from conscious mentation (Galatzer-Levy,2017). These include processes that were almost entirely barred from awareness and later in terms of 'processes like splitting and denial which included conscious awareness of their content but protected against the consequences of conscious elements from interacting with one and other' (Galatzer-Levy, 2017, p.206). Sande et al. (1988) suggest that many blind spots may be due to having too much information. For example it is difficult to see the wood from the trees.

Areas of unawareness or psychological blind spots seek to add 'content' to consciousness so that a deeper and fuller perspective on one's world may be realised (Brooke, 2015, p.135). If a process does not possess all the qualities of a conscious process, it therefore contains areas

of unawareness (Bargh, & Morsella, 2008). However, Broad (1968) warns we know nothing with certainty about the intrinsic nature of the unconscious, and we ought to therefore studiously avoid all phrases which suggest some particular certainty on view of its intrinsic nature. Therefore, we must attempt to order and describe these experiences without concluding anything definite about their essence or ultimate nature (Von Franz, 1975). Broad's (1968) ultimate objective was to try and define or sufficiently describe unconscious mental events. According to Brooke (2015) the unconscious is an ambiguous consciousness, an existential incarnation and awakening that lacks self-reflection.Physiologically, it is a negative scotoma in the visual field (Millodot p. 36). Bargh & Morsella (2008) defined unconscious influence in terms of lack of awareness of the influence or effects of a triggering stimulus and not the triggering stimulus itself (Bargh, 1992). Unconscious mental content appears, according to Jung, first in the form of projection or in dreams or fantasies but are not yet integrated (Brooke, 2015). The unconscious expresses itself indirectly and often can have conflicting areas of mental life between the consciousness and unconscious (Norman, 2010). Psychological blind spots may be personal complexes. 'A complex is a psychic energy centre around which clustered particular types of themes within, personal experience' (Brooke, 2015, p.16).Broad, (1968) stated that sometimes it is a conscious and deliberate process which is itself ignored or misdescribed and other times it is habitual. A large portion of our unconscious is stored knowledge we are unaware of, but that influences our everyday behavior and conscious experience (Norman, 2010). Informational (quality and quantity) and motivational (coping/ defence mechanism) barrier operate together and are the primary explanations for blind spots in self knowledge (Vazire, 2010). PBS may include impulses, ideas, wishes and fears that operate unwittingly and influence our every daybehavior (Kahn, 2002).

Blind Self

> Do we understand each other? Better than we understand ourselves (Richard Russo p.106)

Gallrein (2013) study states how people are unaware of how other people see them. 'Because our peers and especially our adversaries often fail to share our views we inevitably infer that

they are less objective than we are' (Pronin, et al., 2002, p.378). General agreement exists among social and counseling psychologists that the self is constructed through interpersonal exchanges and social feedback (Moore et al.,1997). Vazire and Carlson, (2011), reviewed evidence concerning the accuracy of self awareness and other perceptions of personality. In fact some research has stated others know more than the self knows (Vazire, 2010). Self-knowledge which is no easier than any other, and indeed probably more difficult, since I understand myself only by means of the signs which I give of my own life and which are returned to me via others (Ricoeur, 1994). Gallrein (2013) study concluded that a 'blind spot' is an appropriate term to describe a particular kind of interpersonal perception.

Using a social reality framework luft and Ingham (1955) were the first to systematically address the relationship between self and other-perceptions in personality psychology. They presented a model called the Johari Window, in which they contrasted the views that people have of themselves with the views others have of them (ibid). The Johari window is one model that has potential for enabling users to gain greater insight (Shenton, 2007). It investigates a region called the blind self which includes characteristics of the person that are known to other people but not to the actual individual (ibid). Over several decades, the Johari window has been used in a range of disciplines (Shenton, 2007). Gallrein, Carlson, Holstein and Leising (2013) investigated blind spot features of personalities that others are aware of, but which are oblivious to the targets themselves (Luft&Ingham, 1955). They used a person cantered approach to investigate evidence between normative and distinctive blind spots (ibid). This approach was chosen as it uses self-knowledge to create awareness of one's patterns of traits (self-perceptions and meta-perceptions) (Gallrein 2013). The findings imply that the average person is not aware of some of the ways they are perceived by others. Pronin, et al., (2002) found that people thought that blind spots or cognitive biases were more prevalent in others than themselves. In personality research, the term blind spot denotes personality characteristics that people are not aware of, but that are consensually attributed to them by others (Luft&Ingham, 1955).Gallrein (2016) state a measure of true self-knowledge must account for the characteristics one ascribes to themselves that may not be shared by others.

Furthermore, Vazire and Carlson, (2011), suggest that those who know us well see things that we do not see in ourselves. Gallrein et al (2016) evidenced that the average person is partly unaware of how positively or negatively others view them or in the unique way they are seen. The correspondence between targets' self views and others' views of targets has often been

characterized as modest- as has the relationship between meta-perceptions (what a target thinks others think of them) and others' views (Vazire and Carlson, 2010).Vazire and Carlson, (2011), goal was to make the case that others sometimes see aspects of our personality that we are blind to. Vazire and Carlson, (2011), concluded from the empirical literature that to know peoples personality, we need to know how they see themselves and how they are seen by others who know them well. Consequently, 'we cannot have any final judgement about ourselves or our lives' (Jung cited in Romanyshyn, 2013, p.30)

Self –presentation has been described as comprising strategically controlled behaviours where people deliberately attempt to project a desired identity image to others (Tyler, 2012). Self presentation also consists of automatic, non-conscious component (Baumeister, 1982). Ames and Wzlawek (2014) research concluded work on self-awareness and meta-perceptions suggests that self-awareness exists but is limited, in part because others' views of us are hard to read and our attention or interpretations fall short. They continued to conclude that some accounts propose that we often fill in the blanks by assuming the best about ourselves and our behaviour (self-enhancement) and assuming others see us similarly (projection). Research has shown what people will do in order to maintain a positive view of themselves (Dunning, 2005). Self perception is not an objective, neutral process (Vazire and Carlson, 2011). Relatively unskilled people often vastly overestimate their abilities in domains ranging from logical reasoning to emotional intelligence (Dunning, 2011). Moreover, scholars of meta-perceptions (e.g Kenny & DePaulo, 1993) have argued that people generally project their self-views onto others. A target tends to assume others see them as they see themselves. These effects can produce a situation where people rate themselves (overly) positively in a particular domain and (mistakenly) assume others see them equally positively (Ames and Wzlawek, 2014). Therefore, the challenge of decoding blind spots shows why self awareness might be limited and the mechanisms of self enhancement and projection show that errors in meta-perceptions may often fall in the direction of flattering or incorrect self –views (Ames and Wzlawek , 2014).What inhibits higher levels of self-other convergence? The process of encoding, transmission, and decoding is fraught with the potential for missed or misread signals (Carlson & Kenny, 2012). Assessment of self-awareness is made difficult by the fact that, most of the time, being can be confused with seeming (Ames & Wzlawek, 2014).It is difficult to assess awareness of the manner others perceive us because the perception we have of ourselves can differ from the perception others have of us (Carlson & Kenny, 2012). Dissonance theory is where the performance was public in one case but relatively private in

another (Duval, & Wicklund, 1971). When public-private dimensions are varied, Duval, & Wicklund, (1971) argue that one mediator of dissonance reduction is objective self-awareness. Their research proved that when objective self-awareness was created via confrontation from another, this generated opinion change in the direction of correctness (Duval, & Wicklund, 1971).

Self Awareness Avoidance

Discrepancies between an existing self-state and one's own ideals lead to dejection, whereas discrepancies between self and another's' ideals leads to shame and embarrassment (Silvia, and Duval, 2001). Twenge et al., (2003) study provided evidence that social situations can lead individuals to avoid awareness of the self, thereby relieving rejected individuals of a potentially unpleasant confrontation with their social shortcomings and failures. Furthermore, Duval and Wicklund's (1972) affirmed the objective self-awareness could be an aversive state for some, as the probability that at least one self-standard discrepancy existing is quite high. Individuals need to defend the self from the immediate pain of socially challenging situations (Williams, 2009), while also engaging the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural mechanisms that can aid in the formation and maintenance of relationships. However, avoidance of self-awareness may provide psychological refuge, these individuals need to move forward and forge new social connections if they are to satisfy their fundamental need to belong (Hess and Pickett, 2010.) Therefore, Hess and Pickett, (2010) concluded that by not focusing on the self, one may simultaneously avoid the distress of social failure and free attentional resources for other purposes. They concluded rejection appears to cause individuals to disengage from socially-relevant aspects of the self, potentially alleviating the distress caused by negative social encounters (ibid).

However, previous research, found that high self-awareness promoted defensive, external attributions for negative events (Cohan et al., 1985) presumably because people wanted to avoid the experience of failure (Ickes et al., 1973). The interplay of these two motives determines whether success and failure are attributed to self or to an external possible cause. Therefore, we cannot judge our own personality as we might another (Vazire and Carlson, 2011). Vazire (2010) proposed the SOKA- self-other knowledge asymmetry model to map

out the aspects of the personality that are known uniquely to the self or uniquely to others. This model found the differences between what we know about ourselves and what others know are driven by motivational biases (Andersen, Glassman, & Gold, 1998).

Illusion of Objectivity (Bias Blind Spot)

The tendency to perceive bias more in others than the self is due to the differences in the information that people use in making assessments of bias in self versus others (Ehrlinger et al., 2005; Pronin et al., 2004).Counselling psychologists are recognizing therapy as a culturally contextualized practice whereby counselors own beliefs, expectations, values and biases influence professional practice and research (Ridley et al., 1994). This may limit the effectiveness of introspection in the pursuit of self-knowledge (Wilson, 2009). The one constant that therapists can count on is that they will carry their own lifetime of accumulated cultural assumptions, experiences and biases wherever they go (Sandeen, et. al. 2018). Cognitive sophistication does not mitigate the bias blind spot and the idea that the mechanism that cause bias are fundamental and not easily controlled strategically (West et. al. 2012). Displays of cognitive and motivational bias are inevitable products of the way we all see and understand the world. Perceptions of bias in others, coupled with denial of bias in self, are similarly inevitable (Pronin et al.,2002). However, Sandeen, et. al. (2018) state it is important to normalise the idea that implicit bias is part of being human. Although, Jung was the first to demand that the analyst should himself be analysed, we are largely indebted to Freud for the invaluable discovery that analysts too have their complexes and consequently many blind spots which act as so many prejudices (Jung, 1954, p.8).Sandeen, et al., (2018) state it is important to recognise bias as a natural and universal part of being human, and to differentiate bias from malicious intent. ‘There is no thought or perception that is not mediated by a complex unconscious perspective, but not even a psychologist is prepared to regard his statements, at least in part, as a subjectively conditioned confession’ (Romanyshyn, 2013, p.26). The psychologist who would keep soul in mind, however, is charged to mind the gap in his or her research between his or her conscious claims about the work and his or her complex unconscious ties to the work (ibid).Personal and theoretical prejudices are the most serious obstacles in the way of psychological judgment. They can, however, be eliminated with a little good will and insight (Jung, 1954).A way of knowing

requires the ego not only to balance the tension between conscious and unconscious perspectives, but also to hold off the allure and comfort of being a true believer by falling into either/way of thinking. (Romanyshyn, 2013).However, self report measures on coping strategies and defense mechanism is questionable as the self-report is biased (Cramer, 2000). In contrast, Pronin & Kugler, (2007) explored people's lack of awareness of the limitations of their own introspection. Introspective discrimination is a difficult, tiresome and unwonted process; and no one who is not used to it is likely to avoid mistakes (Broad, 1968). The ideal would naturally be to have no assumptions at all. But this impossible even if one exercises the most rigorous self-criticism, for one is oneself the biggest of all one's assumptions, and the one with the gravest consequences. 'Try as we may to have no assumptions the assumptions that I myself am will determine my method: as I am, so will I proceed' (Jung 1937, p.329 as cited in Brooke, 2015). This will involve one's guiding philosophy on life (Jung, 1943), which in turn involves one's psychological type, cultural situation, and finally one's complexes, 'the most absolutely prejudiced thing in every individual' (Jung 1934c, p. 103).

Using self reports on defenses is questionable considering the over-whelming evidence demonstrating distorting self-reports (Cramer, 2000). In addition, it must be noted that introspection is rarely a reliable source of psychological insight (Kline, 1984). However, MacIntyre, (2004) affirms the preconscious or subconscious is material that although not conscious can be brought into consciousness by ordinary introspective methods.Other blind spots are easy to detect in others behaviour, but when one introspects they largely fail to detect the unconscious processes that are the source of their own blind spots (Ehrlinger et al., 2005; Kahneman, 2011; Pronin et al.,2004; Wilson, 2002).In addition, the size of distinctive blind spots varies within individuals (Gallrein,2016). Individuals with poor awareness had larger blind spots and were more out of touch with the perceptions others actually had for them (Gallrein et al 2016). In the unaware person perilous aberrations manifest, the first of which one attempts to dominate everything by the intellect (Jung, 1961/1995).

What one lacks recognition of, is the role that those same biases play in governing their own judgements and inferences (Pronin et al.,2002). This asymmetry in perception of bias arises from "navie realism" (Pronin,et al., 2001 in Pronin, et al., (2002). MacMahon's (2020) study highlights the difficulty in uncovering blind spots and the importance of a nondefensive attitude. If one has got a close enough relationship with a client and are open enough, they obviously can point them out to you as well as hopefully supervisors can, in a safe way.

Another participant also emphasises the embedded nature of blind spots and the need for another person to help develop perspective.

Ancestral and Cultural Blind Spots

To understand myself is to make the greatest detour, via the memory which retains what has become meaningful for all mankind. (Ricoeur, 1994, p.52).

Romanyshyn, (2013) states we live between the two worlds of collective conscious values, opinions and prejudices and the values and prejudices of the collective unconscious. The utter identification with either would lead to a one-sided truth (Romanyshyn, 2013). 'If the world is always revealed according to the way one stands within it, this self-disclosure as a world is especially apparent when that revealed world is uncluttered with social platitudes and empirical literalism' (Brooke, 2015, p.136). Much of individual's interaction with culture is outside of the conscious awareness (Lu &Wan, 2017). Jung theorized 'it is not the single individual who is liable to psychic illness, as a wrong attitude towards the unconscious; the same thing can also happen as a whole' (Von Franz, 1975, p.5). 'Consciousness, instead of being widened by the withdrawal of projections, is narrowed, because society, a mere condition of human existence, is set up as a goal. Those parts of our personality which are prohibited and taboo in our culture are exiled to the estranged in us the unconscious' (Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017, p.8). According to Jung (1954, p. 107) society is the greatest temptation to unconsciousness, for 'the mass infallibly swallows up the individual – who has no security in himself – and reduces him to a helpless particle'. 'Whereas the natural process of individuation brings to birth a consciousness of human community precisely because it makes us aware of the unconscious, which unites and is common to all mankind '(Jung, 1954, p. 108). The scientific philosopher and historian Michael Hagner (2008a) 'investigated thoroughly and in detail how the visualisation of processes which take place in the hidden spaces of our bodies and brain influence our thought, fantasies and emotions, and our culture in general' (Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017, p.7).

Jung thought the unconscious to possess contents that are beneath the threshold of consciousness and the collective unconscious is conceived as a deeper layer of the unconscious than the personal unconscious(Jung1934/54 cited in Brooke, 2015). 'Collective

consciousness is those who have the least access to their interior selves and have strayed the furthest from their instinctual roots' (Jung 1947/54, p.206). 'The collective unconscious is the invisible world, the great spirit, God, Tao, the great Voice, the great spirit '(Jung 1977, p.375). 'Collective unconscious; its automatic and already functioning intentionalities; its generous endowment of inherent dispositions and propensities; its latent and sometimes involuntary perceptivity; its implicit structure of pre-understanding; and its always accessible felt sense, however inchoate and untutored, of what is basically good, basically true, and basically beautifulthrough which the dream of our community, the unrecognised dream most latent in our ancestral body, comes spontaneously to articulation, and enters the circle of cultural conversation' (Levin, 1985, pp.171-2 cited in Brooke, 2015). Freud believed in genetics and the preserving of memories that were experienced by our ancestors (Easthope, 1999). In addition, Jung affirmed that the mind is an active principle in the inheritance (Von Franz, 1975). It consists of the sum of the ancestral minds, the unseen fathers whose authority is born anew with the child (ibid). Furthermore Freud stated that there is a form of primary repression that is inherited (Easthope, 1999).

Individuals with high cultural self awareness would have a clearer sense of how their cultural experience has shaped who they are (Lu &Wan, 2017). They would be aware of how culture has influenced different aspects of their self, such as values and behaviours (Lu &Wan , 2017). Both the value we set upon our culture and the values we see in it and its very survival, depend upon a "right" or "wrong" understanding of the unconscious. (Von Franz, 1975). If I can understand vanished worlds, it is because each society has created its own medium of understanding by creating the social and cultural worlds in which it understands itself (Ricoeur, 1994). May's vision demands that the power of transformation finds its way into the heart of our decaying society, a culture whose value system is predicated on a pathetic addiction to comfort, ease, and false security (Kiser, 2007). Philosophy attempts to recover the original sense of things by a kind of archaeology, a form of thinking that accepts the cultural and categorical things present in our world and tries to dig through the strata of their categorical sedimentation (Sokolowski, 2000).It tries to trace back the evidence that were layered one upon another in our intellectual history. It strives to move backwards through the genetic constitutions that lie within the categorical formations we inherit (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 167).

Early Influences and Learnt Behaviour

> Kierkegaard demanded that we check ourselves for self-deception and that we aim to face the abyss of the ultimate rather than live in comfort of our temporal life, or with values that have been handed down to us by our parents (cited in Van Deurzen, 2019,p.11).

Socrates declared that all inquiry and all learning is but recalling memories from the past (Palmer, 1998,p.178).Jung held Freud's view those vestiges of old experiences exist in the unconscious (Jung, 1961/1995). Freud states that what we describe as character is based on impressions that have the greatest effect on us from youth (Easthope, 1999). People adopt physical and behavioural habits of people they interact with unconsciously (Bargh, & Morsella 2008). He believed that our emotions, thoughts, judgments, actions and disposition are always the effects of antecedent states (MacIntyre, 2004). King (2021) states it is fair to say we never get a clear or complete picture. We are informed by our preconceptions and prior experience. (ibid). MacIntyre (2004) explains how Freud used the term unconscious in two different ways; firstly as a psychological phenomena and secondly as a theoretical notion to elucidate the link between adult behaviour and childhood events. Watson agreed with Freud that traumatic events in ones infancy could later affect ones habits or personality without the person being aware of it (Watson, 1928). Theorists such as Horney, Fromm, Sullivan, Maslow, Rogers, and May all posit that pathology is the result of obstructions that, occurring in early life, affect later development (as cited in Yalom, 1931). Objectively the stimuli which influence the id and ego formation come from physical nature (animate or inanimate) and from human beings, the persons surrounding the infant (Heimann,1952). Adult life may include forms of neurosis, psychosis or normality all of which is shaped and controlled by the past (MacIntyre, 2004). It is not unusual to find ourselves in situations, which although we complain about we in fact unwittingly orchestrated unbeknownst to us (Kahn, 2002). What is repressed depends on which childhood memories were painful (MacIntyre, 2004). Repressed ideas attract similar ideas into repression (Kahn, 2002). If a child learns it is bold to be assertive to their parents, one therefore represses assertiveness in future encounter (ibid). Experience has shown that if this projection persists it creates a bond that corresponds in every respect to the initial infantile relationship, 'with a tendency to recapitulate all the experiences of childhood on the therapist' (Jung, 1954 p.170). Carl Rogers

wrote about a client who as a child was dependent on other people's opinion, that now as an adult she was completely removed from her own autonomous self (Yalom,1931). Furthermore, one can continually expect punishment in their adult life because of unconscious guilt from childhood (MacIntyre, 2004).Tyler, (2012) research shares some similarity with the chameleon effect, in which the mere perception of another's behaviour is believed to automatically cause non-conscious mimicry. Evidence show that the Chameleon effect occurs automatically and outside awareness (ibid).

Therapy will start with the client talking about adult life and then move into childhood and the incidents that had being apparently forgotten will be recalled (MacIntyre, 2004). The therapeutic situation is an ideal outlet for this material (Kahn, 2002). Memories maybe accompanied by emotional release (MacIntyre, 2004), followed by mitigation of neurotic behaviour (MacIntyre, 2004). Through trust, a clients resistance will lessen to the therapists interpretations and the repressed memory of the traumatic event will be overcome (MacIntyre, 2004). It is important for one to understand the templates one is using that is destructively distorting their perceptions of the present moment (Kahn, 2002). Many clients do not remember certain childhood events and can be unconsciously resistant to the therapist's interpretations (MacIntyre, 2004). Remembering childhood events and abreacting the emotions attached to it will allow behaviour to alter (MacIntyre, 2004). Freud states that recalling a memory has a therapeutic power because memories have been repressed and operating in unconscious unhelpful behaviour (MacIntyre, 2004).

Defence Mechanisms

Over a century and a half ago Sigmund Freud developed the theory of ego defence mechanisms which, he stated are the unconscious resources used by the ego to reduce the conflict between the id and the superego (Freud, 1937). The ego must keep us from being overwhelmed from anxiety (Kahn, 2002). Freud was the first to term 'defence mechanism in 1894 to designate the rebellion of the Ego against painful or intolerable representations (Timmermann et al., 2009).

The anticipation of satisfying some impulses engenders punishment which causes anxiety. A conscious decision to forgo the impulse may cause frustration and defensive behaviour

(Kahn, 2002). The principal Freudian concept on which everything turns holds that mental illness is a result of defence against anxiety (Kahn,2002). Ego defences are prototypical unconscious rejecting and keeping something out of consciousness (Erdelyi, 1985). Cramer (2015) investigated mental processes that occur outside of awareness. In various studies on human reaction to stress, it is assumed that adaptation occurs as a result of coping processes or defences mechanisms (Cramer, 2000). Lazarus and Folkman conceptualize coping strategies as cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and /or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Timmermann et al., 2009).

Its function is to protect the person from experiencing excessive anxiety and the protection of self-esteem. Moreover, Wagas et al. (2015) defined ego defence mechanisms as unconscious psychological processes, which enable an individual to prevent anxiety when exposed to a stressful situation. Freud (1908) argued, ultimately all character traits can be regarded as defences against instinctual impulses (Kline, 1984). Kahn proposes a definition of defence mechanism that departs the classic definition. A defence mechanism is a manipulation of perception intended to protect the person from anxiety. The perception may be of internal events, such as one's feelings or impulses, or it may be of external events, such as the feelings of other people or the realities of the world (Kahn, 2002). Non-conscious mental processes are requisite for defence mechanisms. (Cramer, 2000) Freud stated that defence mechanisms were the corner stone of psychoanalytic theory. If we understood them, we would understand the mind (Kahn, 2002). Freud and his followers did not believe these defences to be pathological. On the contrary we all employ them and couldn't get along without them. Ego defences are healthy and become a problem only if they are employed excessively or inflexibly (Kahn, 2002). A great contribution of Freud's (1894) was his inductive postulation that unconscious blind spots including 'defence mechanisms' protect the individual from painful emotions, ideas, and realities. In addition, defence mechanisms are aspects of every-day behaviour and assist people in better managing situations that threaten the ego (Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015). Furthermore, Hoyer and Steyaert (2015) state that unconscious ego defences allow people to deal with paradoxical experiences, while still

protecting the self. [60] Like other mechanisms, displacement and turning against the self are familiar in everyday life and are relatively harmless as long as they are mild and short lived. Defence mechanisms are more unconscious and constitute appropriate answers in extreme emotional situations (Timmermann et al., 2009). Coping strategies allow for more conscious processes of adaptation to the environment. According to Vaillant (2011) defences have many properties; they mitigate the distressing effects of both emotion and cognitive dissonance, they are unconscious or involuntary, they are discrete from one and other, they are dynamic and reversible, they can be adaptive, creative as well as pathological, they can be invisible or blind to the user and appear odd or even annoying to the observer. Whetherdefences function as neuroses or not depend not on their content but on whether or not they are a nuisance to the individual and those around him or her and whether they inhibit further psychological development (Brooke, 2015).Coping mechanisms are similar however, they may be differentiated on the basis of their status as conscious or unconscious processes and on the basis of being intentional or non-intentional operations. Also they can be determined by situation or disposition and whether they may be hierarchically arranged. (Timmermann et al., 2009). Timmermann et al., (2009)identified two types of coping: problem –focused coping, aimed at changing a situation; and emotional-focused coping, aimed at attenuating and supporting the emotional states triggered by the situation.

Hierarchy of Defences

However, a limitation with measuring unconscious processes was finding an adequate measure of defence and previous studies had psychometric inadequacies (Davidson & MacGregor, 1998). A defence mechanism inventory was developed by Gleser and Ihilevich (1969). Although this measure assured objectivity, evidence for reliability and validity was mixed (Cramer, 2000). In the past decade theoretical ideas about unconscious processes and in research the approach to defence assessment has evolved (Cramer, 2000). Furthermore

new approaches to assessment of defence mechanisms have developed (ibid). Challenges with the inconsistency of asking people to self report on operations that are, by definition unconscious, required researchers to develop new approaches. These observational methods including ratings of defence use clinical interviews (Perry & Cooper, 1989; Vaillant, 1971), coding of narrative material (Cramer, 1991b) allow for freedom of expression of thought content , while at the same time providing the observer with a systematic plan to assess the presence of defence mechanisms. The specificity of the rules for coding makes it possible to determine both the reliability and the validity of the measures (Cramer, 2000).

Over the past 30 years several longitudinal studies at Berkeley and Harvard have clarified our understanding. Cramer (2000) and Perry (1998) organized defence into consensual hierarchy of relative psychopathology. By offering a tentative hierarchy and glossary of consensually validated definitions, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association 1994) has included a Defensive Functioning Scale (pp.751-753) as a proposed diagnostic axis (Cramer, 2000).Freud deals with more than a dozen defences; Omission, ellipsis, symbolization, isolation, displacement, doubt, regression, reaction formation, undoing, rationalization, denial, and projection. These constructs are no longer synonyms of one another but are used to describe distinct mechanisms by which repression (defence) can be implemented (Erdelyi, 1985). According to Vaillant, (2011 the hierarchy has four levels. The first level as psychotic defences (common in PTSD): acting out (e.g Lai Massacre); passive aggression (cutting oneself); autistic fantasy; dissociation (out-of-body experience during torture, multiple personalities common after childhood abuse); and projection (Paranoia) (Vaillant, 2011) . It is advised that defences in this category rarely respond to verbal interpretation alone (ibid). The third level is intermediate (neurotic) defences. Defensive functioning at this level keeps potentially threatening ideas, feelings, memories, wishes, or fears out of awareness (ibid). Examples are displacements (kicking the dog instead of the boss), isolation and its opposite repression – feeling without thinking. These intermediate defences are manifested clinically by phobias, compulsions, somatizations and amnesias. In contrast to the immature defences, intermediate defences usually make the user more uncomfortable than the observer and can often be breached with psychotherapy. At the fourth level are mature defences. Mature defences increase with age and maximize gratification and allow relatively more conscious awareness of feelings, ideas, and their consequences. Examples are altruism, sublimation, suppression, and humour.Defences never operate in isolation but in organic combinations (Erdelyi,

1985).DSM-5 offers a tentative hierarchy of defence, from psychotic to immature to mature (Vaillant, 2011). Coping responses to stress can be divided into three categories; voluntarily mobilizing social or personal supports or involuntary (Vaillant, 2011). The third category involves deploying unconscious mechanisms to reduce the disorganizing effects of sudden stress (ibid). Vailliant (1982) described the hierarchical nature of these defences and grouped them on a continuum of ego maturity from immature to mature. Furthermore, the twenty defence mechanisms identified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) have been classified by Andrews (1993) into a) four mature; sublimation, humour ,altruism anticipation and suppression ; b) four neurotic : undoing, pseudo-altruism, idealization, reaction formation; c) twelve immature : projection, passive aggression, acting out, isolation, devaluing, autistic fantasy, denial, displacement, dissociation, splitting, rationalization and somatisation. There is general agreement that mature defences such as humour, altruism, and sublimation are associated with adaptive functioning (Vaillant, 1977). There is probably no standard or discrete list of defensive tactics (Erdelyi, 1985).

The more complex cognitive operations that are involved, the more mature the defence. When considering ego development, dispositions that increase the capacity of the ego to adapt to the environment both external and internal, may be considered more mature than dispositions that are maladaptive (Cramer, 2012). Children's use of defence mechanisms changes in a developmentally predictable pattern (Cramer, 1991b). Noting that defence use changes with age due to that different defences will be predominant at different periods of development and will involve varying degrees of cognitive complexity and that each defence has its own developmental history, decline in the use of one defence as another becomes predominant(Cramer, 2012). Relying on the immature defences of denial is normative for a five year old but is developmentally out of phase in a young adult. Denial, projection and identification; these three defences guided the development of the Defence Mechanism Manual (DMM) (Cramer, 2015). For each defence there are seven manifestation of the defence that can be used to code the presence of that defence. To summarize Cramer (ibid) study, three theoretical assumptions about defence mechanisms that are all supported when defences are assessed from narrative stories coded with the DMM were; a) Experimentally induced stress increases defence use b) Defence use protects children from psychological distress and c) excessive use of age –inappropriate defence is associated with psychopathology in adults, adolescents, and older children (Cramer, 2015, p. 120). Therefore,

these results support the validity for assessing and researching defence mechanisms including other blind spots.

Vaillant, (2011) affirms that choice of defences is involuntary but mature defences (e.g sublimation and humour) rather than immature defences (projection and hypochondrias) can make a significant difference to mental health. However, even the most pathologic defence can engenders calm. Even immature defences (e.g acting out and passive aggression) reflect the brain's homeostatic effort to cope with sudden changes in the brain's internal and external environment (ibid). Moreover, mature defence mechanism, which, despite being pathological and associated with high anxiety levels, represents an individual's effort to maintain psychological homeostasis in response to a stressful environment (ibid). However, defensive patterns can be limiting especially if over-use of denial or avoidance (Vince & Broussine, 1996). The idea that both children and adults use defence mechanisms to cope with stress and life's challenges have been well documented (Cramer, 2006). Three defences that have been studied widely are denial, projection and identification (Cramer, 2012).

Introjection – Identification

According to MacIntyre, (2004) the unconscious is the link between childhood and adult life. We find our values from the outside world (Von Franz, 1975). Heidegger and Jung were both sensitive to the fact that there are many voices' in one's psychological make-up, and Jung urges one to take responsibility for one's differentiation of and responsiveness to these voices (Jung, 1958b).Introjections, is where another's attitude is taken on as his own (MacIntyre, 2004). It is alternatively known as identification (Cramer, 2015). It is internalizing one's thoughts, beliefs, values, or behaviour (ibid). Voices in authority lodges in our heads, often the voice of parents. –identification- we take aspects of others into ourselves to form our personality (Cramer, 2015). Our parents are our first and most powerful objects of identification. Identification (introjection) is more a mature ego defence (ibid). Rather than attempting to change reality, identification involves a change in the self to become more like some admired other person or group (Cramer, 2012). By taking on the qualities, attributes, opinions and values of this other, the individual gains a sense of belonging and so avoids insecurity and bolsters self-esteem (Cramer, 2012). When the ego receives stimuli from the

outside, it absorbs it and makes it part of itself, it introjects them. When it bars them off, it projects them (Heimann, 1952). In adolescence, identifying with a group or significant other may protect the other from feeling lonely or isolated (Cramer, 2012). Introjections and projection are amongst the earliest mental mechanisms (Heimann, 1952). In addition to identification being used to develop identity it can also be used as an unconscious defence.

A child who is too good indiscriminately absorbs his objects; he remains a shell of impersonations and imitations and does not develop his character (Heimann, 1952). Severe depression shows introjected believes comprise elements of another person and external objects. This gives a clear picture of what is internal and external (Heimann, 1952). Many ambitious and successful men are showing daddy what they can do (Kline, 1984). Some are competing; others having introjected a fierce and disapproving father, far from competing are trying to prove themselves (ibid). Cramer, (2012) uses the example of the concept of the identification with the aggressor, which explains why a person who has been aggressed against may begin to act like the aggressor. Identification with the aggressor is a defence designed to protect one against the anxiety stemming from conflict with a powerful person (Kessler, 1966). One may introject one or more personal characteristics of that person and may also project that aggressive intention onto another person to protect oneself against superego anxiety and guilt (Kahn, 2002). Freud explicitly acknowledged the influence of introjections on the formation of character (i.e the ego) (Heimann, 1952).

Dawkins stated that phenotypic plasticity enables infants to absorb, entirely automatically habits in the unstructured brain (cited in Bargh & Morsella, 2008).The unconscious provides an explanation of the way early childhood events shape our adult life. When a child starts to mature, he establishes his parents as part of himself. Identification with the parents and acceptance of their demands. (Heimann, 1952). ‘Shoulds, musts, oughts’. The introjections of the parents is a selective process, only certain aspects are introjected (ibid). The cultural guides to appropriate behaviour including language, norms and values are ‘downloaded’ in early childhood development (Bargh& Morsella 2008). It is not only cultural norms but also absorbed values and behaviours of those closest to us (ibid). Bowbly states that if the primary attachment with mother or father is not sufficient to meet the child’s needs, this will later influence adult relationships (MacIntyre, 2004). In an attempt to defend self, the mother is introjected and the good and bad parts become split off in the unconscious. (Kline, 1984). Contemporary therapists focus on helping clients reintegrate previously split-off parts of

themselves (Yalom,1931). Infants are wide open to imitative tendencies, having not yet developed cognitive control structures to suppress or inhibit them (Bargh& Morsella 2008).

Introjection and projection occur throughout life and are influenced by the functions of the ego. Their main function is obtaining pleasure and avoiding pain (Heimann, 1952). There is no doubt that Freud gave early introjections a certain role in the formation of the super-ego, as he spoke at length of the child's identification with his parents (Bargh& Morsella 2008). 'The tyranny of the Superego (Uber-Ich or Ich –ideal) are the voices of parental prohibitions introjected, who's role is to interdict the anarchic and destructive nature of the Id' (Inner child instincts). Therefore introjections are fundamental in the formation of the superego (Heimann, 1952). Perception and its component operations (attention, taking notice, storing, judging) are linked up with introjections and projections. It is these exact processes of adding or subtracting something of its own which can modify the original id into the ego (Heimann, 1952). The action of introjections and projection accounts for the change of the id into the ego (ibid). The ego introjects some aspects and projects onto others (MacIntyre, 2004).

The concept of identity includes four identity statuses or styles (Cramer, 2012). The achieved style the individual has experienced a period of personal exploration, involving some conflict, in the process of choosing for him/herself a set of values and occupational goals (Marcia, 1966). For the foreclosed style, the commitment is based on the unquestioned acceptance of the values and goals of parents or significant others. Moratorium, no commitment has been made to goals or values but exploration is happening. In the fourth stage, diffused, neither commitment to goals or values have been made (Cramer, 2012). In late adolescence, the formation of an identity is related to the use of the defence of identification (Cramer, 2001). Erikson (1968) committed identity either achieved or foreclosed is based on identification with parents or other important figures i.e taking on the characteristics of others, including their ideas, values and mores. Alder- inferior complex- often children from educated families may have goals of academic success which are beyond their capacity and interest (Kline, 1984). In contrast children who made greater use of identification were found to have higher scores on all of Harter's (1982) dimensions of competence. Previous research has shown that threats to identity in late adolescence produce an increase use of the defence identification (Cramer, 1991b). The views of significant others that shaped the character of the foreclosed individual have been internalized and not modified by future experience (Cramer, 2012) and will continue into adulthood.]

Projection / Attribution

Another non-conscious defence that was being studies in the 1930's was projection. 'People wish to avoid self-knowledge, they prefer to project evil onto another person or nation or class'(Von Franz, 1975, p.173). According to Adams projective identification and enactments are evident in the therapy room (2016). Ames and Wzlawek (2014) affirm if a counterpart's signals are hard to read, two other mechanisms may fill the void: self-enhancement and projection. 'The client, by bringing an activated unconscious content to bear upon the therapist, constellates the corresponding unconscious material in him, owing to the inductive effect which always emanates from projections in a greater or lesser degree' (Jung, 1954, p.176). Therefore, the therapist and client find themselves in a relationship founded on mutual unconsciousness (Jung, 1954). The transference therefore consists in a number of projections which act as a substitute for a real psychological relationship (Jung, 1954, p.136). According to Jung, our ordinary life still swarms with projections. You can find them spread out in the newspapers, in books, rumours, and in ordinary social gossip (1938/40, p.83). All gaps in one's actual knowledge are still filled out with projections (ibid). Psychological life becomes an interior event unless it is projected outwards. It was Jung's view to seek what was hidden behind the concept of projection (Von Franz, 1975). Badger-Charleson (cited in Goss & Stevens, 2016) avows her own projections within her research where she unwittingly projected parts of herself onto others.

Projection was originally a Freudian concept which Jung then also used but in a different context.We may use other words and terms to describe projections, depending on our training and whether or not we are analytically minded or humanistically oriented (Adam, 2016). The word transference is similar to projection (Jung, 1954). Also known as archaic identity where primitive man identified with his environment (Cramer, 2015). From an existential-hermeneutic stance, projection manifests outside of a person's conscious awareness, as in the unexamined life or at the beginning of therapy (Tratter, 2015). Existential –analytic psychotherapists have used the phase implicit world projection to state the ways upon one project their world designs from meaningful fore-structures and backgrounds of their lives (ibid). Although the self-other paradigm appeared to demonstrate the defence of projection, Holmes (1978) criticized it and believed the same process should be more parsimoniously

labelled attribution (Cramer, 2000). Projection has been previously explained as attribution (Cramer, 2000). The idea of projections was taken up by social psychologists and incorporated into attribution theory (Kelly, 1967).Furthermore, the cognitive processes involved in the defence of projection were taken into social psychology and researched under the name of attribution, or later the false consensus effect. (Cramer, 2000).

Freud theorized, out of guilt the animal nature of man becomes repressed and then projected onto others who purportedly have the same character defects as man (Hawkins, 2011, p. 28). 'Projection is involuntary transposition of something unconscious in oneself to an outer object '(Von Franz, 1975, p.77). It refers to protecting oneself from anxiety by repressing a feeling and misperceiving another person as having that feeling (Vaillant, 2011). In addition, projection is attributing to others one's own unacceptable thoughts, feelings or intentions (Cramer, 2015). What one is not aware of in himself, he may recognize in another (MacIntyre, 2004). The paradigms were two types: the attribution of personal characteristics to ambiguous stimuli and the self-other paradigm (the attribution of traits to self and others) (Cramer, 2000). It is the tendency to see in others' peculiarities and ways of behaving which we ourselves display unconsciously symptoms which indicate that the time is ripe for the withdrawal of some projection (Von Franz, 1975). A person may recurrently fall for a similar type of lover, similar in physical appearance and mannerisms, projecting onto each of them qualities they do not possess and later blaming them for disappointing his expectations (MacIntyre, 2004). Projections handles disturbing thoughts or feelings by attributing them to someone else (Cramer, 2012). Other qualities reside in external objects, rather than in self. (Cramer, 2012).MacIntyre, (2004) affirms neurotic reaction akin to projection is where one does not recognize in himself traits he sees in another. Furthermore Kahn, (2002) states a projection is defence mechanism in which we manipulate both an internal and external perception. It refers to protecting oneself from anxiety by repressing a feeling and misperceiving another person as having that feeling. I repress my hate/anger and see you as being angry at me (ibid). When one discharges its inner tension, it projects something of its own (Heimann, 1952). The projection relates to what was part of the outer world. The ego may project what is good and bad. (ibid). We all employ mild versions of projection a good deal of the time and never notice it unless it affects a relationship enough to call attention to itself (Vaillant, 2011). On one hand we are dependent, and the other resistant. This divided attitude is a sign that one is still unconscious of the situation and has not come to any resolution of it. This is characteristic of all projections (Jung, 1995).

Silvia, and Duval, (2001) research summarised the links between self-awareness, attribution, and action. When people are discrepant from a standard, they make attributions for the cause of the discrepancy appraises the likelihood that the discrepancy could be rapidly reduced. If the discrepancy can be reduced, people will attribute failure internally and attempt to change self (ibid). If the discrepancy cannot be reduced, people will attribute failure externally to a standard or other person. This will promote attempts to avoid self-awareness (Silvia, and Duval, 2001). Research has proven (Cramer, 2015) that participants who have no understanding of projection were more likely to use projection than those who had some understanding of the defense (Cramer, 2015).In fact the data showed a significant linear trend ($p<.01$) for the relation between use and understanding (Cramer, 2015). Practical analysis has shown that unconscious contents are invariably projected at first upon concrete persons and situations (Jung, 1954). 'Experience has shown that this projection persists with all its original intensity (which Freud regarded as aetiological), thus creating a bond that corresponds in every respect to the initial infantile relationship, with a tendency to recapitulate all the experiences of childhood on the therapist' (Jung, 1954, p.170).

The need for the withdrawal of a projection is always constellated at the moment when conscious or semi-conscious doubts about the rightness of one's way of looking at things arise and when on the conscious level this view is fanatically defended. Doubt and fanaticism are therefore symptoms which indicate that the time is ripe for the withdrawal of some projection (Von Franz, 1975). Self-focus increases self-attribution (Silvia, and Duval, 2001). Once the function of the defence is made consciously aware, its use is decreased and often a new cognitively more complex view manifests (Cramer, 2015). If projections are analyzed back to their origin, all projections can be dissolved and disposed of in this way (Jung, 1954). What makes it possible at a particular time for us to withdraw a projection, the act of insight into what was previously projected (Von Franz, 1975). Many projections can ultimately be integrated back into the individual once he has recognized their subjective origin (Jung, 1954, p.170).'The withdrawal of a projection, especially when it involves negative contents which are projected onto other people is a great achievement' (Von Franz, 1975). Because this involves considerable moral effort, it is not generally a popular exercise (Von Franz, 1975). 'A purely human relationship is impossible until all the projections have been consciously recognized; they must be subjected to a reductive analysis' (Jung, 1954, p.137). If for example one knows nothing of their shadow, one can simply ask oneself what are those qualities in other people that get on their nerves more than necessary (Von Franz, 1975). In

Jung's opinion the assimilation of a projection takes place in five stages; archaic identity, the humans experiences projection simply as if it were the perception of reality, the second stage arises when conscious or unconscious doubts should arise from within and if the behaviour of the object conflicts with the individuals ideas about it, he begins to differentiate between the projected image and the actual object. In the third stage there is a moral judgement concerning the content of the projection. Forth stage the person usually explains the projection as having being an error or an illusion. On the fifth level he must question the where its origin stemmed from (Von Franz, 1975). Later in life Merton avowed 'perhaps all things I had resented about the world were defects of my own that I had projected upon it' (Commins, p.64). The components of blind spots are present in every man and woman, but people find them for the most part in projection, or else they identify with another unconsciously (Von Franz, 1975). One mechanism the ego uses to protect itself is to disown the painful data and project it onto the world and others (Hawkins, 2011 p.8)

Pure consciousness does not desire, nor project, has no finite aim (Commins, 1999) it accepts things. Jung assumed that the therapist is the better able to make the constellated contents conscious, otherwise it would only lead to mutual imprisonment in the same state of unconscious(Jung, 1954). Most people resist integration, and although they maybe detached from their original objects, they thereupon transfer themselves to the therapist (Jung, 1954). The greatest difficult here is that contents are often activated in the therapist which might normally remain latent (Jung, 1954). Friends may help to illuminate the repetitive pattern but in vain as the person is unable to recognize or see the link (MacIntyre, 2004). Many people remain not conscious of their projected desires (MacIntyre, 2004)**.** In general emotional ties are very important to human beings but they still contain projections, and it is essential to withdraw these projections in order to attain oneself in a measure of objectivity (Jung, 1961/1995). If there was a wider acceptance of Jung's concept of projection, profound and far reaching changes would result, 'for all scientific and religious doctrines would ultimately prove to be projections' (Von Franz, 1975 p.78).

Repression and Suppression

As repression is unobservable we can only infer that the memory has been repressed (MacIntyre, 2004). Through recall of that memory allows one insight (MacIntyre, 2004).In repression the threatening material is forced back into the unconscious. When working with the unconscious the first thing we come up against is not the inner light but a layer of repressed personal content (Von Franz, 1975). The unconscious is the realm of repressed emotions and memories (MacIntyre, 2004). Freud wrote about stripping unpleasant emotions from memory- such is the power of repression. Therefore in determining what one remembers, what one forgets-is instrumental in constructing the unique personal world of each of us (Yalom, 2008). Sullivan was interested in the phenomenon by which one excludes experience from conscious awareness and/or makes parts of the psyche inaccessible to the self. He used the word dissociation as opposed to repression (Yalom 1931). May interprets the concept of repression as the denial of one's potentialities (May, 1983). Gabriel Marcel acknowledged 'that it is theontological repression, rather than repression of instincts, which underlies the deepest aspects of modern Western man's neurosis '(as cited in May, 1967, p.133). Breuer and Freud stated that traumatic experience can become repressed by passing into the unconscious (Easthope, 1999).However, Freud stated that repression causes anxiety, but that a certain amount of anxiety was healthy (Kahn, 2002). Thus Broad (1968) thought that the aversion to one's discriminative introspection from certain experiences is often a deliberate and literally conscious process. An aversion of introspective attention, which begins as deliberate, will quickly become habitual (Broad, 1968). Emotions and desires tend to recur and if I at first deliberately avert my attention from them, I shall very soon come to do so habitually (Broad, 1968). This habit like any other may eventually become so strong that it cannot be overcome by deliberate volition (ibid).A man who represses his homosexuality, would never even his most insightful and honest moments be able to recognize it (Kline, 1984). One can feel annoyed with one's spouse but deliberately suppress an appropriate response for the sake of harmony (Kline, 1984).

'Repressed contents can consist of thoughts, wishes and also emotions and affects- the first stage of catharsis (purification) serves to bring into consciousness the shadow that is the dark inferior aspects of one's personality' (Von Franz, 1975, p.66). The next stage elucidation, once these contents are assimilated to consciousness then education beings (Von Franz, 1975). Holmes (1978) attributed repression to attentional processes. The net result of this critique was the decision that repression, is defined as a defence process that occurs without awareness.Dissociation, disavowal and denial commonly seen in trauma, while maintaining

distressing content available to consciousness itself in a descriptive sense alter consciousness in a way that is in many ways functionally equivalent to repression(Galatzer-Levy, 2017, p.209). Repressed ideas attract similar ideas into repression. If a child learns it is bold to be assertive to their parents, one therefore represses assertiveness in future encounter (Kahn, 2002). Repression has been previously explained by attentional processes and response suppression (Cramer, 2000). Repression is the manipulation of the perception of an internal event. (Kahn, 2002). Repressed material may be observed in neurosis, between instinctual impulse and the ego's defence (Freud, 1966). An impulse may be repressed and with that charged feelings and a similar event in later life may engender unconscious conflict and neurotic behaviour (MacIntyre, 2004). By bringing this into consciousness creates awareness. However, Freud stated that many ideas are simply forgotten and not repressed at all. Whereas, repressed ideas remain in the unconscious of one's mental life (Kahn, 2002). Therefore it is important for therapists to bear this mind when working with clients motives. Many motives are in between, they are possible to assess, but difficult. Empirical studies within academic psychology focused mainly on repression and projection (Cramer, 2000). Research of the emotional states of post traumatic mental function thus gives us an additional window into the operation of unconscious mental processes. (Galatzer-Levy, 2017). Broad, (1968) states that an absolutely unconscious mental event would be one that could not have been introspectively discriminated at the time by any mind (Broad, 1968). However, to own an experience is evidently not the same as to discriminate it introspectively (Broad, 1968, p.375).

Transference

Transference is a key unconscious theory (MacIntyre, 2004). To give any description of the transference phenomenon is a very difficult and delicate task (Jung, 1954) for the most part it is an unconscious projection of those archetypal forms (Jung, 1954).Freud stated that negative transference is an obstacle to successful analysis. It is feelings that are unconscious affections or hostilities found in earlier experiences of neurosis (MacIntyre, 2004).'Transference is where the therapist's mere presence continually calls the patient to inhabit and befriend more open and responsive worlds' (Brooke, 2015, p.107).Transference is the impulses experienced by one in relation to another, which have their source in early

object relations and then become revived under repetition compulsion (Freud, 1966). Jung stated that the 'contents which enter into the transference were as a rule originally projected upon the parents or other family members' (Jung, 1954, p.178.). MacIntyre (2004), states the importance of recognizing the connection between repression and resistance and transference. 'Mere personal sympathy can never give the patient that objective understanding of his neurosis which makes him independent of the therapist and sets up a counter-influence to the transference' (Jung, 1954, p.138). The self object transference hopes for an improvement on the original relationship (Kahn, 2002).Within psychotherapy, transference refers to the ways in which the patient's experiences in relationship to the therapist are influenced by early childhood experiences, especially those with one's parents (Holmes & Lindley, 1998).

Denial

The mechanism of denial is the mental manipulation of an external event (Kahn, 2002). Denial is the failure to see, recognize, or understand the existence or meaning of an internal or external stimulus (Cramer, 2015). It means protecting oneself from anxiety by failing to perceive or misperceive something in the world outside of my own thoughts or feelings (Kahn, 2002).Denial is a defence that functions by ignoring or misrepresenting thoughts and experiences that would be anxiety arousing, if accurately perceived (Cramer, 2012). In a study, the use of denial by participants was found to be significantly related to the presence of externalizing and internalizing problems (Achenbach &Edelbrock, 1983) and to the presence of social anxiety (La Greca& Stone, 1993).This distortion of reality may be accomplished through misperception, through language (I am not angry), or assuming a Panglossian 'life is for the best' attitude (Voltaire, 1946).

Intrapersonal Isolation

Yalom (1980) writes about intrapersonal isolation, which is a process whereby one partitions off parts of oneself. Freud used the term 'isolation' to describe a defence mechanism, in which an unpleasant experience and its associations are interrupted, so that it is isolated from

the ordinary processes of thought. In contemporary psychotherapy 'isolation' is not only used to refer to a formal defence mechanism but in a more casual way to connote any form of 'fragmentation of the self' (p.354). Therefore, intrapersonal isolation results when one ignores or pushes away ones innate feelings, desires or wishes and distrusts one's own judgment (Yalom,1931). According to Yalom, the experience of 'existential isolation engenders a highly uncomfortable subjective state, and similar to any case of dysphoria is not tolerated by the individual for long' (Yalom 1980, p. 363). Unconscious defences act to bury or deny to conscious awareness. The defences must work interminably to eliminate or ignore the feeling of isolation. The experience of the unconscious has an isolating effect, and many people cannot bear this. Yet to be alone with the Self is the highest and most decisive human experience – one must be alone to find out what it is that supports one when he can no longer support self (Von Franz, 1975). Only this experience can give one an indestructible foundation (Von Franz, 1975).Yalom (1931) asks how does one shield oneself from the dread of ultimate isolation?.One may take a portion of the isolation into oneself and bear it courageously, or to reference Heidegger 'resolutely' (Yalom, 1980).No relationship can eliminate isolation. Each of us is alone in existence (ibid).

Miscellaneous Defences

Freud uses interpretation mainly for the purpose of recognizing the resistances which appear there (Easthope, 1999). Internal and external resistances manifest in individual fears and apathy related to actualizing inner potentialities (Kiser, 2007). Resistance to therapy should be taken into consideration whether the defence is adaptive or not. Lack of self-knowledge in an angry person could be the result of two unconscious desires, the aggressive desire that is anger and the desire not to recognize the aggressive behaviour (MacIntyre, 2004).Reaction formation is a defence mechanism in which we protect ourselves from anxiety by manipulating an internal perception. It means misperceiving a feeling as its opposite (Kahn, 2002).Turning in the hatred related to other people (Kahn, 2002). Consequently, self – accusations and feelings of inferiority manifest (ibid). Displacement is so common it is called 'kick the dog'. After a boss disrespects one, and she does not express anger towards him and may not even feel as it may stir unconscious guilt towards a parent (Kahn, 2002). Instead the

dog or nearest and dearest gets it. (Kahn, 2002).Lacan describes the splitting of the ego as a process of defence (Easthope, 1999).

Existential Duplicity-Unconscious Awareness

> Phenomena are the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to the light (Heidegger, 1927, p. 62-51).

The unconscious is inherently ambiguous for the pre-reflectively lived is a moment of perceptual opening and world-disclosure that is both revealing and concealing (Brooke, 2015). 'Consciousness is always and necessarily selective and therefore limited' (Jung 1921, p.419). Poljac et al., (2012) stated that the perceptual Gestalt and the inaccessibility of the parts that make up the whole reflect two sides of the same coin whereby not everything can be in conscious awareness at the same times. This can be done with an attitude of steadfast receptivity to that which seeks to show itself (Brooke, 2015).

The unconscious has been articulated as a multitude of latent incarnate intentionalities (Brooke, 2015) a fundamental hiddeness out of which everything comes into being or awareness (Boss 1975).The ontological constitution of Being is a fundamental characteristic of existential duplicity of both showing and hiding itself, ontological characteristics of the concealment of Beingness is both visible and invisible (Craig, 2008). Boss (1957,p. 100-101) stated that 'without concealment and darkness man would not be in the world. Light and darkness, concealment and disclosure belong together inseparably'. The attitude of consciousness and the face of the unconscious form a reflexive unit (Brooke, 2015). Similar to our physical or bodily presence, we reveal and conceal things about ourselves simultaneously (van Manen 2006a; Adams and van Manen 2008; van Manen 2008; van Manen and Adams 2010). We are used to binary groupings regularly (Sandeen, et. al., 2018), and our brains are built to use both conscious and unconscious schemas to enhance efficient cognitive processing (Banaji & Greenwald, 1994; Gregg, Seibt, & Banaji, 2006).Heidegger used the metaphor of 'light for consciousness' (Heidegger, 1927, p.62). At the same time other aspects of our worldview fall into shadow, become hidden and covered up. He called this dialogue between what is revealed and concealed alethiea (Heidegger, 1993, cited in King 2021).How he perceived the world is much like looking through a "fog; those elements

in the foreground of awareness take on striking prominence while other aspects fade seamlessly into the background" (King, 2021, p.43). For Heidegger, truth is uncoveredness (aletheia), that moment of uncovering that emerges most clearly in the attitude of letting –be (Brooke, 2015). This is the moment of awareness that my research hoped to understand deeper; a moment when the concealment of a blind spot is unveiled. In Wellington Kunaka's (2016) study a moment of awareness emerged for the trainee therapists when a blind spot was revealed. The realisation was expressed as if it represented coming out of darkness (Wellington Kunaka, 2016, p.200)

Concealment can occur in two forms, either as absence or as vagueness (Sokolowski, 2000). Out of vagueness the object can distinctly come to light (Sokolowski, 2000). Creation or the nature which surrounds us of which we are apart, is in Jung's view probably not entirely meaningless (Von Franz, 1975). But the meaning is latent, since the unconscious, which is sheer nature, harbour a latent meaning which can become actual in an instant of awareness (Von Franz, 1975). Once an object has been evidenced, it is possible and even inevitable for it to move back again into vagueness (Sokolowski, 2000). The slippage back becomes sedimented, it becomes hidden which allows for something higher to come to light (Sokolowski, 2000). When we focus on the newer evidence, the original one recedes into darkness (Sokolowski, 2000). The life of reason is not a matter of one simple evidence, one illumination. Rather, 'the life of reason is a push and pull between presence and absence, and between clarity and obscurity' (Sokolowski, 2000,p.165).

MacMahon (2020) findings evidenced that several participants acknowledged something that might be half formed in consciousness has the potentiality to become more formed. For one participant talking in different contexts helped. These accounts highlight how recognising one's blind spots is not a concrete all or nothing experience but a more fluid process of differentiation, where knowledge is synthesised and reconfigured in different contexts over time. This phenomenon was evident in all participants' accounts as new insights came to light through reflecting and talking with the interviewer about their experiences in the research interviews. In Wellington Kunaka's (2016) study when participants were looking at the consequences of blind spots, what became apparent is that in some instances the participants seemed to have a semi-awareness about the possible location of blind spots in their lives as stemming from the individual's past experiences.This appeared to represent a known predisposition to certain behaviours, thoughts or emotions that were known as a result of changes in certain experiences in the current environment.

Rollo May writes about the importance of Being, where the scope of inquiry concerns itself with the holistic function of a human being who is never exclusively subject or object but dynamically both, where the whole is infinitely greater than the sum of its parts (as cited in Peng, 2011). Something of reality is always revealed and concealed, something is always made present and visible while something remains absent and invisible, something is always spoken and left unspoken (Romanyshyn, 2013).The process of deepest inquiry includes 'unconcealment' and this leads us to create awareness (Heidegger, 1927).Merleau-Ponty's famously said of phenomenology and psychoanalysis 'They are both aiming towards the same Latency' (Merleau-Ponty 1960a p.71). This latency fed the curiosity of my research, with the intention of making it manifest.

Moments of Self-Awareness

Background

> The glass of self knowledge is half-full….and half –empty (Kenny and DePaulo, 1993, p.614)

Some years ago the study of self-awareness experienced a renaissance. Over the past several decades researchers have made progress in understanding self awareness (Vazire & Wilson, 2012).The subconscious is submerged like a submarine and can be brought to the surface readily, thus creating immediate awareness (Easthope,1999).Thanks to consciousness within any immediate moment I have the potential of awareness of the environment around me (Searle, 2013).Self awareness can be measured by several factors, including self-pronoun use and mirror –recognition (Johnston, 2005). Moreover it is thought to be right hemisphere dominant (ibid).

Levels of Awareness

Lu and Wan, (2017) research added nuanced knowledge to the self awareness literature by highlighting the different possible sources of self –understanding. Searle, (2013) states self-awareness consists of all of our states of feeling or sentience or consciousness. It begins when we wake from dreamless sleep and continues until we go to sleep again or become unconscious (Searle, 2013). Legrain et. al., (2010) research concluded that the notion of self-awareness is not a monolithic, all-or-none phenomenon but rather consists of complex ability that spans several levels of awareness. It is worth speaking of self-awareness along specific dimensions rather than blanket self-awareness (Duval & Wicklund, 1971). Freud's persistent aim was to identify more fundamental layers of awareness beneath the deceptive surface of discourse (Timms,1987). Furthermore, Rochat (2003) claimed that self-awareness is not singular, but multiple. Its development is a continuous and dynamic process that can be divided into gradual levels (ibid). Neville, and Cross, (2016) study is among the few

empirical studies to provide a discussion of triggers of self awareness. For each participant described this awakening change as a process (ibid).

According to James (1980), there are at least two fundamental and interrelated levels of the self. The first level is the 'I', the implicit level, at which the self is merely a subject of experience. The second level is the 'me', the explicit level, at which the self has become an object of knowledge for oneself. Rochat (2003) also differentiates between the implicit self and the explicit self. There are three levels in the explicit self-awareness. The first is the identified self, the permanent self and finally the external self. The latter being when one becomes aware of how he is perceived by other individuals. At this stage, one realizes that the external self can evolve or can be modified even though no changes occur at a deeper level of one's self (Legrain et. al., 2010). In addition, it has been stated that both private and public self –awareness exist. The former is awareness of self from a personal perspective (Carver and Scheier, 1981). It refers to heightened attention to inner aspects of the self, including one's own thoughts, feelings and motives (Carver and Scheier, 1981). Listening to one's own voice is believed to activate a private form of self awareness. Public self-awareness is 'the awareness of oneself from the imagined perspective of others' (Fejfar and Hoyle, 2000. p.132). It refers to a heightened attention to public aspects of the self as a social object, with an accentuated concern about how one is viewed by others (Carver and Scheier, 1981). St Augustine, the Church father, made a distinction between two kinds of awareness: a morning awareness and an evening awareness. 'The former is self knowledge, a knowledge in which the human being recognises himself in the image of the creator; the latter is the knowledge of the things created' (Von Franz, 1975, p.176). Awareness can be found directly by undercutting egocentricity it can be life changing and helpful (Palmer, 1998). 'Morning knowledge is discovered only by the man who is detached who has forgotten his ego' (Von Franz, 1975, p.177).

Implicit versus Explicit Self Knowledge

It is important to distinguish between conscious (explicit) and unconscious (implicit) knowledge (Gawronski &Bodenhausen, 2006; Rydell & McConnell, 2006; Smith & Decoster, 2000). When people consciously reflect on knowledge, they draw on information that is structured by logic and reasoning (Gawronski &Bodenhausen, 2006). Information can be consciously brought to mind and verbally reported (McConnell et al., 2011). Implicit attitudes are automatic judgments without conscious reflection (McConnell et al., 2011). Heidegger would refer to this as pre-ontological. It can include life defining relationships or core beliefs that are integral to a person's being beyond what a person explicitly understands or expresses (Tratter, 2015). People's decisions are often guided by conscious evaluation (explicit attitude) and yet their automatic response are influenced by unconscious (implicit attitude) (McConnell et al., 2011). McConnell et al. (2011) study provides direct empirical support for Gawronski &Bodenhausen, (2006) theoretical argument that unconscious evaluations help shape spontaneous affective experience. Research shows that unconscious implicit attitudes predict spontaneous behavioural responses independent of conscious explicit attitude (Rydell & McConnell, 2006). Furthermore, research has proven that memories unavailable to consciousness nevertheless influence conscious memory (Roediger, 1990). One may have one intention consciously but another intention unconsciously (MacIntyre, 2004).

MacIntyre, (2004) questions, what is the justification for the belief of the unconscious existence or lack of awareness? He answers the unconscious accounts for behaviour which could not be accounted for by conscious intention (MacIntyre, 2004).The qualities of two unconscious processes differ, the New look research states that the person who did not intend to engage in the process was therefore unaware. The skills acquisition stated that the person who did intend to engage in the process but then completed without conscious guidance was also unaware (Bargh, & Morsella 2008). Research has stated that defences precedes coping mechanism are activated automatically and are the first defensive operation (Timmermann et al., 2009). It seems essential to address both the explicit and implicit aspects of the protective sphere so as to better understand the resources and weaknesses of the Ego confronted with internal and external conflict and dangers (Timmermann et al., 2009). Our implicit knowledge of how to do things and habitual performance of various tasks takes up most of

active doing (Galatzer-Levy, 2017). There is a strong link between the implicit and unconscious processes (Tratter, 2015). Priming experiments have demonstrated how implicit memory, where memories are activated outside of awareness can influence conscious recall and judgment (Roediger, 1990).The concept of implicit world-projections reflects a phenomenological truth that experience with clients shows that meaning appears in a tangible way, as a memory, fantasy, dream, projection or many other ways and it is secondary if they are conscious or unconscious (Tratter, 2015). McConnell et al. (2011) study provides strong support for previous research (Gawronski &Bodenhausen, 2006) that unconscious and implicit attitudes have an important role in shaping in-the-moment experiences. Sue & Sue (2013) state one's implicit learned systems of grouping and categorizing can lead to stereotypes and prejudicial beliefs. The preconscious consists of memories, including things we do without thinking about them including walking and driving (Easthope,1999). The unconscious process need not be deemed an entity but rather a living process, not a state of affairs to be uncovered, but a way of elaborating the dialectical relationship between external and psychic realities (Bohleber, et al., 2017). Back et al., (2009) found in one study that people's implicit self-view of their personality predicted their behaviour after controlling for what could be predicted from their explicit self-view. This study suggested that people have implicit knowledge about themselves that cannot be reported explicitly. Therefore, our conscious self-perception provides an incomplete picture of one's personality (Vazire and Carlson, 2011). Furthermore, literature on implicit social cognition illustrates how unconscious attitudes can lead people to act against their ethical values (Sezer et al., 2015).

The exploration of the relationship between these two forms of unawareness is an important topic for clinical investigation (Galatzer-Levy, 2017). Conscious thought is intrinsically slow because its rules are more complex than many non-conscious mental functioning(Galatzer-Levy, 2017). The major aspect of choice finally came to refer to as 'thinking fast' and thinking slow' (Kahneman, 2013). Following a wish comes will which is concerned with transmuting of awareness into self-consciousness (May, 1969). This boils down to computational efficiency and the time available for decision making (Kahneman, 2013). The functioning of the brain can be characterised by two types of cognition having different functions. System 1) processing is fast and automatic; system 2) is slow and analytic. Type one processes implicit learning and the automatic firing of over-learnt associations. Type two involves working memory and processes of inhibition (West, 2012). Furthermore, previous research distinguishes between different forms of thinking and acting, such as automatic

versus controlled (Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977), mindless and mindful (Langer, 1978). The unconscious system (the entrance hall) is a realm of primary process and the pleasure principle, the conscious system (the drawing room) is the seat of secondary process and the reality principle. The id is the repository of the instinctual drives, sexual and aggressive (Kahn, 2002). It is totally unconscious and unsocialzed. It operates on the pleasure principle, demanding instant gratification. According to Legrain et. al., (2010) people who are aware at an explicit level should be able to think about themselves through the eyes of somebody else.

Objective versus Subjective Self-Awareness

The human dilemma is that which arises out of a man's capacity to experience himself as both subject and object at the same time. Both are necessary- for the science of psychology, for therapy, and for gratifying living (May, 1967, p.8).

Jung was convinced that the majority of people didn't acknowledge their unconscious (Von Franz, 1975) In psychology, the principal of complementarity means that there is an indissoluble bond between the subject, who uses language to speak about the unconscious , and the unconscious which is the object of that language (Romanyshyn, 2013). The unconscious is known only indirectly through the effects it has on conscious contents. Husserl stated that mental life cannot be grasped, but we can grasp what it intends, the objective and identical correlate in which mental life surpasses its self (Ricoeur, 1994, p.50).Jung stated (1954) just as he finds himself moulded by external and objective social influence, so too is he moulded by internal and unconscious forces, which he summed up under the term 'the subjective factor'.'Subjective self-awareness results when attention is directed away from the self and the person experiences himself as the source of perception and action' (Duval and Wicklund's 1972, p.3)in which such existence is undifferentiated as a separate and distinct object in the world. A psychologist's conscious statements about soul always have an unconscious side to them, which for Jung expresses itself as a 'calculus of subjective prejudices' (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 26).In subjective self-awareness, the focus of attention is directed outward (Duval, & Wicklund,1971). The person will neither be aware of the view-points of others, nor will be even cognizant of himself as a distinct entity to be compared against standards (ibid). Jung declared 'As soon as a psychic content crosses the

threshold of awareness/consciousness, the synchronistic marginal phenomena disappear, time and space resume their accustomed sway, and consciousness is once more isolated in its subjectivity'(cited in Romanyshyn, 2013, p.32). Such concepts as shame, embarrassment that would imply self-evaluation and social comparison do not apply (Duval, & Wicklund,1971). Only when the self becomes an object of conscious awareness can self-evaluation occur. When an individual becomes objectively self-aware and then begins to evaluate behaviours that were carried out while in a state of subjective self-awareness (Duval, & Wicklund,1971). Research hypothesis found conditions forcing an individual to focus on himself as an object will result in self- evaluation (Duval, & Wicklund, 1971). Objectification begins very early, from the moment of self-interpretation (Ricoeur, 1994). 'When attention is directed inward and the individual's consciousness is focused on himself, he/she is the object of his/her own consciousness – hence objective self awareness' (Duval and Wicklund's 1972, p.2). Self-awareness can only be reached through the objectification of my own life (Ricoeur, 1994). In addition, Piaget (1966) analyzes a disparity between egocentric thought, in which thought is not conscious of itself, and self-consciousness, in which the self is the object of attention. A state of objective self-awareness is one in which individuals experience heightened awareness of their internal feelings and beliefs (Hess and Pickett, 2010).

Consciousness focuses either on one's self, or on external objects. Mead (1934) describes the self as reflexive, which means it can be both the object and subject of consciousness. It is the immediate social environment that's causes a person to assume an objective view of himself, and without social contact and the opportunity to examine one's self from another's point of view, the self remains the subject, rather than the object, of consciousness (Duval, & Wicklund,1971). It is noteworthy that the point of view of another is necessary before the self becomes an object of consciousness (ibid). There is something about social contact that determines whether the self is the subject or the object of attention (ibid). According to Meads (1934) and Piaget's (1966) research social contact is necessary to allow an individual to pass from subjective to objective self –awareness. Thus, the extent the individual is conscious that the other is viewing or examining, objective self-awareness will result (Duval, & Wicklund, 1971).Objective self-awareness can be aversive when there is a discrepancy between people's internal feelings and beliefs and their external behaviour (Duval and Wicklund,1972).Knowing what is best for you does not always lead to behaviour that is congruent with this knowledge (Alberts et al., 2011). In subjective self awareness, the person is likely to perform actions that are inconsistent with his personal values, and when one

moves to an objective state, he will find his behaviours fall short of his standards of correctness (Duval, & Wicklund, 1971). This will include increased sensitivity to any 'incorrectness' or inconsistency among his beliefs, values, behaviours, or personal traits, and may show a resultant tendency to establish 'correctness' (ibid). However, further research concluded that if the contemporaneous state of the self-to-standard comparison system is discrepant from its preferred state of self-standard identity, this will generate negative affect (Duval, & Lalwani, 2012). Research designed by Duval, & Wicklund, (1971) demonstrated that objective self-awareness can mediate attempts to reduce discrepancies between opinion and behaviour.

Automaticity versus Analytical Attention

Hawkins talks about the ego as the imaginary doer behind thought and action. This set of entrenched habits of thought, enforced by 'societal consensus and unconscious repetition creates an illusory sense of a personal self' (Hawkins, 2011 p.6). The unconscious can be thought of as a set of entrenched habits of thought, which are the results of entrainment by invisible energy fields that dominate human consciousness. They become reinforced by repetition and by consensus of society. Further reinforcement comes from language itself (ibid). The study of self-focused attention continues to be a dynamic and active research area (Silvia, and Duval, 2001). Attunement to existence starts with self knowledge (Peng, 2011). Introspective discrimination can be applied only to mental events which we own and of which we have simultaneously undiscriminating awareness (Broad, 1968). This is a process of turning inwards and is due to the renaissance epistemological need to interiorise psychological life (Romanyshyn, 1982/84). Introspective analysis and discrimination involve a special act of attention which we can make or not as we like (Broad, 1968). Ann Cornell, a focusing therapist, offers a few simple steps that enable us to attend to 'felt-sense' bodily signals that bring fuzzy, preverbal knowledge into conscious awareness (Palmer, 1998). By being conscious one makes an object of introspective attention (Broad, 1968). Attention typically operates on automatic; we go with familiar habits (Palmer, 1998). Our placement of attention determines the way the world looks and that reality is entirely believable (ibid).

Unconscious processes are ‘not the enemy to be subdued, but merely a compilation of unexamined habits of perception ‘(Hawkins, 2011, p.8). We think we control our attention and decide to pay attention to what ever captures our interests (Palmer, 1998). The sobering reality is that placement of attention is largely habitual (ibid). Holmes believed the evidence for repression was better explained by attentional processes. In addition, procedures previously requiring attention may become automatized and thus unconscious and the person performing them is unaware of their operation (Jacoby et al., 1992). Research on self-awareness show how impenetrable this automatic evaluation process can be (Silvia, and Duval, 2001).Our perceptions are limited by a characteristic way of attending, which highlights certain information, while screening out equally relevant data (Palmer, 1998). Attention is generally passive, moving unconsciously from thing to thing, drawn by habit, comfort, passing curiosity, and a need to avoid anxiety (Palmer, 1998). Previous studies have shown that low self focus was associated with automaticity (Silvia, and Duval, 2001). But attention can also be made active, directed and voluntary (Palmer, 1998, p.134).Automatic effects on behaviour can be derailed through a conscious reflective mode of processing or by diverting ones attention to an unresolved discrepancy and arousing motivation to do something about it. (Silvia &Duval, 2001). Focussing attention on the self can break automatic links between priming and behaviour because highly self-aware people consciously consider different actions instead of automatically (ibid). People suffering from depression and social anxiety, often experience automatic negative thoughts about the self. Intensive therapy is needed to regulate these spontaneous evaluations and make the implicit explicit (Silvia, and Duval, 2001). Reframing (Beck, 1967) and creating awareness is a useful process to help ameliorate this.

Empirical Research

Methodologies

Comparison of methodologies has been complex due to the inconsistency of the various methodological approaches. A great challenge for this research was the lack of empirical studies that were peer-reviewed and published (Neville and Cross, 2016; C’de Baca

&Wilbourne, 2004; McDonald, 2005; Miller &C'de Baca, 1994), therefore unpublished doctoral research (Jarvis, 1997; Liang, 2006; Murray, 2006) and master's thesis (Ilivitsky, 2011) were utilized to further support the critical evaluation of this topic.

Mc Donald's (2008) narrative enquiry offered chronological coverage of the epiphany including a narrative of the series of events that lead up to that moment of awareness and how one's life was transformed in the aftermath of the moment of awareness. However, the antecedent information related to the moment of awareness and its consequences felt somewhat removed from that exact lived experience of that exact moment of awareness that my research wanted to reveal. Neville and Cross (2016) study was grounded in adults understanding and perception of epiphanic experiences and centred the voices of sixty-four men and women from various countries. They were interested in describing the context and perceived outcomes of the participants understanding in the context of their race. Their chosen methodology was racial life narratives. This methodology is the most common form of investigating epiphanies in psychology. The findings in their research were consistent with Cross's (1991) original conceptualization of epiphanies. Although, this research is rooted in the context of racial awareness it helped inform my research in terms of identifying awakening prototypic stories and for counsellors in terms of providing opportunities to assist individuals in the meaning making process. Murray (2006) vaguely names his study as qualitative. However, he does not specify which exact methodology which guided his research (p. 70). Miller &C'de Baca, (2001) empirically-derived research was based on a mixed-methods study of fifty five participants who claim to have had a sudden and profound inner change. This study appeared to have few methodological faults which clearly elucidated their research findings in peer reviewed papers. However, some consequent reports displaying their findings (Miller &C'de Baca, 2001) are presented without specifying the methodology used to arrive at these themes.Some disparity was noted in the qualitative studies, between the researchers' interpretation and the participants understanding of the experience. McDonald (2005, 2008) findings elucidate that 'epiphanies are an experience of profound change and transformation in self-identity' (2008, p. 99), however no quotation was explicitly used to elucidate this experience.

Analysis

In McDonald's (2008) study core characteristics emerged from the data via content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), however, a limitation of McDonald's (2005) study was noted as the presentation of findings supported pre-formed characteristics or hypotheses. This appeared incompatible with their chosen qualitative methodology (self-identity existential analysis). A noted limitation of Ilivitsky study (2011) was the use of a transcriptionist to transcribe the interview audio recordings. For qualitative research immersion in the research findings maybe heightened due to personal transcription. However, the transcripts were then checked by the researcher for accuracy against the original audio recording, and punctuation was added to express non-verbal elements such as intonation, emotion, and speaking style (Ilivitsky, 2011). However, another level of revision by the participant to check their own transcripts for accuracy would have heightened the truth value of the research.The methods used to analyze the data in the present study were explicitly and sequentially outlined, each of the findings were supported with verbatim quotations, and the number of participants that contributed to each category was clearly indicated.

Critical evaluation of findings

While it is not possible to easily generalise from the unique experiences of qualitative research, the critiqued studies provide rigorously developed categories which offer a useful thematic structure against which to compare and contrast other studies of epiphanic moments. All researchers emphasised the sudden and unexpected nature of an epiphanic moment including its ineffability and sense of surprise.

When exploring moments of awareness, including epiphanic experiences a varied and diverse range of themes emanated from the literature. For the purpose of this article the main themes are critiqued.

Suddenness

The sudden and abrupt nature of a phenomenon of this type was noted in the majority of the empirical literature. The experience of a moment of awareness whether in relation to trivial or crucial matters, is typically unexpected in nature and rarely anticipated. 'It suddenly dawned upon me', 'I suddenly realized', or 'it occurred to me out of the blue', are phrases commonly used to describe such revelations or insights (Eifermann, 1989, p. 115).One participant in Murray's (2006) study openly shared her experience that was sudden in nature; 'I went to sleep and when I awoke . . . suddenly the name popped into my head . . . in an instant . . . wow, this is it . . . this name truly fits . . . there was something transcendent about it'.Jarvis (1997) found the epiphanic experience to be a "sudden, discontinuous change, leading to profound, positive, and enduring transformation" (p. 5). Miller and C'de Baca (1994) found that 58 percent of participants claimed their experience took them by surprise. In a later study one participant in Miller &C'de Baca (2001, pp. 18-19) study stated; 'It was really this bubbling up – like a bubbling and the words just sort of popped'. McDonald (2008) established this moment to be: "a sudden, abrupt, and positive transformation that is profound and enduring" (p. 90).Taylor, (2018) stated it is an experience of sudden, personal, profound, positive and permanent change, which can fundamentally alter the lives of those who experience it. Miller (2004) added that the suddenness is part of what made the experience so distinct and vivid. Syntheses of the literature suggest that the defining attributes of a moment of clarity include sudden, immediate, and unplanned clarity regarding circumstance which all contains variations of "sudden understanding." (Chilton, 2015, p.18). McDonald's (2008) study found that each of the participants' experiences of epiphanies was sudden and abrupt, contrasting with other types of positive change and transformation that are typically gradual in nature. Jauregui (2007) conveys something of the mystery and familiarity of the phenomenon of epiphanies in a description of sudden change in the context of psychotherapy: "Something big is occasioned by something little, something easily missed. And it unfolds from there - sometimes as a flash, sometimes in exquisite slow motion - out of conventional time and space and language [at such times it can strike you] … The universe is bigger than it was a minute ago and so are you." (p. 3)

Wisdom Deep Inside

Miller and C'de Baca (2001) found 58 percent of participants had experiences that are very difficult to explain in words. One participant in Murray's (2006) study expressed the epiphany as indescribable. One of his participants disclosed; "everything changed for me . . . I can't really explain it . . . but I will try to explain it physically . . . it was like a state of grace . . . I really couldn't feel my body anymore . . . I wasn't in tune with my brain anymore . . . I was in tune with something else . . . I guess you could call it my soul . . . I was just in tune with something else . . . answers to questions just came to me".One participant in Murray's (2006) study felt the experiencecome from the centre of his soul and "without thinking" (Murray, 2006, p. 290); 'but in that moment I felt a calm . . . I felt totally - 100 per cent pure and sure that I would be okay . . . it was a sense of peace and a calmness . . . there was no doubt in my mind . . . I felt it in my heart and in my soul . . . I thought that my words had come from the centre of my soul . . . this time was different than all the other times' (Murray, 2006, p. 290).Ilivitsky, (2011) revealed this moment transpired from deep inner wisdom that just knew. One participant shared "just knows what it knows." Miller and C'de Baca (2001) confirmed 6 percent of participants experienced a moment of awareness as a deep inner wisdom and was "rarely remembered as volitional" (Miller &C'de Baca, 2001, p.14).One participant avowed that he "felt at one with or connected with everything around them" (1994, p. 262) and another shared "A really great sense of peace and well-being enveloped me. And I knew – I mean I knew, not believed, not thought that I had made the most important step I would ever take in my life" (Miller and C'de Baca, 200, p. 18).

Miller and C'de Baca (2001) found that 76 percent felt that it emanated from something outside themselves and had a mystical quality to it of being acted upon by something outside of and greater than oneself" (p. 21).All participants claimed that they were changed by an unplanned, unwilled process outside of their conscious control (either a higher power or a deep inner wisdom) (Ilivitsky, 2011). Sudden conversions (James, 1902/1985) and mystical transformative experiences (Miller &C'de Baca, 2001) have been described as passive and involve a connection to a higher power (Ilivitsky, 2011). Two participants in Ilivitsky's, (2011) study reported that having a sense of there being 'something more to life' or to themselves facilitated greater awareness The following explanation accounts for one participants experience in Ilivitsky's (2011)study; 'I felt really connected to the world..I felt

absorbed in sort of a different sort of consciousness..It felt like ...I'm actually something… small that's part of something larger' (p.72). Another participant described being acted upon by a power greater than herself: "I felt him [God] inside of me... The Holy Ghost is what transformed me." (Ilivitsky, 2011, p.73).

Gradual

Ilivitsky, (2011) states the term "sudden" does not imply that change occurs all at once, with no previous circumstances. For many changes in one's life were spurred by either an 'aha' moment (epiphany) or a series of events (encounters) that lead to increased insight and reinterpretations of the meaning (Neville and Cross, 2016). Bien (2004) affirms that change may occur "continuously, but at some point this change is manifested in an apparently dramatic manner" (p. 494). He discusses the sudden transformation of the Buddha. This transformation was viewed as gradual or sudden. One could emphasize that the Buddha's enlightenment occurred at a particular moment, or that it was the work of years of spiritual practice preceding the moment of change. Change has both gradual and sudden aspects, depending on the lens under which it is viewed (Bien, 2004). Miller and C'de Baca (2001) disclosed that change transpires incrementally. "The exact time of awareness is hard to say exactly. How does one know when someone becomes more wise or cynical, more intelligent or confident, more optimistic or selfish. Personal qualities wax and wane, one small step at a time, for better or worse" (p. 18). Bien (2004) was aware that, "The psychotherapist will observe a series of micro-changes, marked by sighs and other physical indicators as well as increasingly insightful verbal expression, which gradually accumulate into something substantive" (p. 494). Loder (1981) provides a theologically-based philosophical examination of what he terms transforming moments or convictional experiences. He posits that such change involves a series of phases. However, Ilivitsky (2011) study found negative emotions and experiences eventually culminated in a breaking point.

Illumination and Clarity

Participants experience has been widely described as "profound" (Jarvis, 1997, p. 5; Miller &C'de Baca, 1994 p. 258; Murray, 2006, p 2; McDonald, 2008, p. 89;). Mc Donald (2008) described it as a profound insight or perspective into consciousness. Illumination and clarity added to the profound effect of these moments. In McDonald's study (2008) each of the participants experienced a significant insight, which had the effect of illuminating elements of self-identity that had once remained in darkness (McDonald, 2008). McDonald (2008) had personally experienced sudden and momentary occurrences that increased clarity and awareness. McDonald (2008) shared one such example from a participant "It was like a veil was lifted... I'm going to be a nurse". In addition, Neville and Cross (2016) concluded that personal experience /observation type epiphanies increased the clarity and awareness. In their study the majority described an epiphany as an awakening, (Neville, and Cross, 2016). Many viewed their racial –cultural predicament in a new light. Further to this, one participant in Murray's (2006 pp. 259-261) study described an instant in which it became "absolutely, totally powerful, totally clear" that she needed to leave an abusive relationship. Miller and C'de Baca (2001), Murray (2006), and Ilivitsky, (2011) asserted that moments of clarity are rarely volitional and usually present themselves unknowingly.

Miller and C'de Baca (2001) found that 87 percent of participants reported that during the experience "an important truth was revealed". For Heidegger, truth is uncoveredness (aletheia), that moment of uncovering that emerges most clearly in the attitude of letting –be (Brooke, 2015). One participant relates this moment to a realization (McDonald, 2008, p. 99). Another participant in Ilivitsky's (2011) study used the phrase a 'new realization, a new way of thinking or understanding'. This is 'distinctly different from ordinary reasoning processes' (Miller &C'de Baca, 2001, pp. 18-19). Loder (1981) described it as a sense of relief and release; and, lastly, new thoughts and actions that emerge alongside the integration and interpretation of the experience. This experience can often be "positive" or "benevolent" (Jarvis, 1997, p. 5;Miller &C'de Baca, 2001, p. 4; Murray, 2006, p 2; McDonald, 2008, p. 93). New insights leads to different behaviours, that led to establishing a sense of connection to something broader than the individual self, the 'aha' moment or epiphanic experience or a wow moment (Neville & Cross, 2016). These experiences created wow responses which

often lead to a more informed way in which one thought about themselves (Neville & Cross, 2016).

Murray (2006) also claim that insightful transformative experiences or moments of clarity such as Rachel's are "rarely remembered as willful or volitional" (p.14) and usually present themselves "without thinking" (p. 290, p.82).Neville and Cross (2016) concluded that personal experience /observation type epiphanies increased the clarity and awareness. Broad, (1968) states that there is something which is called unconscious awareness, and that an animate being can be unconsciously aware of certain things and in any given moment can gain clarity McDonald (2008) used a narrative methodology and identified characteristics of an epiphanic experiences. One was experienced as sudden and momentary occurrences that increased clarity and awareness (ibid). Merton received a gift he later described as the goal of prayer: clarity (Commins,1999, p.64). Merton's first epiphany of 'clear and immediate knowledge was that heaven was right in front of 'him' (cited in Commins, 1999, p.60). One of the many moments of awareness he had, he was 'suddenly , almost forcibly, jerked clean out of the habitual , half tied vision of things, and an inner clarity exploded from the rocks themselves became evident and obvious' (Commins,1999 p.67). All things became resolved and what matters became clear (ibid). He felt he pierced through the surface and went beyond the shadow and the disguise (Commins,1999).The process, is like what happens in the individual psyche : 'a man may go about for many years with an inkling of something, but grasps it clearly only at a particular moment' (Jung, 1995, p. 339). There can be moments of clarity in any and everyday life, epiphanies when we experience what we already partially apprehend through human contact and half developed reflections (Commins, 1999).

Sokolowski(2000) affirms that we provide a light within which things can manifest themselves, a clearing where they can be collected and recollected. Carey (2007) concluded such experiences were like a light being turned on (cited in Kounios, & Beeman,2015). Merton described his epiphany as 'an illumination' (Commins, 1999 p.62). His experience was like 'a window frame to the light' (ibid). Kounios, and Beeman(2015, p.5) findings expressed a moment of awareness as 'suddenly, I saw things in a new light' . Merton wrote, 'it struck me like a thunderbolt and went through me like a flash of lightening' (Commins, 1999, p.60).Similarly, Kounios, and Beeman, described their experience like 'a bolt of lightning' or 'a lightning bolt' (2015, p.5). In one study scholars equated an epiphany with the phase, seeing for the first time (Schwartz, 2010). Merton's sight was 'blinded and became illuminated' (Commins,1999, p.64).Each epiphany for Merton had the power to heal his

semi-blindness. Freud recognised those spell-binding moments of recognition when a childhood trauma which has shaped the whole personality is suddenly brought to light (Timms,1987). Such insights can be gained only belatedlydoes not alter the fact that Freud's accords them a privilege status (Timms,1987). The light of reason opens up the space for truth (Sokolowski, 2000).

Truth

> When Heidegger uses a rather poetic trope and calls man, or Dasein, the 'shepherd of being' , he means that we are the ones to whom things can be disclosed in their truthfulness, that we hold a privileged place in the scheme of things because we are datives of manifestation. We evidence things. We let them appear (Sokolowski, 2000, p.161).

According to Sokolowski, (2000) there are two kinds of truth that occur in our rational life: the truth of correctness and the truth of disclosure. Phenomenology uses the term evidence to name the subjective activities that bring truth about. Evidence as noesis is correlated to truth as noema (Sokolowski, 2000). Merton described epiphanies as 'immediate contact with the Truth' ,'a sudden and immediate contact between my intellect and the Truth' (Commins,1999 p.61). The notion of a moment of awareness is the ultimate goal of Zen Buddhism 'satori', which translates as 'acquiring a new viewpoint for looking into the essence of things'. According to Suzuki 'satori is the sudden flash into consciousness of a new truth" (Suzuki cited in Kounios, & Beeman,2015). Sokolowski, (2000) sees the avowal of a truth as the bringing forth of a presence. Evidence is the successful presentation of an intelligible object, the successful presentation of something whose truth becomes manifest in the evidencing itself (Sokolowski, 2000, p.161). It is the moment when something enters the sphere of reason. The truth discloses itself. The truth is actualised. It is evidenced (Sokolowski,2000). May theorized about the significance of the pause (1981, p.165). It is in the pause that people learn to listen to silence and create a moment of awareness (ibid).

Insight

Schwartz, (2010) explained that epiphanies offer intense moments of insight that make possible the juxtaposition of facts, factors or theories in arrangement previously thought impossible. McDonald's (2008) study revealed a characteristic of a moment of awareness as insightful.Neville and Cross (2016) described an epiphany as a sudden insight spurred by an event or experience that leads to personal and enduring transformation with respect to one's core understanding. Kounios, and Beeman study expressed this moment as, 'Things just clicked' 'it was a spark of inspiration' 'a slash of insight', 'an epiphany' (2015, p.5). Merton's epiphanies were gifts unnecessary to faith (Commins,1999). They moved him from insight to sight (ibid). We are not mere recipients; we are not only datives, but nominatives of disclosure (Sokolowski, 2000). Epiphanies are experiences that increase critical awareness. In one study the majority described an epiphany as an awakening, it was characterised as an experience that triggered personal exploration of one's self (Neville, and Cross, 2016). Merton was 'yanked away from a flawed way of seeing things' and 'awakened from blindness' (Commins, 1999, p.67). A review on Merton's life explored his experience of three fundamental epiphanies that 'forcibly yanked him into a deeper level of awareness' (ibid). Each epiphany had the potentiality to reveal something of a different reality (Commins,1999). Merton's first epiphany was 'certainty and belonging, brightness without physical light' another came as a 'thunderclap', the final one 'woke him from a dream' (Commins, 1999 p. 59). McDonald (2008) study revealed that a moment of awareness had a lasting effect on another and invited transformation in one's identity. In addition, Kounios, and Beeman (2015) concluded moments of awareness are just ordinary thought that yield extraordinary results. Personal growth doesn't have to be a glacial process. As physican – author Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., wrote " A moment of insight is sometimes worth a lifes's experience". (p.235 cited Kounios &Beeman,2015).

Eureka! Aha!

One would marvel again at a momentary presence displaying itself in the blink of an eye, an epiphany (Romanyshyn, 2015). Some years ago *The Times of London* enthusiastically

proclaimed the discovery of the brains ‘E-spot’ (for ‘Eureka’).Kounios, and Beeman(2015) main study revealed a key area of the right hemisphere lights up at the aha moment. Their study found many expressions that refer to what is commonly called a eureka or moment of awareness (ibid). New insights leads to different behaviours, that led to establishing a sense of connection to something broader than the individual self, the ‘aha’ moment or epiphanic experience or a wow moment (Neville & Cross, 2016). These experiences created wow responses which often lead to a more informed way in which one thought about themselves (Neville, and Cross, 2016). For many changes in one’s life were spurred by either an ‘aha’ moment (epiphany) or a series of events (encounters) that lead to increased insight and reinterpretations of the meaning (Neville & Cross, 2016).Timothy Carey (2007) conducted structured interviews with people who had just finished therapy. Some used familiar metaphors to describe their moment of awareness such as a button being pushed or a click (as cited in Kounios & Beeman,2015).

Indescribable

What happens within oneself when one integrates previously unconscious contents with the consciousness is indescribable in words (Jung,1995). There is a qualitative feel to that state;something it feels like to be in that state (Searle, 2013). According to Jung (1995) it can only be experienced. Merton’s epiphanies gave form, substance and full maturity to amorphous and undevelopedintuition(Commins,1999). It is the sudden experience of comprehending something you didn’t understand before, thinking about the familiar in a novel way (Kounios & Beeman, 2015, p.5). Merton avowed ordinary, everyday human existence is the material of radical transformation of consciousness (Commins,1999).

These moments of consciousness confirmed years of spiritual development (Commins,1999).This and other findings provided concrete evidence for the reality and distinctiveness of these moments (Kounios & Beeman,2015).However, despite Schooler’s discovery, new research findings about moments of awareness are rare (Kounios, & Beeman,2015).The field has become dormant although it remains a core topic of experimental psychology (Kounios, &Beeman,2015).

Illuminating Blind Self and Channels of Awareness

Interpersonal feedback

All self –knowledge is mediated through signs and works (Ricoeur, 1994). McConnell ‘s et al., (2011) study found that people may benefit from seeking input from those close to them, to make the unconscious conscious. Momentary states of self awareness can also be triggered by various situations that can make less self-conscious people focus their attention inward, such as seeing oneself in the mirror or being in front of another or an audience (Carver and Scheier, 1978). The figure from the unconscious are uninformed, and need man, or contact with consciousness, in order to attain knowledge (Jung, 1995). McConnellet al., (2011)reason that friends or therapists have unique insights into people’s emotional dilemmas that are invisible to those facing them first-hand (ibid).Biesanz et al., (2007) found that we are astute judges of each others’ personalities. As a result, other people –especially those who spend a lot of time around us and who we open up to- almost inevitably become experts on our personality.

Response facilitation is appropriate where one is confronted by another to enhance response. Social facilitation engenders one to become objectively aware of himself and move towards correct performance (Duval, & Wicklund, 1971).Pronin et al.,(2002) concluded that adversaries would be well advised to engage the efforts of sophisticated third parties to help create more awareness. Vazire and Carlson, (2011)stated that a total picture of what a person is like requires both the person’s own perspective and the perspective of others who know him or her well (ibid).They suggest direct honest feedback would be useful in opening blind spots but a more realistic strategy is to take the perspective of others when perceiving one’s own personality (i.e meta-perception). Blind spots can be breached first by confrontation, second by intrapsychic competence and thirdly by improving brain function (Vaillant, 2011). Some blind spots may persist because of lack of honest feedback and therefore people see no reason to change (Leising &Muller-Plath, 2009). When another is placed infront of another who is deemed observing and evaluating the person’s objective self –awareness will increase and will examine his performance relative to the level he aspires to (Duval, & Wicklund, 1971). Objective self-awareness increases to the degree he thinks another is evaluating him (Duval, & Wicklund, 1971). Gallrein (2016) suggest more interpersonal feedback to reduce distinctive blind spots is worth investigating. Vazire and Carlson, (2011), suggest a simple dose of feedback could help one bring his self-perception in line with his behaviour.

According to Kahn, (2002) to each of our interpersonal encounters we bring unconscious desires and fears. In social facilitation literature 'social' has normally meant the presence of other people (Duval, & Wicklund, 1971). Duval, & Wicklund, (1971) concluded the person who is in the presence of others will exert more effort to attempt to reach a standard of correctness and the enhanced motivation to be correct.

Personal Therapy and Supervision

> Psychological induction inevitably causes the two parties to get involved to create a third and to be themselves transformed in the process, and all the time the therapists knowledge (presence), like a flickering lamp, is the one dim light in the darkness and prays to God for illumination (Jung, 1954, p.199).

Badger-Charleson (as cited in Goss & Stevens, 2016) stated the importance of 'relational supervision', to enable one to explore 'blind spots' and encourages one to recognise their own defensive processes or unprocessed data (p.65).Through therapy one can bring to awareness unconscious material to the client, which can ameliorate one's pain (MacIntyre, 2004). Psychoanalytical therapists Robert Stolorow stated the crucial aspect of therapy is making the invisible visible (Kahn, 2002). As an existential therapist Craig (2008) asks what does one do with what remains hidden from view and how does one address it in a therapeutic dialogue. The therapist is thus truly a hermeneut, an interpreter who translates the client's unconscious (Von Franz, 1975) and is merely a midwife at the birth of a process of growing and becoming conscious (Von Franz, 1975). May continues to state that the task of the therapist is to make the client conscious of their intentionality and to heighten the client's consciousness in regard to further meaning that need to be created (May, 1969). Jung worked without conscious intention; he simply followed unconscious prompting from the unconscious and did or said whatever came to him from nature (Von Franz, 1975). Therapists can routinely influence, intentionally or unintentionally, their clients' self awareness when they engage in personal conservation (addressing them with personal questions using their name)(Carver and Scheier, 1978). Therapist now understand that the healing power of the therapeutic relationship is as powerful as bringing unconscious forces to the surface (Kahn, 2002).Therapy involves an uncovering of blindness that has blocked his or her desiring and wanting from awareness and thus seeks to oppose and alter a passive and apathetic attitude toward life that the client has chosen (May, 1969). Therapists strive to decode conscious, preconscious and unconscious inner working with their patients (Leuzinger-Bohleber,

&Solms, 2017).Freud was convinced the secret to a cure was recovering buried impulses and fantasies from their repression (Kahn, 2002). May (1981) states the purpose of psychotherapy is to set people free, to become free to be aware and to experience their possibilities. He continues to state that problems are the outward signs of unused inner possibilities. 'People come to a therapist because they have become inwardly enslaved and they yearn to be set free' (May, 1981 pp.19-20). In Jung's opinion treatment is 'never merely logotherapy (Victor Frankl), because a therapeutic encounter, understood by Jung, must include exploration of the unconscious including irrational imponderabilia, such as tone of voice, facial expression and gestures'(Von Franz, 1975, p.54). The aim of therapy is that the patient experiences his existence as real. The purpose is that he becomes aware of his existence as fully as possible, which includes becoming aware of his potentialities and becoming able to act on the basis of them (May 1969). 'Transference where the therapist's mere presence continually calls the client to inhabit and befriend more open and responsive worlds engenders self-awareness' (Brooke, 2015, p.107).Anderson and leitner (1996) highlighted for counsellors the importance of self focus or self awareness as a strategy to be used by depressed clients for attaining valuable feedback that will facilitate mood regulation. Theories of self –regulation have become particularly popular in health psychology; as many forms of unhealthy behaviours are believed to represent failures to self regulate (Moore et al., 1997).

For Hillman, the job of therapy, whether it be conducted by one's own anima or by an actual therapist, is (contrary to the Freudian maxim) to lead the individual deeper into unconsciousness (Drob, 1999). Jung had no interest in training a client in a certain method instead he always tried to help him find peace with himself by mediating the messages sent by the client's own unconscious (Von Franz, 1975). He states the main goal of therapy is to create deep meaning and experience (Drob, 1999).Unconscious generated frustrations, distortions and misdirection are obstacles to one achieving their potential and through unleashing their unconscious through therapy can be empowering (MacIntyre, 2004).The task of the therapist is to bring into consciousness the unconscious, no matter which psychic institution it belongs, the id, ego or superego (Freud, 1966).According to Jung all intelligent psychotherapists recognize the need for conscious realization of unconscious aetiological factors (1954). No analysis is capable of banishing all unconsciousness forever. Therefore, unconscious processes is understood as a given by virtue of the therapists interpretive activity (the concept possess only heuristic value). It is possible to modify /construct this psychic reality by way of interactions with external reality, either by way of significant others or by

the analyst through interpretation(Bohleber,et al., 2017). When one possesses no very clear idea about something, because one is unconscious or unwilling to admit it to oneself, this creates an obvious disadvantage (Jung, 1954). A therapist must enter into a dialectical procedure with another psychic system both as questioner and answerer. The relationship between therapeutic benefits and defence use has been demonstrated (Vaillant, 1994). Insight into the unconscious realms of the mind may indeed be necessary for cure but is not sufficient. Just because a client or person knows something intellectually does not mean they deeply understand it(Kahn, 2002). The treatment must do more than destroy the old morbid attitude; it must build up a new attitude that is sound and healthy. This requires a fundamental change of vision. 'One must see the cause and origin of one's neurosis but also see an legitimate goal towards cure' (Jung, 1954, p.138). This unveiling of the unconscious is supported through a deep understanding of one's unconscious or through insightful therapy (MacIntyre, 2004).However, Freud stated that intellectual awareness of one's past is never sufficient to emancipate one from it. Emotions, feelings and desires must be worked through and released for change to transpire (MacIntyre, 2004). This is why individuals suffering from neurosis find therapy and psychoanalysis empowering. They have found their behaviour unproductive and although they have tried to reason with themselves, they have found it practically ineffective (MacIntyre, 2004).If one is to overcome unconscious desires and motives, they must become aware of their reasons (MacIntyre, 2004) and be open to both rational scrutiny and criticism. What a client will learn from therapy is that through making oneself known to others that one makes one known to oneself (MacIntyre, 2004). How successful a client's quest for self-awareness will depend on the sensitivity and patience of the therapist, the complexity of that client's history, and the developmental work of therapy, both within and without the session (MacIntyre, 2004). Working though emotions and desires is paramount so that the emotions become related to the present and are no longer unconscious expression of the past. This allows the client to become self-determining (MacIntyre, 2004). To bring a repressed idea or memory into awareness is not enough to engender healing. (MacIntyre, 2004). One must bring into consciousness the memory with all its emotional charge and work through the emotions to enable change and new conscious insight (MacIntyre, 2004). One must first identify the behaviour through self-awareness or therapy. The therapist has the sensitive job of bringing the unconscious material to consciousness, and making the link between childhood events and adult behaviour (MacIntyre, 2004).The idea of therapy is bringing to mind all memories and chaotic material,

that will allow one via a therapists interpretation put order and healing into their life (MacIntyre, 2004).]

Introspective Reflection- Self evaluation

Bohleber, et al., (2017) asks are 'unconscious processes an organised structure of mental life, existing independently of the therapist's interpretive activity? And is the unconscious processes observed directly. Or else only inferred from observable behavioural evidence' (p.49). The very act of interpreting does not modify the inferred phantasy. The internal eye can examine what the external eye cannot see. It is Socratic 'know Thyself'. As cognitive and linguistic symbolization gradually replaces dissociation, increased self-reflection fosters the illusion of something emerging that, though always known, has been previously warded off(Bohleber, W. et al., 2017).Sandeen, et. al. (2018) stated that increased self-awareness about psychologists own assumptions and biases is essential. They suggest weaving experiential, self-reflective, and didactic content throughout doctoral programs.According to Huxley, 'knowledge is a function of being, without contemplative training our being is not adequate for accessing such insights' (as cited in Palmer, 1998, p.22). Individuals differ in their degree of self awareness depending on their tendency to engage in self reflection (Lu &Wan , 2017).Individuals with high private self-consciousness tend to pay attention to their private, internal self-aspects and engage in more introspection (Scheier& Carver, 1985). They also tend to pay more attention to their own values, beliefs, and emotional experiences (Duval et al., 2001). Sandeen, et. al. (2018) suggests reflective local practice (RLP) for psychotherapists to help create lifelong learning and awareness. West et al (2012) suggests similar, (CRT) Cognitive Reflection Test introduced into the journal literature by Frederick (2005) is a task designed to measure the tendency to override a response alternative that is incorrect and to engage in further reflection that leads to the correct response. Following the research tradition on reflection of personal self reflection on personal dispositions and personal experiences facilitates self understanding (Carver &Scheier, 1998; Duval et al., 2001). The awareness of the influence of personality and personal experience on the self informs personal self-awareness (Lu & Wan, 2017). They continue to posit that individuals could actively reflect on their experiences and use this information as a source to understand who they were (ibid). For Freud the dream served as a means of uncovering repressed,

generally infantile unconscious wishes, and it was hoped that the therapeutic effect would result from this elucidation (Von Franz, 1975). The essential thing according to Jung (1995) is to differentiate oneself from these unconscious contents by personifying them, and at the same time to bring them into relationship with consciousness. That is the technique of stripping them of their power (Jung, 1995). Jung stated it was not too difficult to personify them as they possessed a certain degree of autonomy, a separate identity of their own.

However, Jung is opposed to the 'subjectivistic interpretation' of self (Brooke, 2015, p108).'Every student who has perused the literature and amused himself with the interpreting dreams and unearthing complexes in himself and others can easily get far enough, but beyond that and for deep insight only the therapist who has himself undergone a thorough analysis, or can bring such passion for truth to the work that he can analysis himself through his client' (Jung, 1954, p.137).The preconscious or subconscious is material that although not conscious can be brought into consciousness by ordinary introspective methods (MacIntyre, 2004).Objective self-awareness (OSA) theory assumed that the orientation of conscious attention is the essence of self-evaluation. Focussing attention on the self brings about objective self-awareness, which initiates an automatic comparison of the self against standards (representations of correct behaviour, attitudes and traits) (Silvia & Duval, 2001). It is important for the consciousness to reflect, from which all higher consciousness emerge. (Von Franz, 1975).

'How can the client learn to abandon his neurotic subterfuges when he sees the doctor playing hide and seek with his own personality, as though unable, for fear of being thought inferior, to drop the professional mask of authority, competence, superior knowledge' (Jung, 1954, p.137). 'Psychotherapy challenges not just parts of the man but the whole man and the therapist must demand this understanding of himself firstly' (Jung, 1954, p.178). It has been confirmed what the therapist fails to see in himself/herself she/he will either not see at allor will see grossly exaggerated in the client (Jung, 1954). Careful self-criticism and detailed comparison are needed if we are to frame our judgments on a more universal basis (Jung, 1954). The therapist must continue learning, and never forget that each new case brings new problems to light and thus give rise to unconscious assumptions that have never before been constellated (Jung, 1954).]

Attentional Focus and Bodily Awareness

Mindfulness appears to help the two major barriers to self-knowledge: informational barriers (i.e., the quantity and quality of information people have about themselves) and motivational barriers (i.e., ego-protectives motives). Mindfulness intervention prior to ego-threatening feedback may lessen the negative outcomes associated with holding more accurate versus positively biased self-views. (Wilson, 2009). The best way to create awareness in practice is to try to attain a conscious attitude which allows the unconscious to co-operate instead of being driven into opposition (Jung, 1954, p.178). When there is a marked change in the individual's state of consciousness, the unconscious contents which are thereby constellated will also change (Jung, 1954). Attentional focus was assumed to operate according to gestalt consistency principles (Heider, 1960).

The body is the incarnation of psychological life (Brooke, 2015). Jung and Heidegger have similar approaches to the question of truth (Brooke, 2015). For Jung this meant psychological truth. For Jung to be true something has to be effective; and to be effective it has to be immanent (Brooke, 2015). Jung (1928/31b) stated, 'exploring the unconscious must give the body its due. It is as much a call from the world as a call from one's bodily and spiritual life' (Brooke, 2015, p.135). Baltazar et al., (2014) provided the first empirical evidence that human bodily self awareness may become more acute when one is subjected to another's gaze. People need to judge for themselves what is best to do in a particular situation. Traits, skills and self-awareness are necessary to influence and change one's practice (MacIntyre, 2004). It is helpful to learn how to connect one's lack of self awareness with the misdirection of their desires. This will enable them to direct their desires rightly (ibid). To release the feeling one must bring the ideas to consciousness (ibid).

Experiential Triggers and Trauma

Neville and Cross, (2016) findings extend our understanding of the process in which people develop a sense of consciousness. Their research concluded that increased awareness was spurred by personal experience and/or observations, education, and activism (ibid). However,

the self is multifaceted (James, 1890), with personal characteristics, social relationships, collective membership as a major component, individuals could develop self-awareness from specific experiences related to these major components (Lu &Wan, 2017). When experiences are connected to a particular source, it could foster the development of self awareness in relation to that source (Lu & Wan, 2017).Uber-consciousness or a sense of awakening can follow in the aftermath of experiential triggers or lived experience (Neville & Cross, 2016). Neville and Cross, (2016) explored epiphanies or encounters that prompted change in individuals perspective about their understanding of a situation. Personalself awareness develops through attention to one's internal dispositions and personal experiences and sensitivity toward the impact of these personal experiences. Individuals may realize that the culture that they belong to has had much influence on the important aspects of their lives (Lu &Wan , 2017).A key role Freud introduced was the concept of a traumatic event and that of abreaction (release of pent-up emotion) (MacIntyre, 2004). A trauma is an event of emotional importance. The release is in the recalling of unconscious memories. A trauma leads to repressed emotion, and unless abreacted can cause neurotic symptoms (MacIntyre, 2004). One must emotionally work through which will give meaning to their unconscious insight (Kahn, 2002). Neville and Cross, (2016) concluded both formal and informal education helped to awaken participants to a new understanding. Their finding showed informal education experiences such as travel and reading as aspects of awakening. (Neville &Cross, 2016). A key role Freud introduced was the concept of a traumatic event (fright, shame, physical pain) and that of abreaction (release of pent-up emotion). A trauma is an event of emotional importance. The release is in the recalling of unconscious memories. A trauma leads to repressed emotion, and unless abreacted can cause neurotic symptoms (MacIntyre, 2004). This trauma can be released by finding a means of expressing the emotional content.

Benefits of Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is a supreme gift, a treasure as precious as life (Yalom, 2008). Lack of awareness of one's own behaviour causes much unintentional pain (MacIntyre, 2004). Research has shown that high self awareness increases the tendency to make internal causal attributions (Duval &Wicklund, 1972). In addition, high self awareness prompts people to make more internal attributions and does so independently of the outcome to be attributed

(Ames & Wzlawek, 2014). According to Duval and Wicklund (1972), self awareness increases the salience of an internalized, social and or situational standard. They state that self-awareness increases self-control performance (ibid). Furthermore, awareness of how significant social relationships influences the self could result in a relationship self-awareness that could be relevant to adjustment and well being in the relationship domain (Lu &Wan, 2017).Neville, and Cross, (2016) findings revealed two primary positive personal outcomes of awakening: increased possible selves and pride /acceptance. These moments of self-awareness have the power to redeem us, awaken us, and make us conscious and whole.

The goal of most psychotherapy is to make one whole again. The etymological root meaning of Gestalt therapy is wholeness (Yalom, 1980). Neville, and Cross, (2016) study shows personal experience /observation type epiphanies increased the clarity and awareness, and encouraged greater meaning making. Previous research proved that self-awareness can be quite positive when people are congruent with their standards (Greenberg &Musham, 1981). With personal self awareness, the attention to personal dispositions and personal experiences could heighten the importance of one's true self (Boyraz& Kuhl, 2015) contributing to the tendency to behave more authentically, to act according to one's real thoughts and feelings instead of social approval and external standards (Kernis& Goldman, 2006). High personal self-awareness directs individuals attention to the true self (Lu & Wan, 2017). Higher authenticity, including behavioural component, has also been shown to be positively associated with well-being. Individuals, who live authentically, those whose behaviours are congruent with their values and beliefs, tend to have higher self-esteem and less stress. From a humanistic-existential perspective, authenticity is an integral part of healthy psychological functioning (Boyraz& Kuhl, 2015). Personal self awareness could contribute to well being by guiding the self to utilize the true self as psychological resources for adaptation and coping. (Lu & Wan, 2017). Behavioural authenticity contributes to better well being. Strong identification has been associated with such well being outcomes as purpose in life, daily happiness, psychological well-being and physical health (Lu & Wan, 2017). Deindividuation would seem to create a reduced self-awareness (Duval, & Wicklund,1971). 'That is the self in its uncanniness calls the inauthentic self to become the authentic self' (Gelven 1972, pp.72-3).

According to Jung 'anyone who takes the sure road is as good as dead' (Jung, 1995, p.328). It is so important to affirm one's own destiny. In this way we forge an ego that does not break down when incomprehensible things happen; an ego that endures the truth (ibid). Thus man

becomes a self only as he participates in his development and throws his weight behind this or that tendency, no matter how limited this choice may be. The idea of the alter ego, the other self, or higher self recurs whenever genius becomes conscious of its own processes, and we have testimony for it in age after age (Jung, 1995). If the ego fails to seek autonomy it may need therapy to encourage self-awareness (MacIntyre, 2004). Sandeen, et. al. (2018) state without self awareness, the psychotherapist risks making blunders that will limit or prevent benefit to the client. Theory of possible selves (Markus &Nurius, 1986) assumes that a discrepancy between actual self and hoped for self will be resolved by changing self in the direction of the latter.

Risks of Opening Blind Spots

Knowledge of the unconscious offers valuable insights but as MacIntyre (2004) states even partial self-knowledge may involve a degree of unexpected pain. Neville and Cross's (2016) study revealed that not everybody received benefits from gaining increased awareness. One person experienced disappointment and despair from her awakening and moment of awareness.Research by Twenge, et al., (2003) has demonstrated decreased self-awareness among individuals in negative social situations is a defensive strategy designed to buffer the self from the acute distress (and feelings of rejection).Subsequent research, found that high self-awareness promoted defensive, external attributions for negative events (Cohan et al., 1985) presumably because people wanted to avoid the experience of failure (Ickes et al., 1973). The interplay of these two motives determines whether success and failure are attributedto self or to an external possible cause. (Twenge, et al., 2003) stated that social challenging situations can lead to the desire to avoid self-awareness because of the discrepancy generated between people's generally positive view of themselves and the experience of being rejected by others (Hess and Pickett, 2010). This response is thought to be a defensive reaction to what would otherwise be an acutely distressing experience. Discrepancies between an existing self-state and one's own ideals lead to dejection, whereas discrepancies between self and another's ideals lead to shame and embarrassment. (Silvia & Duval, 2001). Twenge et al.(2003) study provided evidence that social situations can lead individuals to avoid awareness of the self, thereby relieving rejected individuals of a potentially unpleasant confrontation with their social shortcomings and failures. Duval and

Wicklund's (1972) stated the objective self-awareness would be an aversive state, as the probability that at least one self-standard discrepancy exists is quite high. However, although, avoidance of self-awareness may provide psychological refuge, these individuals need to move forward and forge new social connections if they are to satisfy their fundamental need to belong (Hess and Pickett, 2010.). Therefore, individuals need to defend the self from the immediate pain of socially challenging situations (Williams, 2009), while also engaging the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural mechanisms that can aid in the formation and maintenance of relationships. Hess and Pickett, (2010) concluded that by not focusing on the self, one may simultaneously avoid the distress of social failure and free attentional resources for other purposes. They concluded rejection appears to cause individuals to disengage from socially-relevant aspects of the self, potentially alleviating the distress caused by negative social encounters. Resistance to therapy should be taken into consideration whether the defence is adaptive or not. It is not good practice to challenge immature defences if the client is unwilling or unable to look at self as this may engender anxiety and rupture the therapeutic relationship (Vaillant, 1994).

Further Research

Descartes and Berkeley argued mental phenomena are the most potent causes of human behaviour, they argued that we need more study of the mind (as cited in O'Donohue, and Ferguous, 2001).There is very little empirical data describing the process of change or awareness (Neville and Cross, 2016).Furthermore, despite the continual progress in self-awareness research, many theoretical issues remain ambiguous and unresolved (Silvia & Duval, 2001). Searle, (2013) states future research lies in better understanding of creating more awareness. Jung, (1995) affirmed the assimilation of the fundamental insight that psychic life has two poles still remains a task for the future. Further to this, Vazire and Carlson, (2011) have suggested that future research should examine how others' knowledge can improve self –knowledge. Carlson, (2013) stated that future research is needed to establish whether self-knowledge is more desirable than other forms of self-deception Silvia, and Duval, (2001) hope that a conceptual integration of new findings will further stimulate research on self-focused attention. Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, confirm that the 'most salient part of the world for human beings involves interactions with other human beings,

therefore the relevance of the argumentations for future interdisciplinary dialogue on the unconscious' (2017, p.13).

Objective self-awareness theory has undergone fundamental changes in the five decades since Duval and Wicklund's (1972) original formulation. Many assumptions of self-awareness theory require revision, particularly how expectations influence approach and avoidance of self-standard discrepancies; and the role of causal attribution in directing discrepancy reduction (Silvia, and Duval, 2001). In addition, Neville and Cross (2016) state more information is needed to understand how identity may change over time after an awakening moment. Although original self –awareness theory (Duval and Wicklund,1972), and cybernetic model of self –regulation(Carver and Scheier, 1981) can explain why directing attention to the self enhances regulatory performance, they do not provide more insight in the relation between self-focused attention and cognitive resources (Alberts et al., 2011).However, unconscious concepts and theories should not be in contradiction with the current knowledge in other scientific disciplines (Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017). Interestingly, many of the central psychoanalytical concepts of Sigmund Freud have proven to be externally coherent with the modern neuro-scientific understanding of complex psychic processes. Moreover, Tyler (2012) states that there is no extant research that directly examine the non-conscious activation of people's self-presentation efforts. Cramer (2012) recommended future research exploring defence mechanisms in adulthood. Many aspects of the unconscious still remains unclear except that it has a much greater part of the explanation for ordinary action than intuition suggests(Galatzer-Levy, 2017).West et. al. (2012) findings indicate a reinterpretation of the blind spot as an efficacious processing strategy rather than a more common interpretation as a processing flaw. In every piece of Freud's work, he warned us not to deny these unconscious powers. Only in acknowledging their effectiveness can we guarantee a wise handling of these powers (Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017). 'Turning our backs and negating the unconscious not only leads to psychic illness, it also enhances the danger of uncontrolled outbreaks of drives and threatens human co-habitation and our culture'(Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017, p.8).

Conclusion and Clinical Implications

> Evanescence of all earthly things, should take account of psychic changes. Eternal truth needs a human language that alters with the spirit of the times. The primordial images undergo ceaseless transformation and yet remain ever the same, but only in a new form can they be understood anew (Jung, 1954, p.196).

Given that moments of awareness or lack of self-awareness are process- oriented, there is a 'dearth of empirical studies uncovering critical events promoting a perceived change in one's thinking and meaning making' (Neville, and Cross, 2016, p.103). Although, research has made progress in understanding links between self-awareness and causal attribution and the effects of expectancies on self-standard discrepancy including blind spots (Silvia, and Duval, 2001) there are only a handful of psychology studies on epiphanies and general self-awareness (Neville, and Cross, 2016). Contemporary research has added nuanced knowledge to the self awareness literature by highlighting the different possible sources of self – understanding. There is always something to be learnt (unconcealed) from engaging with a phenomenon. According to Peng, (2011) self awareness is more important today than ever, as the pervasive powers of technology not only threaten to destroy us, but also imperil large portions of the earth

The present research is limited, out-dated and in need of a deeper understanding from a qualitative perspective. My hope is similar to Freud's, that hopes one to grow aware of their unconscious, control it and gain self awareness for future choices (MacIntyre, 2004).We need the concept of the unconscious today because it addresses questions of human happiness and unhappiness which goes beyond economic and social issues (Easthope,1999). For a life of practical rationality, self-knowledge is necessary to identify one's unconscious desires, and for one to recognize their responses are inadequate or inappropriate so that one can correct them (MacIntyre, 2004). Awareness and understanding of a 'previously unknown episode in ones past can somehow remove that episode of its power' (MacIntyre, 2004, p.7). It is not a question of one freeing themselves from unconscious processes, but rather deciding which powers from the past inform their present (MacIntyre, 2004).

My current investigation was designed to address the gaps in the literature by gathering therapist's stories to explore whether participants identified moments of self-awareness or

psychological blind spots in their narratives. I want to describe the context and perceived outcomes of psychological blind spots and moments of awareness in their understanding of what it means to them. The current study will be grounded in therapist's phenomenological understanding (perception of human experiences) and centred the voices of men and women from various psychotherapeutic modalities. It is helpful to reflect on the lack of self awareness that characterizes many normal everyday interactions. People can often be unaware of how they communicate, what they say and how they say it (MacIntyre, 2004). What self-awareness can foster is for one to learn how to hear one's inner and outer dialogue. Learning to hear oneself as others would (MacIntyre, 2004). It is important that an adult is able to rationally evaluate and discriminate. One must find a way of preventing the unconscious influences from inhibiting their rational powers (MacIntyre, 2004). It is painful to leave beside certainties and false beliefs developed but is inevitable to establish a productive and constructive dialogue and reach beyond a rediscovery of already established knowledge' And in the end one will come to realize that there are many things indeed of which academic knowledge never dreamed (Jung, 1954).

> 'The unconscious is a dynamic presence in all aspects of life....we cannot nor should not ignore it' (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 139).

Appendix VIIBook Reviews and Relevant Learning

I will briefly outline several of the pertinent books that proved useful in the literature review including some of the key learning.

Jung

Jung, C.G (1934). The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious

Jung, C.G (1954). The Collected Works. The Practice of Psychotherapy

Jung, C.G (1961/1995). Memories, Dreams and Reflections

The works of C.G Jung has formed the backbone to my research. Not only has it been a privileged to immerse myself in his knowledge but a pure joy to suffuse his words into my unconscious mind. Jung's timeless information continues to be as relevant today as ever. His poetic, erudite yet simple language transcends age, gender or class. He embodies a universal language of truth that invites awareness. To engage in some of his original works and his autobiographical musings felt more like an indulgence rather than a chore. His language evoked and provoked an inner truth and for that reason I am eternally grateful. My heart would often feel lighter with a sense of warmth whilst reading. He wrote fluently on the topic of the unconscious and creating awareness. This buttressed my ideologies and supported my objectives. To have included his philosophies in the literature review adds integrity and heightens the truth value of this research. Throughout my doctoral journey I implored the forefathers and mothers of past generations to be the beacon of light in what at many times felt like great darkness I requested the sagacity of their deceased spirits to walk beside me and inform my direction.

Jung's key findings that supported my work are too many to mention but a few include;

The ideal would naturally be to have no assumptions at all. But this is impossible even if one exercises the most rigorous self-criticism, for one is oneself the biggest of all one's assumptions, and the one with the gravest consequences. Try as we may to have no assumptions ..the assumptions that I myself am will determine my method: as I am, so will I proceed (Jung 1937, p. 329 as cited in Brooke, 2015). This will involve one's 'guiding philosophy on life'(Jung, 1943, p.79), which in turn involves one's psychological type,

cultural situation, and finally one's complexes, 'the most absolutely prejudiced thing in every individual' (Jung 1934c, p. 103). Although, Jung was the first to demand that the analyst should himself be analysed ,we are largely indebted to Freud for the invaluable discovery that analysts too have their complexes and consequently many blind spots which act as so many prejudices (Jung, 1954, p.8). Jung stated (1954) just as he finds himself molded by external and objective social influence, so too is he moulded by internal and unconscious forces, which he summed up under the term the subjective factor. Personal and theoretical prejudices are the most serious obstacles in the way of psychological judgment. They can, however, be eliminated with a little good will and insight (Jung, 1954).

The meaning of divine service or the service which man can render to God, that light may emerge from the darkness, that the Creator may become conscious of His creation, and man conscious of himself (Jung, 1995).Mental content remain latent in the unconscious and hence reserved for the future (Jung, 1995).Jung, (1995) never lost a sense of something that lives and endures beneath the eternal flux.What we see is blossom, which passes; the rhizome remains (Jung, 1995).Jung, (1995) affirmed that we live two lives the life we live and the one we have forgotten.Everybody's experience within their own existential circumstances is gathering, organized and held within one's own existence, most of which is out of awareness (ibid). 'Most people identify themselves almost exclusively with their consciousness and imagine that they are only what they know about themselves' (Jung, 1995, p.330). Yet anyone with even a smattering of psychology can see how limited this knowledge is (Jung, 1995). It is therefore important to examine the phenomena of creating awareness and its absence with the greatest care, however obscure they may seem, with a view to discovering the seeds of new and potential orders (Jung, 1954).In Jung's (1995) prologue to Memories, Dreams, Reflections, he affirms 'We are a psychic processes which we do not control, or only partly direct'.

'Since there can never be absolute freedom from prejudice, even the most objective and impartial investigator is liable to become the victim of some unconscious assumption upon entering a region where the darkness has never been illuminated and where he can recognize nothing'(Jung, 1954, p.168).In the unaware person perilous aberrations manifest, the first of which one attempts to dominate everything by the intellect (Jung, 1995). 'The activated unconscious appears as a flurry of unleashed opposites and calls forth the attempt to reconcile them or grow aware, so that the great panacea may be born' (Jung, 1954, p.182). 'Once a person realizes that he himself has a shadow, that his enemy is in his own heart, then the ego

will become like a shuttlecock tossed between a duality of inner conflict with the result that there is an obfuscation of the light, i.e consciousness is depotentiated and the patient is at loss to know where his personality begins or ends. It is like passing through the valley of the shadow, and sometimes the client has to cling to the therapist as the last remaining shred of reality' (Jung, 1954, p.198).

What happens within oneself when one integrates previously unconscious contents with the consciousness is indescribable in words (Jung,1995). According to Jung (1995) it can only be experienced. Whether a change has taken place as the result of integration and what the nature of that change is remains a matter of subjective convictions (Jung, 1995).

Jung stated anything that is 'derived merely from rationality risks being profoundly inauthentic unless it bears witness to the destabilizing presence of the unconscious' (as cited in Rowland, 2005, p.23). "As soon as a psychic content crosses the threshold of awareness/consciousness, the synchronistic marginal phenomena disappear, time and space resume their accustomed sway, and consciousness is once more isolated in its subjectivity" (Jung cited in Romanyshyn, 2013, p.32).Jung gave a detailed description, in his Memories, Dreams, Reflections (1995) of the gradual emergence of his conscious ego (which he called No.1) out of the objective psychic background or unconscious (No.2). Jung was convinced that the majority of people didn't acknowledge their unconscious (as cited in Von Franz, 1975).

Leuzinger- Bohleber,, Arnold, and Solms

Leuzinger- Bohleber, M. Arnold, S. Solms, M. (2017) The Unconscious. A bridge between psychoanalysis and cognitive neuroscience.

Galatzer-Levy, R.M (2017). Concluding remarks and future perspectives. In Leuzinger-Bohleber, M. Arnold, S. Solms, M. The Unconscious. A bridge between psychoanalysis and cognitive neuroscience.

Bohleber, W., Jiménez, J. P., Scarfone, D., Varvin, S., & Zysman, S. (2015). Unconscious phantasy and its conceptualizations: An attempt at conceptual integration. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*,

The Unconscious explores the critical interdisciplinary dialogue between psychoanalysis and contemporary cognitive neuroscience. It bridges the gap between psychoanalysis and cognitive neuroscience, to enable better understanding of researchers and clinicians engagement with key topic of the unconscious. This book invites considered discussion in the realm of the non-conscious processes; however its choice of language and content of the book makes it attractive to neuroscience and psychoanalysis. The key learning consists of;

As cognitive and linguistic symbolization gradually replaces dissociation, increased self-reflection fosters the illusion of something emerging that, though always known, has been previously warded off (Leuzinger- Bohleber, et al., 2017). What is assumed as evidence of a buried unconscious is an illusion created by the interpersonal / relational nature of the analytic process during the ongoing symbolization of unprocessed affect (Bohleber, et al., 2017).Ergo, unconscious processes are co-constructed and come to life during the very processes of relating with significant others throughout personal development or in therapy, by interpreting enactments (ibid).The unconscious process need not be deemed an entity but rather a living process, not a state of affairs to be uncovered, but a way of elaborating the dialectical relationship between external and psychic realities (Bohleber, et al., 2017).It challenges Freudian thinkinge.g Freud's implicit assumptions that consciousness is an ordinary accompaniment of mental life is replaced with the idea of consciousness as a rare mental process occurring primarily in times of challenge as a means of slow thinking

The theory of motivated avoidance of awareness as an exclusive explanation of why things are outside awareness needs to give way to an appreciation of the evolutionary value of being able to think fast enough to cope with and get through life (Galatzer-Levy, 2017, p.209). Freud published a series of masterful studies that clearly demonstrated that mental processes that are actively barred from awareness result in symptoms that differ from conscious mentation (Galatzer-Levy,2017).These include processes that were almost entirely barred from awareness and later in terms of processes (like splitting and denial)which included conscious awareness of their content but protected against the consequences of conscious elements from interacting with one and other (Galatzer-Levy, 2017, p.206).It is obvious that most of what human beings do occur without conscious attention to the activity and day-to – day living (Galatzer-Levy, 2017). Our implicit knowledge of how to do things and habitual performance of various tasks takes up most of active doing (Galatzer-Levy, 2017).

The exploration of the relationship between these two forms of unawareness is an important topic for clinical investigation (Galatzer-Levy, 2017). Conscious thought is intrinsically slow because its rules are more complex than many non-conscious mental functioning(GalatzerLevy, 2017). Der Spiegel talks of the renaissance of psychology of the unconscious 150 years after the birth of Freud (Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017).Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, (2017) stated Freud effectively contributed the third largest discovery to mankind by unearthing 'the dynamic unconscious'.We are not the masters of our own houses; instead we are driven by unconscious impulses and fantasies (Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017).Every day we live far beyond the bounds of our consciousness; without our knowledge, the life of the unconscious is also going on within us (Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017).Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, (2017) stated Freud effectively contributed the third largest discovery to mankind by unearthing 'the dynamic unconscious'. Freud published a series of masterful studies that clearly demonstrated that mental processes that are actively barred from awareness result in symptoms that differ from conscious mentation (as cited in Galatzer-Levy,2017).

Kounios, and Beeman,

Kounios, J. and Beeman, M (2015). The Eureka Factor.

Kounios, and Beeman's book on *The Eureka Factor* is lively and readable whilst ensuring scientific accuracy. Although, I found this book light in essence some key learning and references supported my literature search and created more awareness on my subject in a more anecdotal and qualitative sense. Most relevant learning included;

Janet Metcalfe showed that people can consciously monitor their deliberate analytic thought; however, the mental processes leading up to insight are largely unconscious, making it difficult to monitor them and predict when a solution will burst into awareness (Kounios, and Beeman,2015, p.6).Despite Schooler's discovery, by the 1990s new research findings about insight are rare (Kounios, and Beeman,2015). The field has become dormant although it remains a core topic of experimental psychology (Kounios, and Beeman,2015). Kounios, and Beeman (2015) questioned are moments of awareness just ordinary thought that yield extraordinary results. In 2002 Kounios, and Beeman revealed a key area of the right hemisphere lights up in an aha moment. This and other findings provided concrete evidence

for the reality and distinctiveness of a moment of insight (Kounios, and Beeman, 2015). The Times of London enthusiastically proclaimed the discovery of the brains 'E-spot' ("E" for "Eureka")

"Things just clicked" "it was a spark of inspiration" "a bolt of lightening" "A slash of insight" "A lightening bolt" "An epiphany" "suddenly, I saw things in a new light". All these expression refer to what is commonly called'eureka' or moment of awareness. (Kounios, and Beeman, 2015). It is the sudden experience of comprehending something you didn't understand before, thinking about the familiar in a novel way (Kounios, and Beeman, 2015, p.5). Moments of awareness was experienced by Sir Isaac Newton in the theory of gravity, the melody of ballads to Sir Paul McCarty, and an understanding of the cause of suffering to the Buddha. The notion of a moment of awareness is the ultimate goal of Zen Buddhism "satori", which translates as "acquiring a new viewpoint for looking into the essence of things "According to Suzuki satori is the sudden flash into consciousness of a new truth" (Suzuki, 1964, as cited in Kounios, and Beeman, 2015).It is a mental catastrophe taking place all at once, after much piling up of matters intellectual and demonstrative.

A survey in the United States documents that many people have experienced epiphanies. In 1962, 22 percent had such experience. This figure increased to 49 percent in 2009. Researcher Timothy Carey (2007) conducted structured interviews with people who had just finished therapy. Some used familiar metaphors to describe their moment of awareness such as light being turned on, button being pushed or a click (as cited in Kounios, & Beeman,2015). Personal growth doesn't have to be a glacial process. As physican –author Oliver Wendell Holmes , Sr., wrote " A moment of insight is sometimes worth a life's experience". (as cited in Kounios, and Beeman,2015, p.235).

Brooke

Brooke, R. (2015). Jung and Phenomenology.

Brooke manages to demystify Jung's sometimes esoteric ideologies and translates theminto more existentiallanguage. His book is unquestionable of high academic standard commensurate to doctoral level. He systematically addresses the central idea of Jung's thought and the developments post Jungian. This book offered a deeper understanding on my subject and a good reference book. Various key learning contain;

Self understanding is never absolutely transparent to itself, for the impersonal opacity of the lived continues to be the existential ground of reflective consciousness (Brooke, 2015).The unconscious has been articulated as a multitude of latent incarnate intentionalities (Brooke, 2015) a fundamental hiddeness out of which everything comes into being or awareness (Boss 1975).Meaning is carried beyond the proximately manifest in behavioural gestures to the interior latency which the manifest brings forth (Brooke, 2015).Jung's essays contain appeals for recognition of psychic life that is not conscious but has the potential to become (Brooke, 2015).

Sokolowski

Sokolowski, R (2000). Introduction to Phenomenology.

Although this book is based on phenomenology, I have included some appropriate references in my literature review. It is a rich and illuminating book that encompasses phenomenology and beyond. It speaks a similar language to that related to the unconscious and fostering awareness. It supported my reading within a phenomenological context. Several helpful references and quotes included;

'There would be no philosophy, no search for wisdom, if we knew everything , if there were no hiddenness, no vagueness, obscurity, error, and ignorance' (Sokolowski, 2000, p.168).The phenomenon of darkness conditions the possibility of light, which reflect what light and darkness are (Sokolowski, 2000, p.168). We generally consider presencing to be good, but it does not follow that the absence or hidden are bad (Sokolowski, 2000). 'It may be necessary and good that things go into obscurity'. (Sokolowski, 2000, p.165). Hiddenness is not just loss; it can also be preservation and protection (Sokolowski, 2000). Things need their right time to be seen (Sokolowski, 2000). 'Hermeneutics has taught us, Bergung is also Verbergung , concealment is also preservation' (Sokolowski, 2000, p.166).

Evidence brings things to light, but every evidence emerges out of absence and vagueness, and the focus on one aspect of an object usually means that other aspects lapse into obscurity. (Sokolowski, 2000). The life of reason is not a matter of one simple evidence, one illumination. Rather , the life of reason is a push and pull between presence and absence, and between clarity and obscurity (Sokolowski, 2000, p.165). Concealment can occur in two forms, either as absence or as vagueness. Out of vagueness the object can distinctly come to

light. Once an object has been evidenced, it is possible and even inevitable, for it to move back again into vagueness (Sokolowski, 2000). The slippage back becomes sedimented, it becomes hidden which allows for something higher to come to light (Sokolowski, 2000). When we focus on the newer evidence, the original one recedes into darkness (Sokolowski, 2000).

Kahn

Kahn, M (2002). Basic Freud. Psychoanalytic thought for the 21st century.

This book offered a digestible antidote to jargon leaden reads on Freudian concepts. Notwithstanding, its ease of reading, it did offer evidence-based references on some key concepts and theories. It proved useful as an earlier read as part of my doctoral literature. A number of interesting findings comprise;

So much of our mental life is not obvious to us and therefore we remain ignorant of our motives (Kahn, 2002). Motives, conflicting feelings and forces are buried out of awareness (Kahn,2002). Understanding the unconscious is not merely important as a tool in therapy but as a way of understanding self, for unconscious fear and guilt can influence are daily motives (Kahn, 2002).Psychoanalytical therapists Robert Stolorow stated the crucial aspect of therapy is making the invisible visible (Kahn,2002). Although uncovering the unconscious is not enough to allow healing to transpire. (Kahn,2002).The unconscious system (the entrance hall) is a realm of primary process and the pleasure principle, the conscious system (the drawing room) is the seat of secondary process and the reality principle. The id is the repository of the instinctual drives, sexual and aggressive. (Kahn, 2002). It is totally unconscious and unsocialzed. It operates on the pleasure principle, demanding instant gratification.Displacement is so common it is called ‘kick the dog’. After a boss disrespects one, and she does not express anger towards him and may not even feel as it may stir unconscious guilt towards a parent (Kahn, 2002). Instead the dog or nearest and dearest gets it. (Kahn, 2002).

Yalom

Yalom, I (1980). Existential Psychotherapy.

Yalom, I (2005). The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy

Yalom, I.D (2008). Staring at the Sun. Overcoming the Terror of Death. *The Humanistic Psychologist.*

Yalom, I., Tinklenberg, J., Guilula, M. (1968). Curative factors in group therapy.Unpublished study.

Yalom's language and ability to write well always makes for a quality reading experience. His books are evidence based and empirically experienced. It speaks an existential language that is holistic in nature and therefore is open to 'non-conscious' musings. He continues to inspire through honesty, language and philosophical truths. The learning that supported my research consists of;

Yalom (1980) writes about intrapersonal isolation, which is a process whereby one partitions off parts of oneself. Freud used the term 'isolation' to describe a defence mechanism, in which an unpleasant experience and its associations are interrupted, so that it is isolated from the ordinary processes of thought. Yalom (1980) states that in contemporary psychotherapy 'isolation' is not only used to refer to a formal defence mechanism but in a more casual way to connote any form of fragmentation of the self (p.354). Therefore, intrapersonal isolation results when one ignores or pushes away ones innate feelings, desires or wishes and distrusts one's own judgment (Yalom,1980). According to Yalom, the experience of existential isolation engenders a highly uncomfortable subjective state, and similar to any case of dysphoria is not tolerated by the individual for long (Yalom 1980, p. 363). Unconscious defences act to bury or deny to conscious awareness. The defences must work interminably to eliminate or ignore the feeling of isolation. The experience of the unconscious has an isolating effect, and many people cannot bear this. Yalom (1980) asks how does one shield oneself from the dread of ultimate isolation? One may take a portion of the isolation into oneself and bear it courageously, or to reference Heidegger 'resolutely'(Yalom, 1980).No relationship can eliminate isolation. Each of us is alone in existence (Yalom, 1980).

Macintyre

Macintyre, A (2004). The Unconscious. A conceptual analysis

Macintyre's book was a useful book to support conceptualizations of some unconscious theories. I found it insightful and appropriate. Other important reference emanated from this book. The key learnings are as follows;

Dr. Jones stated that Freud's greatest contribution to science was the conception of the unconscious mind (as cited in MacIntyre, 2004).Freud's general theory states that there is an omnipresent causation exerted upon the consciousness that is unconscious in nature (MacIntyre, 2004).Lack of awareness of one's own behavior causes much unintentional pain (MacIntyre, 2004).Lack of self-knowledge in an angry person could be the result of two unconscious desires, the aggressive desire that is anger and the desire not to recognize the aggressive behavior (MacIntyre, 2004).Dr. Jones calls the primary process as the 'kernel of the unconscious' (MacIntyre, 2004). It is the omnipresent background to the consciousness. It influences thoughts and behavior continually (MacIntyre, 2004). One's behavior is determined by unconscious desire but also the inability to recognize the behavior by an unconscious desire (MacIntyre, 2004).According to Lacan human beings are subject to desires informed by unconscious thoughts (MacIntyre, 2004). Knowledge of the unconscious offers valuable insights but as MacIntyre (2004) states even partial self-knowledge may involve a degree of unexpected pain.One may have one intention consciously but another intention unconsciously (MacIntyre, 2004). MacIntyre, (2004) questions, what is the justification for the belief of the unconscious existence or lack of awareness? He answers the unconscious accounts for behaviour which could not be accounted for by conscious intention (MacIntyre, 2004)

Romanyshyn

Romanyshyn, R. (2002). The Ways of the Heart.

Romanyshyn, R. (2013). The wounded researcher: Research with soul in mind.

Romanyshyn, R. (2006). The wounded researcher: Levels of transference in the research process.

Romanyshyn, R. (2015). Conversations in the Gap between Mind and Soul.

Romanyshyn, similarly to Jung speaks a poetic language of lost worlds. This is displayed in his openness to explore another way of experiencing the world. His use of metaphorical and potent language is the voice of the soul, of depths greater than we can understand. His philosophical outlook engaged me in a truth that resonated with my chosen topic. Several insightful references are as follows;

Romanyshyn states we have responsibility as humans to become aware of the part we play in bringing greater awareness to the psyche (2013). The more light we bring into awareness, the deeper the darkness of the unconscious becomes. “The more we come to know, the more we come to know we do not know” (Romanyshyn,2013, p.30). In psychology, the principal of complementarity means that there is an indissoluble bond between the subject, who uses language to speak about the unconscious, and the unconscious which is the object of that language (Romanyshyn, 2013). A psychologist’s conscious statements about soul always have an unconscious side to them, which for Jung expresses itself as a “calculus of subjective prejudices” (as cited in Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 26).This is a process of turning inwards and is due to the renaissance epistemological need to interiorise psychological life (Romanyshy, 1982/84). This personal equation, which functions unconsciously, always “has a telling effect upon the results of psychological observation” (Romanyshyn, 2013, p.26). There is no thought or perception that is not mediated by a complex unconscious perspective, but not even a psychologist is prepared to regard his statements, at least in part, as a subjectively conditioned confession”. “The psychologist who would keep soul in mind, however, is charged to mind the gap in his or her research between his or her conscious claims about the work and his or her complex unconscious ties to the work” (Romanyshyn, 2013, p.26). A way of knowing requires the ego not only to balance the tension between conscious and unconscious perspectives, but also to hold off the allure and comfort of being a true believer by falling into either/way of thinking. (Romanyshyn, 2013). One would marvel again at a momentary presence displaying itself in the blink of an eye, an epiphany (Romanyshyn, 2015).

Ricoeur

Ricoeur, P (1994). Hermeneutics and the Human Science.

Although, this book was intended for methodological purposes its richness and knowledge included unconscious and conscious insights that were appropriate to the context of my literature review. Several inputs include;

Self-knowledge is no easier than any other, and indeed probably more difficult, since I understand myself only by means of the signs which I give of my own life and which as returned to me via others (Ricoeur, 1994).Manlearns about himself only through his acts, through the exteriorization of his life and through the effects it produces on the others (Ricoeur, 1994). One comes to know himself only by the detour of understanding, which is always an interpretation (Ricoeur, 1994). The unconscious is known only indirectly through the effects it has on conscious contents. Husserl stated that mental life cannot be grasped, but we can grasp what it intends, the objective and identical correlate in which mental life surpasses its self (as cited in Ricoeur, 1994, p.50). Objectification begins very early, from the moment of self-interpretation (Ricoeur, 1994). What I am for myself can only be reached through the objectification of my own life (Ricoeur, 1994).

Easthope

Easthope, A (1999). The Unconscious. The new critical idiom. NY: Routledge.

Although, less learning was gained from this book it did serve to strengthen my knowledge on the topic. Some interest included;

According to Easthope, It is hard to know about the unconscious because it is consciously repressed actively unconscious, unbewusst (1999).Removal of software is not enough, one needs the rewiring also (Easthope, 1999).Lacan describes the splitting of the ego as a process of defence (Easthope, 1999).

Von Franz

Von Franz, M.L (1975) C.G. Jung. His Myth in Our Time.

This book was an exploration of several of the key learning from Jung. Von Franz, having had the privileged of working with Jung granted her a depth of insight that is evident in her writing. Her reflections are based on Jung's empirical findings. This book offered another perspective on the Jung's understanding of the unconscious and creating awareness. The important learning's are as follows;

'Creation or the nature which surrounds us of which we are apart, is in Jung's view probably not entirely meaningless' (as cited in Von Franz, 1975, p.169). Though on-going self-knowledge is needed to reveal to the individual how much light is needed to illuminate how much darkness is within (Von Franz, 1975).St Augustine, the Church father, made a distinction between two kinds of awareness: morning awareness and an evening awareness. The former is self knowledge, a knowledge in which the human being recognises himself in the image of the creator; the latter is the knowledge of the things created (Von Franz, 1975, p.176). Morning knowledge is discovered only by the man who is detached who has forgotten his ego (Von Franz, 1975, p.177).The fundamental question was whether the unconscious is only an epiphenomenon of consciousness, arising from repressions (Freud), or whether, as Jung thought, it is the 'autonomous creative matrix of normal psychic life' (as cited in Von Franz, 1975, p.6).Yet to be alone with the Self is the highest and most decisive human experience – one must be alone to find out what it is that supports him when he can no longer support self (Von Franz, 1975). Only this experience can give him an indestructible foundation (Von Franz, 1975)

Palmer

Palmer, H (1998). Inner Knowing. Consciousness..Creativity…Insight..Intutition.

This book spoke about the unconscious and creating awareness using simpler language. This enabled ease of reading and greater understanding. Poetic references and good use of prose made for an enjoyable read. Some pertinent quotes consist of;

Awareness can be found directly by undercutting egocentricity it can be life changing and helpful (Palmer, 1998).Ann Cornell, a focusing therapist, offers a few simple steps that

enable us to attend to 'felt-sense' bodily signals that bring fuzzy, preverbal knowledge into conscious awareness (as cited in Palmer, 1998). Attention typically operates on automatic; we go with familiar habits (Palmer, 1998). Our placement of attention determines the way the world looks and that reality is entirely believable (Palmer, 1998). We think we control our attention and decide to pay attention to what ever captures our interests (Palmer, 1998). The sobering reality is that placement of attention is largely habitual (Palmer, 1998). Our perceptions are limited by a characteristic way of attending, which highlights certain information, while screening out equally relevant data (Palmer, 1998). Attention is generally passive, moving unconsciously from thing to thing, drawn by habit, comfort, passing curiosity, and a need to avoid anxiety (Palmer, 1998). But attention can also be made active, directed and voluntary (Palmer, 1998, p.134).

Hawkins

Hawkins (2011) Dissolving the EGO realizing the SELF

Sir David Hawkins, M.D., PhD, was an internationally renowned psychiatrist and consciousness researcher. This book is founded on some of the most profound philosophical truths of mankind. Each line demands attention, concentration and an openness to questioning the way one habitually views and perceives the world. Although, I did not reference his work pervasively within the thesis his understanding of unconscious process and fostering awareness informed my narrative.

One mechanism the ego uses to protect itself is to disown the painful data and project it onto the world and others (Hawkins, 2011 p.8). Hawkins talks about the ego as the imaginary doer behind thought and action. This set of entrenched habits of thought, enforced by societal consensus and unconscious repetition creates an illusory sense of a personal self (p.3). Unconscious processes are survival skills necessary to deal effectively with the world. Unconscious ego processes is not the enemy to be subdued, but merely a compilation of unexamined habits of perception (Hawkins, 2011 p.8). The unconscious can be thought of as a set of entrenched habits of thought, which are the results of entrainment by invisible energy fields that dominate human consciousness. They become reinforced by repetition and by consensus of society. Further reinforcement comes from language itself. To think in language

is a form of self programming. The use of the pronoun I as the subject- and therefore the implied cause of all actions automatically creates a duality of subject and object. (p.6)

With absolute humility, the ego dissolves. It is a collection of arbitrary mental processes that gain force only because of vanity and habit. If one lets go of though, it dissolves. All thought is vanity. All opinions are vanities(p.6).What varies from individual to individual is the degree to which one is enslaved by its programs (Hawkins, 2011).The unconscious hold is weakened by acceptance, familiarity and compassionate understanding; in contrast, it is reinforced through repetition by 'self-criticism, condemnation, fear and shame '(Hawkins, 2011, p.11).Temptation stems from within; it is merely the desire to experience the ego's payoff and satisfactions of an impulse, even if it's only a curiosity or wanting. The unconscious ego consist of a set of programs which operates through complex, multilayered conditions wherein thought follows certain decision trees that are weighted by past experience, indoctrination, and social influence (Hawkins, 2011, p.11). Freud theorized, out of guilt the animal nature of man becomes repressed and then projected onto others who purportedly have the same character defects as man (as cited in Hawkins, 2011, p. 28).

Van Deurzen

Van Deurzen, E.(2019). The Wiley World Handbook of Existential Therapy

This diverse book offers a range of theories and practice that explores existential therapy in a philosophical informed approach. Not only does it house some of the most influential authors, such as du Plock and Craig, in existentialism it also elucidates the place of existentialism in our ever evolving and rapidly changing world. This potent book contains great philosophical thought and questions how it relates on a practical level within a psychotherapeutic context. It inspires and invites thought.

Appendix VIII Other Methodology Considerations

a) Language

'Romanyshyn, (2013) states that 'psychological language is a way of speaking in the gap between meaning and the absence of meaning, a way of speaking of meaning as a presence that is haunted by absence' (Romanyshyn, 2013, p.29). 'It is a language that bridges that gap between the meaning that is present and whose fate is to be undone, and the one that is absent, whose task is to undo the meaning that has been made' (Romanyshyn, 2013, p.29).

'The nature of language and meaning, of action, interpretation and subjectivity, are issues of increasing concern to a wide range of contemporary disciplines' (Ricoeur, 1994, p.1). For philosophers, linguists, literary critics and social scientists, the clarification of such issues has become an urgent and inescapable task (ibid). 'Since phenomenology is the 'Languaging' (Logos) of phenomena, since language is historical and constitutive, and since phenomena are revealed partly as dissemblance, existential phenomenology is an interpretative, hermeneutic exercise' (Heidegger 1927, p.53-4). 'Hillman concurs with Lacan that there is no univocal speech, no absolute sincerity, no unitary self, and nothing 'incharge' from which any such univocal speech, action or sincerity can arise' (Drob, 1999, p. 67).Jung states there is always a gap between what psychology says of the whole and what soul wants to be spoken. The moment one forms an idea of a thing and successfully catches one of its aspects, one invariably succumbs to the illusion of having caught the whole. Psychology suffers this illusion. It makes monuments out of its allusions to soul, which always remains elusive (Romanyshyn, 2013). Freud states how language has exceptional powers and are the verbal bridges to the unconscious (Timms,1987). The analysis of the unconscious is seen in human behavior especially linguistic behavior (Easthope, 1999).Dreams disguise a latent wish in the manifest content and jokes or slips of the tongue are indirect statements.

Mediation of the language becomes mediation of the text. What enables us to communicate at a distance is thus the matter of text, which belongs to neither its author nor to its reader. (Ricoeur, 1994). Jung recognises that all understanding is interpretive, and he is particularly sensitive to language as a constituted power in hermeneutic understanding (Brooke, 2015). Jung understood that the language one uses when articulating a phenomenon makes a difference to the experience and meaning of the phenomenon (Brooke, 2015). 'The matter of

the text, leads one to the threshold of their own reflection' (Ricoeur, 1994, p.62). Kafka's scrupulous awareness of the limits of language continuously interacts with his quest for more intense states of consciousness (Timms,1987). What must be reached is the subjectivity of the one who speaks the forgotten language. Language becomes an instrument at the service of the individual (Ricoeur, 1994). The epistemological problems lies in that we can only know about ones inner speech from their outer speech (Easthope, 1999). However it is paramount to avoid excesses in either pedantry or nebulosity (Ricoeur, 1994).

Romanyshyn,(2015) states that even Newton's prismatic eye, which in a darkened room saw through a filtered ray of light the spectrum, was not just a matter of what meets the eyeball. It was a creative imaginative act. We have taken up his way of languaging the world, the language of science whose indicative mood has severed fact from fantasy, reason from dream, mind from soul, and has privileged the former over the latter (Romanyshyn, 2015). According to (Romanyshyn, 2015) an example of this in psychology in the DSM manual, whose diagnostic categories are increasingly managed in a partnership between pharmaceutical companies and the insurance industry. The classic text of modernism subvert the old metaphysical topology according to which the truth is located 'behind' or 'beneath' a deceptive surface (Timms,1987).For Kafka's, Rilke, Joyce, Woolf , Proust and Apollinaire and the surrealists, like Freud they explored the fault -lines of language , where a play on words may generate privileged insight and (as T.S Eliot puts it) 'language may be dislocated into meaning' (Timms,1987, p.118) . However, Nagele's insisted that the literary text move along a threshold that it cannot cross fail to allow for such moments of privileged insight. (Timms, 1987). Nagele's critique of the rhetoric of depth thus results in a poetics of 'surface' which leaves the heritage of modernism- as of Freud himself- curiously depleted (Timms,1987, p.118).

b) Poetic and metaphorical language

To think poetically as Heidegger did, is to establish the poetic sensibility as legitimate in the claim it makes upon us for thinking ontologically, a claim which tends not to survive the knife of Western rationalism. 'Thus if we want Jung's psychology to be thought of poetically, we cannot take refuge in the Cartesian assumptions which flatten the manifold pregnancy of

the world res extensa, nor can we find a (spuriously) certain ground to our psychic reality in reified entities called archetypes, sleves, or even personas' (Brooke, 2015 p. 7)

The unconscious speaks in images rather than in words (Easthope, 1999). Freud suggests that we use symbolism with unconscious meaning all the time but are unaware we are doing it (Easthope, 1999). Shelley stated that poetry is a divine act which is incomprehensible and beyond conscious awareness (Easthope, 1999). Irish Poet Brendan Kennelly raises a question of how one writes in the gap between reason and dream/vision, between the conscious attitude of waking life and reaches deeply into the unconscious as a dream or vision (Romanyshyn, 2013). Jung stated through metaphor reality becomes intensely alive, yet at the same time remains strangely elusive (as cited in Brooke, 2015).Art and poetry too work with a specific means of representation (Easthope, 1999). Metaphor is such a language (Romanyshyn, 2013, p.27). Metaphoric sensibility is necessary for a psychology, which, in taking the unconscious seriously dwells in the gap of the transcendent function (Romanyshyn, 2013).

The merit of my chosen methodological approach, hermeneutic phenomenology, lies in its close attention to language, notably to patterns of metaphor which exemplify textual opaqueness. The use of poetic, metaphorical and rhetorical language to explicate the therapist's experience and reveal the implicit nature of the phenomena is prevalent throughout this study. Art and poetry too work with a specific means of representation (Easthope, 1999). (Romanyshyn, 2013) lays the groundwork for a psychological language rooted in a metaphoric sensibility. Hillman placed much value on the metaphorical language. Hillman states that archetypal psychology sees every fragment of life as myth and poetry (Drob, 1999).The consciousness is expressed verbally whereas the unconscious is something preverbal (MacIntyre, 2004). But can become conscious by verbal expression.The gap which is also an abyss, between the conscious and unconscious perspectives is a tension, which psychologist Fechner experienced as the conflict between the 'day-time and night time view' of the world. Jung stated a symbol that holds the tension between what is visible and what is invisible, between, what shows itself in the light and what hides itself in darkness. Therefore my study required an expression of language that hinted at meaning and did not attempt to define or pin down the phenomena too definitely.

c) Phenomenological Writing

Good writing is habit of practice. Just write, give your thoughts freedom of expression and keep your inner critic in check (Cameron, 1992, 2004). 'For if one works, one finally relaxes and stops thinking. True creation occurs then and only then*'* (Bradbury, 1996, p.147). The phenomenological challenge for me was the bridge between reading and reflection to writing. Dr. Kelly ameliorated my disquiet. 'How does one use language of the day, to speak about things of the night?' (Kennelly cited in Romanyshyn 2007, p.309). Jung's writing 'is an attempt to evoke in writing what cannot be entirely grasped: the fleeting momentary presence of something forever mutates and reaches beyond the ego's inadequate understanding' (Rowland, 2005, p.3).

d) Anecdote Example

A client was coming for a good few sessions with anxiety, and no matter what we tried out to solve or break down his anxiety and get to the root of it, he always felt that there was nothing that could ameliorate it. I felt he had a blind spot that nothing from the past was affecting him right now...he grew up with his mom who was an alcoholic..slowly, he became aware that he had a lot of trust issues with everyone that was currently in his life... but the biggest person he had the trust issue was with himself. ...he eventually, after many sessions, made a connection that his trust issue formed from his bond and relationship with his mom. He didn't have any trust with his mum at all.....And, when it became clear then that this was causing anxiety that was feeding into all the different areas in his life, he became hugely aware, it was kind of like a bingo moment for him. .....Really, it was the conversation we were having in the sessions where he was looking at his anxieties and from that he was open to have some conversations with friends outside of the sessions, he brought that conversation into the session that he had with his friends. And he felt that he actually found the piece of the puzzle that was missingfor him..... (Roisin)

Reflection

The above anecdote elucidates the lived experience descriptor of a moment of awareness. Roisin describes her understanding of unveiling a client's blind spot and creating a moment of awareness within a clinical context. The narrative describes the notion of moments of awareness manifesting within a sense of space. There is almost a virtual space within or without wherein moments of awareness given the right elements to reveal themselves. The above ancedote is an appropriate exemplar of a lived experience descriptor (LED) (van Manen, 2014) which is the bedrock to a hermeneutical phenomenological approach. There appears to be a natural unfolding of blind spots that fosters more awareness to allow the 'bingo moment' emerge. The image of a 'bingo moment' conjures up with great clarity and ease of understanding, that exact instant when awareness befell this person. This 'Bingo moment' is similar to other narratives under the category of spatiality. The imaginative and metaphorical language of 'Bingo moment' and 'finding the missing piece of the puzzle' is evocative and aligns with the intention of this methodological approach.

Appendix IX Ethical Considerations Continued

> Declaration of Helsinki states that considerations related to wellbeing of the human subject should take precedence over the interest of science and society (The World Medical Association,' 2000 p.5). .

Discourses involving ethics invoke transcendent values and absolute principles (Pollock, 2012). According to Pollock (2012) ethical regulation has become increasingly complex and restrictive without any evidence that the current techniques have improved the quality of qualitative research or protected research participants from substantive harm They force adherence to a bureaucratic system of procedural ethics which can be ill suited to the nature of the research (Pollock, 2012). However, one of the safety issues is the psychological impact of being a participant in 'sensitive' research. There are many phenomena that within specific cultural and social context are 'sensitive'. They may be defined as 'sensitive' if they are private, stressful or sacred and discussion tends to generate an emotional response (McCosker et al., 2001). Knowledge of the unconscious offers valuable insights but even partial self-knowledge may involve a degree of unexpected pain (MacIntyre, 2004). There may be an immediate and/or delayed impact on the mental health of anyone involved that may include a physical response to the psychological impact. Studying 'sensitive' topics creates both methodological and technical issues for the researcher. The issues may include 1) conceptualisation of the topic 2) defining and accessing the sample 3) mistrust, concealment and dissimulation between the research and the participants and 4) safety (Lee, 1993).At the heart of conducting ethical sensitive research is a simple question, 'If I was the potential subject, would I consider participating?' This may be answered by acknowledging some landmark agreements on approaches to ethical research including; the Nuremberg code (1947), Declaration of Helsinki (2000), Belmont Report (1979), CIOMS (2002) and U.S. Common Rule (1991). Literature has outlined strategies to be used to minimise psychological impact on participants, especially when a research focuses on a 'sensitive' phenomenon (McCosker et al., 2001). Although, the sensitive nature of this study was not apparent, I kept a constant focus on ethical awareness throughout data collection, analysis and final product.

Procedural ethics cannot address the specific ethical dilemmas that may arise in real world settings of qualitative investigation. This is not to say that qualitative investigation are 'unethical', but that their ethical conduct cannot be safeguarded by adherence to a rigidly pre-

determined protocol (Pollock, 2012). This research was committed to justice, which involved an understanding of both the burdens and benefits of the research (Parahoo, 2014). Safeguarding depended on the practice of micro-ethics and personal integrity of the researcher (Pollock, 2012).

Every effort was made to ensure that the confidentiality and anonymity of participants was upheld and that identifying factors were not revealed without participants' permission. Permission to use the material that arose when interviewing was obtained in writing (NAPCP, 2015). It was my duty of care to ensure that the research was in agreement with the core ethical principles of beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy and fidelity (NAPCP, 2014). The principle of beneficence/nonmaleficence stated that the research should produce recognisable benefits for all involved and that it should cause no harm (Pollock, 2012). To overcome complex ethical dilemmas that can arise during research I engaged in a 'relational ethic of care' (Ellis, 2016, p. 2). Practice-based research includes ethical guidelines which put the client's best interest to the fore (Bager-Charleson, 2012). This ensured the relationship was equal and not exploitative (Mitchell, 2020). Phenomenology encourages an attitude of loving acceptance of all aspects of the client's existence (Copper, 1993). The time and place for the interview was held in an environment where the researcher and the interviewee felt safe and comfortable (McCosker, 2001) i.e a counselling room.A commitment to avoiding harm to research participants was buttressed with the provision of additional supports (Bond, 2004). Therefore, it was pertinent that supports were in place for the interviewees both during and after the research process.It was important for me to comment on the strength of the interviewee, whilst allowing the interviewee to terminate the interview if too distressed (Hollow and Wheeler, 2009). As the chief researcher, it was pertinent that I should be accountable for my actions and work within institutional systems of supervision and support (Pollock, 2012). It was important to maintain a high level of transparency in order to monitor any bias through reflexivity.

a) Ethics of blind spots and moments of self awareness

> An ethical epistemology is one of the implications of the intangible approaches to research, particularly its process of dialogues, in which the researcher confronts the other in himself and the others in the work (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 336).

In traditional forms of research we have, as we should, an ethical responsibility towards our subjects. This ethical obligation also applies to the imaginable approach to research (Romanyshyn, 2013). Ethics is therefore a primary concern at the root of my epistemological approach, for the way I construct the world, is the way in which I encounter myself and others (Beebe, 1995). My research, with its process of dialogues and hermeneutic methods has implications for ethical epistemology (Romanyshyn, 2013). The interview dialogues, which are the core of the research process, took an inter-subjective reflective and imaginable approach. This was of ethical importance. Ethics in relation to moments of awareness and blind spots was about accepting responsibility and becoming accountable (Romanyshyn, 2013). The first ethical question was therefore, have I been faithful to the 'call of the work'(Romanyshyn, 2013). It was ethically imperative to make the complex process of research as conscious as possible (Romanyshyn, 2007). I was therefore obliged to consider the other within myself who constitute my unawareness in the work. It was important to monitor how I may be biased in order to maintain a high level of transparency through reflexivity.

b) Ethical Blind Spots

From the perspective of my research I was interested in the ethical blind spot. Unethical behaviour results from people's limited attention to ethical consideration, which results in an ethical blind spot (Pittarello et al., 2015). This is a lack of awareness that impairs the ability to identify the ethical implications of a situation (Bazerman, 2014; Bazerman & Banaji, 2005). Pittarello et al., (2015) proposed in tempting situations, where self interest is pitted against being honest, ambiguity serves as a justification to do wrong but feel moral. People often justify their perception of reality (Kunda, 1990). When people face ethically tempting situations, their awareness is restricted by ethical blind spots (Bazerman, 2014; Bazerman, &Tenbrunsel, 2011). This is guided by self-serving motivation (ibid). People may engage in self-deception when they are making self-serving choices and not feel that they are lying (Von Hippel &Trivers, 2011 cited in Pittarello et al., 2015). Pittarello et al., (2015, p. 802) empirical research concluded that self-serving justification shape people's ethical blind spots, negating the truth. Pittarellos' et al., (2015) results suggest 'that ethical failures are most likely to occur in settings where ethical boundaries are blurred' (p.803). Relevant ethical frameworks such as BACP Ethical Guidelines for Research Counselling and Psychotherapy

(BACP, 2002) and the Association of Internet Researchers (Markham &Bauchanan, 2012) give ample support in this regard.

c) Confidentiality and Protection of Participant Information]

The codes below promoted integrity, honesty and respect to each person throughout the stages of the research. I adhered to them all;

1.3 Informed consent and freedom of consent

1.3.6 Obtain clients consent before making audio recordings, making him or her aware of the purpose, storage and disposal of same.

1.3.7 Encourages clinicians to obtain appropriate consent when publishing research.

1.3.8 Ensure that identities are carefully disguised and obtain appropriate consent when publishing research (IACP, 2015)

In conducting and presenting research, I held the participants interest as paramount in keeping with confidentiality rights. Every effort was made to ensure that the confidentiality and anonymity of participants was upheld and that identifying factors were not revealed without participants' permission. Permission to use the material that arose when interviewing was obtained in writing (NAPCP, 2015). The interviews were only conducted upon gaining consent from the interviewees.The interview process worked within the environment of safety and trust, and was conducted upon gaining informed consent from interviewees (Laverty, 2003). Adequate time was given to consider participation and sign the consent forms including plain language statements. I ensured that the research purpose and objectives were clear and that participants were fully informed of the nature of the research and use of the data. Respect for the participant's autonomy required that research participation was voluntary (Pollock, 2012).All participants were aware of the voluntary nature of their participation and the liberty to access their own data at any time under the Freedom of

Information Act 1997[61]. Anonymity was maintained by using aliases. The names of the participants were protected by using pseudonyms and numbers in the transcripts of the interviews, in the research thesis and in any publications of the research findings. Any biographical material which might identify participants was also excluded or fictionalised. Any detailed content of their stories was not used.Interviewswere recorded and stored electronically on a computer protected by encrypted password (Creswell, 2003). Identification numbers were substituted for participants' names in the computer files. I am aware of the legal and ethical restrictions on absolute confidentiality.

d) Right to Withdraw

1.3.1 Ensure that the client consents to participate at all stages and respect the client's right to discontinue at any time. (IACP, 2015)

Participants had the right to withdraw or complain about the research at any point (Pollock,2012) before the completed research was handed in for marking, without having to give anyexplanation for doing so (Mc Leod, 2015).The research wasbased on fully informedconsent, with the right to withdraw at any time (Pollock, 2012). I ensured that eachparticipant was given a plain language statement with Metanoias ethics committee phonenumber attached.At the beginning of the interview, each participant was reminded of the purposeof the study and that it was recorded for transcription purposes (Parahoo, 2014). As an ethicalconsideration, personal emails were obtained to return transcripts to participants for participantvalidation (Orb et al., 2001). I gave each participant the opportunity to review their transcript foraccuracy (Smith et al, 2009) and withdraw any comments they found too personal.

e) Professional Gatekeepers

[61] As amended, 2003

Research studies are normally planned to take account of the sensitive nature of the enquiry, the vulnerability of the participants and access to the research environment via the gatekeeper (Hollow & Wheeler, 2009). In response to the 'sensitive' nature of the phenomena psychological blind spots and moments of awareness, the ethics committee acted as gatekeepers during the research process to protect the individuals from harm (McCosker, 2001). I sought approval from Metanoia's ethics committee in advance of planning and organising the study. It was important to be sensitive to the gatekeeper's position (McFadyen and Rankin, 2016). I involved the gatekeepers in advance of planning and organising the study.They were informed with clear understanding of the study. Their role was crucial to the success of the study so it was of paramount importance sufficient time and energy was devoted to this process (McFadyen & Rankin, 2016).

f) Establishing Contact with the Participant

Middlesex research guidelines / ethics committee ensured the recruitment process and contact with participants was through a 'safe' mechanism. For example through agencies that provide support and counselling (Hollow & Wheeler, 2009). I advertised with an email and phone number that connected to an answering machine (Parker & Ulrich, 1990).The interviews required a private confidential environment; it was of paramount importance that the participants could feel secure and relaxed throughout the interviews (Mc Leod, 2015). The time and place for the interview was in an environment where the researcher and the interviewee feel safe and comfortable (McCosker, 2001) i.e a counselling room. Once the initial interview was scheduled, participants were sent a letter asking them to read the plain language statement and complete the consent form.I established an ethically supportive relationship with the participant that was consistent with the type of research being undertaken (Bond, 2004).

g) Alternative Supports Post Interview

One of the safety issues is the psychological impact of being a participant in 'sensitive' research. There may be an immediate and/or delayed impact on the mental health of anyone involved that may include a physical response to the psychological impact. Literature has

outlined strategies to be used to minimise psychological impact on participants, especially when research focuses on a 'sensitive' phenomenon (McCosker et al., 2001). 'A commitment to avoiding harm to research participants may require the provision of additional supports'(Bond, 2004, p.5). It was crucial that supports were in place for the interviewees both during and after the research process. Arrangements were made for the participants to have a debriefing session after the interviews in the event emotionally upsetting material surfaces during the interview. Furthermore, recommendation and contact numbers for two low cost counselling services in the area were offered as a resource to the interviewees. I engaged with follow up calls one week post interviews and a check-in email a month later to ensure all interviewees remained positive about their research involvement and received critical feedback. I engaged in a supervision session post interviews (McFadyen &Rankin, 2016).

h) Psychological safety

Notwithstanding the debate within differing methodologies about the nature of objectivity, and the relationship between the researcher, the interviewee and the data, there is a need to be clear about psychological safety of people involved (McCosker et al., 2001). Part of the process included appropriate assessment of risk and the development of a clear safety plan (McCosker et al., 2001). There is evidence that those who take part in qualitative studies often find this to be a positive experience and are willing to engage in research even when it involves discussion of topics which may be distressing and emotionally challenging (Pollock, 2012). Interviewee's motivation may include personal interest, altruism and reflection on personal experiences (McCosker et al., 2001). Minimisation of harm to the researcher (McCosker, 2001) was an important ethical issue to consider. As the chief researcher the sense of emotional exhaustion and being overwhelmed by the nature of the interviewees experience was important to manage. (McCosker et al, 2001). Therefore, I engaged in routine and empirical self-care methods to buttress my well being.

i) Research Integrity and trustworthiness

As an ethical researcher I sought the highest possible levels of trust in the relationship with the people being researched and all other people involved directly in the research and in the application of research to practice (Bond, 2004). Research integrity requires a robust ethical commitment to fairness, honesty and competence in all aspects of work (Bond, 2004).I committed to striving for fairness and honesty in the collection and analysis of all data and in how those findings are presented. I committed to transparency and ensured that the data collection and analysis was undertaken competently and accurately. I ensured that my chosen methodology was consistent with my research aims.

i) Literature Review

This comprehensive literature review did not require ethical approval. However, research studies included were peer-reviewed and went through an ethics process. The majority of studies included in the final thesis were peer-reviewed from reputable universities or organisations and that went through rigorous ethics reviews.

j) Data Storage

Upon completion of the interviews, I transferred the audio-recordings onto a password encrypted iron key before transcribing them verbatim on my personal computer. Digital interview transcripts and audio-recordings were stored both on the iron key and filed on my computer, which was also password protected. In addition to this, I kept hard printed copies of interview transcripts in a locked filing cabinet at home. Once submission of the study has been reached, all existing data, in the form of audio files and transcriptions will be destroyed. The information collected from the interview will be securely eliminated after the research (Eysenbach and Till, 2001).

k) Fidelity and Utility

I limited my bias and prior knowledge of my understanding of the phenomena by developing self-awareness. As an interpretive investigator I made extensive use of self-reflection to ensure the 'results were grounded in data' (Levitt, et al., 2017, p.14). Ample and appropriate exemplars from the data allowed the readers to judge the fidelity of the analysis (Levitt, et al., 2017). Further methods, recommended by Henwood and Pigeon (1992) which I included to establish, rigour, trustworthiness and coherence in the research was: keeping close to the data; ensuring theory was integrated at diverse levels of abstraction; a clear auditable paper trail of documentation was presented to account for the decisions taken; transferability and relevance of this study was made apparent. Rigour was further evidenced by the thoroughness of the study, my attention to theoretical sampling, the quality of the interview and the completeness of the analysis undertaken (Smith et al, 2009). To further aid the rigor of this research, prior to running these interviews the questions were piloted with someone

knowledgeable on the phenomena to ensure that the questions were appropriately phrased, consistent, and were aligned to the research's aims and objectives (Kelley et al., 2003). See summary of the various criteria that supported the rigour and trustworthiness of this study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Van Manen, 1997).

Appendix X Research Bursary Award

IACP November 2020 newsletter

Research Bursary Award Recipient Melanie McGovern

Research Bursary Award 2020-2021

The foundation of the Research Bursary Award arose from IACP's desire to support and encourage members in their research endeavours and to promote evidence-based practice and research within the counselling and psychotherapy profession. Melanie McGovern is the winner of the second Research Bursary Award. Melanie's research is a qualitative study: "How do we Know what we do not Know - Psychotherapists' Lived Experience of Psychological Blind Spots and Moments of SelfAwareness; A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry". Melanie is at an advanced stage of her research, with data gathering and analysis complete and findings disseminated in clinical workshops. Her academic article on moments of awareness is awaiting publication in European Journal of Qualitative Research. She submitted a poster to the European Conference on Mental Health, and she intends to disseminate her findings further through the publication of articles and presentations at both national and international conferences. We'd like to congratulate Melanie and to wish her the very best with the completion of her doctoral research. We look forward to reading about the research findings in this very important area over the coming months.

iacp

Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

IACP Research Bursary 2020

This is to confirm that that the recipient of the award is

Melanie Mc Govern

Research Title:

'How do we Know what we do not Know'
Psychotherapists' Lived Experience of Psychological Blind Spots
and Moments of Self-Awareness;
A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry.

Congratulations from
The Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy

17th October 2020

Ray Henry

Ray Henry
IACP Cathaoirleach

Appendix XI Academic ArticleMoments of Self-Awareness

EJQRP (2021) Vol. 10, 46-59 2021 The Author/s ISSN: 1756-7599

European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy
www.EJQRP.org
European Association for Integrative Psychotherapy

Spontaneous clarity - a new reality dawns: Psychotherapists' lived experience of epiphany moments

Melanie McGovern

Integrative psychotherapist in private practice, Galway, Ireland *Email*: melaniepsychotherapist@gmail.com

Abstract: This article presents findings from the author's doctoral research into psychotherapists' perceptions of their moments of self-awareness and epiphanies. Following a review of existing research on this phenomenon, the author used a reflexive, hermeneutic phenomenological approach to analyze textual data, including interview transcripts, generated by seven experienced psychotherapists. The author also drew on a written account of her own experience of the phenomenon in order to strengthen the transparency of the study and aid interpretation. Data analysis suggested that, for therapists, manifested moments of self-awareness encompassed four existential dimensions: spatiality, corporeality, temporality and relationality. Five major themes emerged: 'Spontaneous clarity - A new reality dawns'; 'Cross the conscious threshold - Makes the truth much bigger'; 'Inner knowingness manifests'; 'Tipping point'; and 'Vacillation'. This research adds to existing literature in highlighting this phenomenon with a greater breadth and depth of clarity. Hermeneutic phenomenology encouraged a nuanced understanding of an epiphany with the sense of crossing a threshold into a conscious space. In addition, the high degree of body connectedness therapists experienced in such moments and how it displayed its own idiosyncratic sense of time added further knowledge on this topic. The idea of oscillating awareness, where the therapists experience a flux between the cultivation of consciousness and retreating from awareness, supplements the current literature.

Keywords: epiphany, moments of self-awareness, phenomenology, reflexivity, existential dimensions, psychotherapy

> Parting of clouds does not cause the sun to shine, but merely reveals what was hidden all along. (Hawkins, 2011, p.80)

This article seeks to explore experienced psychotherapists lived experience of an epiphanic experience that presents as a sudden moment of self-awareness.The word epiphany originates from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, which means 'manifestation'. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (12th edition, 2011, p.480) defines an epiphany as "a moment of sudden and great revelation." In the psychotherapy field, the term has been used to denote positive change that is both sudden and profound. For example, Jarvis (1997, p.605) defines an epiphany as a "sudden discontinuous change, leading to profound, positive and enduring transformation through reconfiguration of an individual's most deeply held beliefs about self and world."

Jauregui (2003) conveys something of the combination of mystery and familiarity invoked by the concept when she characterises an epiphany as:

> a revelation usually brought on by some simple, homely, or commonplace experience out of conventional time and space and language [at such times it can strike you] ...The universe is bigger than it was a minute ago and so are you. (Jauregui, 2003, p. 3)

The synonyms of epiphany include revelation, moment of awareness, knowledge of thought without a reason, immediate cognition, and intuitive understanding (Fletcher, 2008). Such a synthesis follows from the assumption that while individual authors have used somewhat differing conceptual frameworks, they all refer to a common process of sudden, brief, vivid inner experience of heightened awareness. For the purpose of my study a moment of self-awareness is defined as a sudden insight that results in deeper understanding and heightened level of consciousness.

In the field of psychotherapy various terms have been used to describe outstanding moments of in-session change, among them "good moments" (Mahrer & Nadler, 1986); "significant events" (Elliot, 1983); and "helpful events" (Grafanaki & McLeod, 1999). Stern (2004) uses the term "kairos" or "moments of meeting" to describe such life-changing moments in therapy.

My own interest in this topic derives in part from my psychotherapy practice, where several of my clients have undergone moments of acute awareness that have encouraged an alternative perspective on a situation and ultimately a change in their worldview. But I, too, have experienced such an occurrence, which influenced me to make positive changes to my life. One such moment came unannounced after years in which I had experienced dissatisfaction in my chosen profession. Early one morning I encountered a dawning of awareness, an internal truth made manifest that also carried a message supporting my return to education. In that potent, indescribable instant, a truth was revealed and a felt sense that could not be denied. I became aware of implicit fear and latent self-views I had carried for many years which supported this eclipse of awareness.

My passion and genuine curiosity about the epiphany phenomenon would prove the bedrock of my doctoral research. Throughout, it was important for me to remain transparent, acknowledge my implicit assumptions (Kafle, 2011) and ensure they fed into the research in creative, useful ways (Kelly, 2019).

Literature Review

Such transcendent, unpredictable moments do not lend themselves readily to research. However, in the psychotherapy field four studies stand out for the light they shed on the epiphany phenomenon: Murray (2006); McDonald (2008); Fletcher (2008); and Amos (2019).

Murray's (2006) unpublished doctoral thesis is a qualitative enquiry into what he terms "an unencumbered moment"(p.35): a life-changing moment of clarity when one's foundational beliefs about self and world undergo a radical shift. Murray set out to provide an in-depth descriptive account of that moment of clarity. While this research is characterised as qualitative in nature, the methodology used is left largely unspecified. Instead, Murray formulates his research questions through introspective and retrospective processes whereby he uses his experience of his own unencumbered moment to critically analyse himself. Following this, he selects participants from a specific demographic: individuals whose lives have previously been in danger and whose foundational beliefs have suddenly shifted. Five of the nine participants were previously known to Murray.

Murray's (2006) research offers some important insights into the epiphany phenomenon. For one participant, the experience was indescribable: "Everything changed for me...I can't really explain it" (p. 290). Another participant described an instant when everything, including her future course of action, became "absolutely, totally powerful, totally clear" (p.260). The research data relies heavily on Murray's own interpretations, however increased reflexivity or member checking may have aided the trustworthiness of this study (Langdridge, 2007). The principal strength of this study lies in its qualitative approach to a relatively unexplored area.

McDonald (2008) employed an existentially orientated narrative inquiry approach to the collection and analysis of participants' understandings of epiphanies. Central themes emerged on the basis of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2009). Epiphany moments, as experienced by participants, were found to involve "a sudden, abrupt, and positive transformation that is profound and enduring" (p. 90). Participants experienced a moment of significant insight which had the effect of illuminating elements of self-identity that had hitherto been obscured.

While McDonald's findings do not relate specifically to therapy (none of four participants was a therapist), a more serious limitation is the tendency of his findings to support his own pre-formed ideas. This appears incompatible with his chosen qualitative methodology: self-identity existential analysis. In addition, there is a disparity between the researcher's interpretation and participants' understanding of

the experience. At times, interpretive categories seem out of step with the interview extracts offered in their support. Although he writes with considerable fervour, McDonald at times fails to establish firm links between epiphanic experiences as described by participants and the inferences he proposes. However, the analysis is supported by a number of quality control measures, including consensual validation by participants and credibility checks by academic colleagues and an experienced consultant psychiatrist/ psychotherapist.

Fletcher's paper (2008) forms part of a relatively recent strand of process research involving "in-session change" (Sherman, 1994, p.229). Arguing for the relevance of what she calls "clinical epiphany". Fletcher (2008) suggests that eliciting stories of epiphany can help the process of therapeutic change and improve long-term outcomes. Comparable to McDonald (2008), Fletcher (2008) also chose a narrative approach to interviewing because of the primacy it affords human action and lived experience. Her study involved the analysis of qualitative data obtained from detailed interviews with four women, all of whom were experienced psychotherapists known to Fletcher herself. Participants were asked to recount an experience of epiphany in therapy. In the paper, Fletcher explores what was experienced at the time of the epiphany and the ways in which participants' clients later made narrative sense of that encounter. The findings shed light on the complex, often quite tacit meanings that surround client-therapist interactions during epiphany experiences. Each story is unique and idiosyncratic, and no attempt is made to generalize findings to a wider population. However, this paper's focus differs from the intention for my research which is interested in sudden moments of awareness that is not exclusively within the therapeutic sessions. Whereas Fletcher (2008) was interested in the client narratives of in-session change which stand out as exceptionally memorable within a lengthy span (at least ten years) of therapy.

The reliability of the findings is enhanced by the fact that participants were invited to review transcripts and interpretations to ensure accurate, relevant and compelling descriptions of their experience. The fact that participants were asked to describe a lived experience of the phenomenon, which may have occurred in a clinical context, allows for a closer examination of the therapeutic possibilities of the phenomenon.

Amos (2019) investigated the lived experience of epiphanies for her doctoral research. Following Jarvis (1997, p.5), Amos defines epiphany as a "sudden discontinuous change" that can transform an individual in a profoundly positive and lasting manner through a reconfiguration of their most deeply held beliefs about themselves and the world.

IPA was the chosen methodology. However, a limitation of IPA may be noted in the way it breaks stories down into themes which seems incongruent given that qualitative research does not generalise the findings (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Furthermore, it tries to provide a systematic structure to what is an open interpretive process (Smith et al., 2009).

In the case of Amos, use of IPA methodology is accompanied by a strong impulse to present findings in such a way as to evoke empathic understanding. For Amos, this is seen as having particular relevance to fleeting moments of awareness. She therefore widens the lens by including arts-based representations of her research findings: six found poems are dispersed through the text, each chosen to supplement the emerging interpretations. In addition, Amos presents interview transcripts in stanza form, a choice which has been described as "particularly effective as a means of representing the rhythm, meaning and structure of oral narrative" (McLeod & Balamoutsou, 2004, p. 291). This manner of presentation offers readers the time and space to notice, observe and reflect.

However, the lack of a psychotherapeutic perspective amongst the participants may have presented as a limitation and further affected the clinical implications of this research. A key finding of Amos's research is the healing potential of sudden, profound moments. The study is strengthened by its rigorous methodology section and by its identification of aspects of the phenomenon that could be picked up and developed by future researchers. My own research is in some respects a response to this invitation.

While all four studies highlighted above underline the relevance of a qualitative approach to the study of epiphany moments, only one utilised a phenomenological hermeneutic lens, through the use of IPA, to interpret the data. Furthermore Fletcher's, (2008) research was the only study that explored the phenomenon from the vantage point of the practicing psychotherapist.

The experiential knowledge that can result from a moment of acute awareness is particularly relevant to professionals working in caring or therapeutic roles (Amos, 2019). As someone who has experienced a profound moment of self-awareness, I was interested in how therapists who had had similar experiences made sense of them and their therapeutic implications. Drawing on the experiences of men and women from a range of psychotherapeutic modalities, I sought to pursue the following research questions: What characterizes psychotherapists' lived experience of moments of self-awareness, and what understandings do they derive from such moments?

Methodology: Hermeneutic Phenomenology

I sought out a research methodology and design that resonated with my chosen topic whilst also remaining loyal to my natural research disposition. This engendered fidelity and heightened the truth value of the research (Levitt, Motusky, Wertz, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2017).

Central to phenomenology is the notion of embodied knowledge: the view that understanding can never be simply cognitive but rather is always interwoven with senses, mood and intersubjective contexts (Amos, 2019). Phenomenological enquiry therefore roots itself in tangible human experience. It seeks to explore meaning rather than quantify or measure (Amos, 2019). Hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990, 2014) emphasizes the interpretative nature of *being-in-the-world,* and the importance of texts, either as a source or as an expression of the phenomenon under investigation (King, 2020).

Hermeneutic phenomenology emerged as the most appropriate choice for this study. I was drawn to the fact that it 'invites both freedom of experience and intellectual thoroughness' (Anderson, 2011, p. 17). It recognises the role of interpretation both of text and of lived experience; it acknowledges the researcher as an integral part of the process; it places importance on the description of lived experience through writing; it encourages a dialogue between text and reader, which requires openness; it also builds knowledge through an iterative process (hermeneutic circle); and finally, it allows for the use of literary devices (metaphor, image, mythology) when engaging with the phenomenon (Kafle, 2011).

In opting for a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, I set out three objectives: to understand the phenomenon of moments of self-awareness through experience or consciousness (Finlay, 2009); to stay as close as possible to the description of the lived experience (King, 2020); and to "transform the lived experience into a textual expression of essence" (van Manen, 1990, p.36).

By positioning myself in the hermeneutic-phenomenological tradition of van Manen (1990, 2014), I sought to combine participants' written accounts and interview transcripts with input from a wide range of philosophical and literary sources, including my own lived experience.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited via word of mouth and by placing a poster outlining the research in the staff rooms of reputable counselling centres, always with gatekeeper consent (McFadyen & Rankin, 2016). A combination of purposeful maximum variation (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and snowball homogenous sampling (Lewis et al., 2007) was used to ensure the participants had expert experience of the phenomenon (Goss & Stevens, 2016) including diversity of participants in terms of sex, age, geographical location and psychotherapy modality. This allowed for multiple perspectives on the shared experience (Ritchie, 2013).

Potential participants were sent a plain language statement and a consent form to sign. Eight participants (two men and six women) were recruited on this basis; four participants were integrative therapists, two were humanistic existential practitioners, and two were psychoanalysts. All the therapists were accredited with between three and twenty-six years' experience. They all had engaged with a minimum of three years personal therapy. A pilot interview with one participant was conducted, and the interview protocol was slightly revised following their feedback. In total, seven participants contributed to the research.

Data Collection

Three distinct textual sources formed the basis of data collection:

Firstly, my own lived experience descriptions of the phenomenon were noted in a journal. I explicitly laid out my pre-understandings and personal experience of moments of self-awareness, so as to understand how my reflections and thought process might influence the interpretive nature of the research.

Secondly, each participant provided a short written account of their epiphany experience before being interviewed. The participant's written lived experience descriptions offered a textual version of their individual experience and understanding of moments of self-awareness. Handy and Ross (2005, p.40) suggest that "semi-structured written accounts of experience can also provide highly focussed, descriptively rich, reflective data". Van Manen (1990) encourages externalising one's lived experience on paper to foster an objective stance towards experience and enable it to be seen from another perspective.

The third component comprised the transcripts of semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that semi-structured interviews are the most effective method of collecting in-depth, data-rich and nuanced accounts of lived experience. Van Manen (2014, p.317) distinguishes between the phenomenological interview, used as "a means for exploring and gathering experiential material", and the hermeneutic interview, geared to "exploring the ways that fundamental phenomenological notions and methods can be understood."In the case of my research, the goal was to reveal the universal elements underlying the inter-subjectively experienced phenomenon (Creswell, 2009).

Data Analysis

In terms of methods, hermeneutic phenomenology offers few guidelines. "In fact, there is no actual method of how to do hermeneutic phenomenology" (Finlay, 2011, p. 115). Van Manen (1990) offers no prescriptive method for research. Instead, he suggests that the researcher draw on and adapt methods as necessary, in response to the phenomenon under investigation.

Although lacking a template on which to model my research, I still needed a research intention with a clear phenomenological sensibility (Finlay, 2011). As van Manen (2014, p.320) notes, "uncovering a phenomenological lived experience is a complex and creative process of insightful invention, discovery, and disclosure". It involves a free act of seeing meaning that is driven by the epoche and the reduction (van Manen, 1997). Thematic analysis refers to the "process of recovering structures of meaning that are embodied and dramatized in human experience represented in a text" (van Manen, 2014, p.320).

For the analysis of data, I followed the four steps of analysis outlined by van Manen as part of a hermeneutic phenomenological "selective or highlighting approach" (1990, p.94; 2014, pp.320-321): Each participant's experience was presented as a lived experience description (LED). This sought to reflect what were understood to be the most important aspects of the participant's lived experience; Each LED was converted into an anecdote; Anecdotes were submitted to holistic, selective and line-by-line thematizations; The emerging themes were chosen for exemplary phenomenological reflective writing (van Manen, 2014). This allowed me to extrapolate the themes further and confirm my interpretation.

In order to strengthen the analytical process, the methods used to analyze the data were explicitly and sequentially outlined. Each finding was supported by verbatim quotations, and the number of participants contributing to each category was clearly indicated. In exploring themes and insights, I treated text as a source of meaning at every level. Every paragraph, sentence, phrase and expression in participants' written LEDs and interview transcripts was subject to close examination. The consequences of choosing this particular combination of hermeneutic phenomenology offered further depth on exposing the phenomenon in its raw and pure essence.

Interpretation was conducted on the basis of the hermeneutic circle, a process of coming to understand the essence of something through interpreting and moving iterativelybetween the whole and the parts (Finlay, 2011). This involved a process of co-creation between researcher and participant involving reading, reflective writing and interpretation (Gadmer, 1960), which was continued until a 'fixed gestalt' or point of saturation became manifest (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

During the analysis stage, a number of quality control measures were undertaken. As part of a process of consensual validation (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Yardley, 2000), participants were invited to review and amend their transcripts (Morse et al., 2002). In addition, academic colleagues critically read the evolving analysis to check that themes and patterns were consistent, credible and supported by evidence (Elliott et. al.,, 1999; Yardley, 2000). To strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, I sought further confirmation from three external doctors of psychotherapy; all of them experienced researchers (Dukes, 1984, as cited in Creswell, 1998).

Ethical Considerations

The research received approval from my University's ethics committee. At every stage, I sought to conduct the study in a responsible and ethical manner, with attention paid to legal requirements and relevant professional guidelines. Every effort was made to ensure the anonymity of participants and to respect the confidentiality of disclosures. Pseudonyms were used throughout this study to protect the identity of the participants.

Respect for the autonomy of participants required that their involvement in the project was voluntary at every stage

(Pollock, 2012). I practiced non-maleficence towards each participant by avoiding causing them harm or distress and by granting them the right to withdraw at any point. I also took participants' psychological safety into consideration (McCosker et al., 2001).Given the sensitive nature of my research, I was aware that participants might experience immediate and/or delayed impacts on their mental health. While moments of awareness offer valuable insights, even partial self-knowledge could involve a degree of unexpected pain (MacIntyre, 2004).Further counselling supports were offered post interviews should the therapists have required.

Findings

Analysis of the data yielded a number of insights into the complex, often quite tacit meanings that surround a lived experience of a moment of self-awareness. Four general categories within self-awareness manifestations emerged: spatiality; corporeality; temporality; and relationality. On the basis of these categories, five main themes were uncovered: 'Spontaneous clarity --A new reality dawns'; 'Crossing the conscious threshold -- Makes the truth much bigger'; 'Inner knowingness manifests'; 'Tipping point'; and 'Vacillation'(see Figure 1, below).From this, 17subthemes emerged. In this article, however, the focus is on findings relating to the principal themes. See figure 2 which summarises the 5 principal themes and their subthemes.

Fig 1: Findings of psychotherapists' understanding of moments of self-awareness

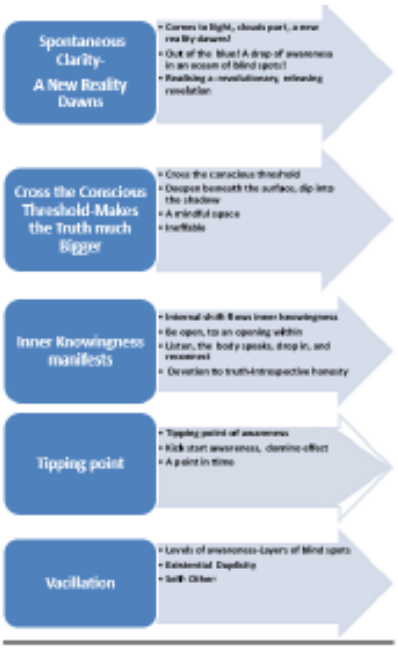

Fig 2: Moments of self-awareness: Themes and subthemes

Theme 1: Spontaneous clarity - A new reality dawns!

This theme captures participants' understanding of an epiphany moment as a sudden dawning of awareness and heightened knowledge. Participants emerged with a new sense of reality. Five of seven therapists described their lived moment of awareness as an uncovering, an experience of spontaneous clarity that allowed them to see with fresh eyes. Several therapists described their lived moment of self-awareness as suddenly seeing life through a different lens. One therapist understood the moment as a clearing of awareness, like 'a curtain being drawn back' and 'something new coming to light'. The narrative below elucidates accurately how Jacob understood a moment of awareness as a new found clarity. This type of moment of awareness was different from his ordinary consciousness of a busy day. It fostered the ability for Jacob to objectively witness himself. This created an 'aha' moment where not only did Jacob understand more about himself but also exposed new information:

> It was almost like a curtain being drawn back and spontaneously I was moved to see what the busyness of life on a daily basis doesn't necessarily let me see. So that moment I got clarity... that moment of clarity, drawing back the curtain, giving a reflective space, objectively looking at self and catching self and that 'aha' what it was I just thinking or feeling...I suppose for me it would be something like coming to a sense of understanding something more about myself. Something that is new,

> something that surprises me. Something that can delight me as well as awaken curiosity. (Jacob)

The narrative below elucidates Joe's intimate experience, which was revealed in a pre-reflective manner. The poetic use of language describes Joe's personal experience with immense imagination that honours the methodological intention of this research, which was to elicit the eidetic reduction of the phenomenon:

> That moment of awareness, the clouds parted... it dawned on me... I saw it clearer than ever before with new eyes. The universe showed me everything. Everything! The source of everything is divinity. Now this has been an experiential reality. What I'm sharing is experiential reality not from reading books or whatever. It's in experience of my own life. So everything, the essence of everything is the divine. (Joe)

For most participants, their moment of acute awareness presented suddenly and without volition. Participants used a range of metaphors to describe this: "a light bulb moment of clarity"; something that "popped up" or "bubbled up", or came "out of the blue"; an experience akin to "finding the missing piece of the puzzle".

For Joe, this type of experience was a moment of heightened awareness, with intense clarity and new-found knowledge. The use of metaphorical language created an evocative image of a rocket of awareness soaring through the air and out of the blue clarity manifested.

> I remember one time surrendering to God. And I was surrendering, and I was walking up the steps to my apartment and this inner knowingness came, non-verbal but 100 percent rock-like, 100 percent clear, you're only surrender to your own higher self. And this inner knowingness came, non-verbal, out of the blue, silence. (Joe)

Theme 2: Cross the conscious threshold - makes the truth much bigger

Participants further understood a moment of self-awareness as a form of cultivating consciousness. This manifested by paying attention, looking objectively and seeing another perspective. Participants used phrases such as "wider field of vision"; "seeing around the corner"; and "detour of understanding" to describe this dimension. Within this moment of consciousness, the truth became more conspicuous. It was as though participants experienced a heightened sense of truth. In the anecdote below, Annabelle describes the challenge to her habitual way of seeing and thinking. While retaining her position that religious and other doctrines express one point of view, she uses the metaphor of "seeing around a corner" to describe a moment of acute insight and awareness:

> It was like seeing around a corner and then suddenly I knew... whereas I could be on the other side of the corner thinking that's all there is this bend...so it was like widening my field of view, and I saw the world from a different angle...it certainly felt like the world is wider...just stepping back and looking at life in a bigger way, having a bigger perspective creates a moment of awareness...and makes the truth bigger. (Annabelle)

The language Annabelle uses here is metaphorical and evocative. To "see around a corner" summons up the image of something spatially new and different, something that feels different from (or even the opposite of) one's previous way of seeing things. In the instant of turning a corner, new possibilities became visible. Annabelle's lived experience of that moment of awareness then presents itself as a wider perspective on life, one which brings a greater truth to the fore. This is akin to a mindful space that supports reflection and new awareness.

Samantha's experience of an epiphany moment presented as a deepening of awareness. This type of moment created the notion of an intensifying and expansion of knowingness; a sense of creating awareness on previously unknown or unconscious material:

> I think I've deepened into awareness now that I speak, I think it's the perfectionist piece that I'm not good enough....feeling not good enough and yet I've never been told what I did wasn't good enough. In fact, I was probably told the opposite...because I put in the extra effort to do things....that moment of awareness was a deepening...a deepening of everything. (Samantha)

Participants struggled to capture the indescribable feeling associated with such profound lived experience. For Lucy; "moments of awareness are hard to describe... ineffable, elusive, sometimes gradual and subtle."

Theme 3: Inner knowingness manifests

Participants also spoke of their lived experience as involving "an internal shift" that manifested as an "inner knowingness". Such moments of awareness seemed to emerge from within the body and were described as having a qualitative felt sense and as being visceral in nature and sometimes preverbal. This type of moment presented for a number of therapists as an internal truth that materialized within the context of the body. Numerous therapists understood this moment as attuning to their bodies and connecting with innate wisdom. Other

narratives within this theme relate to the ways in which participants' bodies formed part of their experience of epiphany moments. Participants mentioned listening to, connecting with, and dropping into the body. For Joe, his moment of awareness emerged as a pre-verbal inner knowingness that came from the divine within. It was definite, conclusive and an alternative way to know that was not cognitive in nature:

> It's beyond doubt. It was just an inner knowingness…when I meditated and my mind was completely silent, and in fact the mind will only take you so far. Then it was more prayer and surrender and devotion. So it was out of the silence arose an inner knowingness that was non-verbal.(Joe)

A number of participants mentioned how physical and emotional bodily connectedness encouraged moments of awareness. One participant described how their lived experience of a moment of awareness involved them connecting with their body in order to disconnect from their busy mind. This in turn altered their state of awareness. For Jacob the body has the potential to be the vessel or channel that carries and delivers moments of self-awareness:

> Knowingly and unknowingly. Consciously and unconsciously…it pops up…the awareness of the body holding something of the past. And the awareness of the body being able to reconnect with what was repressed…that is a moment of awareness it is a revelation. And yet we're going around all day, every day with these potential revelations in our body! But they're blind spots aren't they or the protection. That's very profound. (Jacob)

Another type of moment of awareness presented as an "opening within". Several participants experienced this as a form ofopenness, as being open or seeking an opening within. Just as an attitude of openness is essential to phenomenological enquiry, internal openness engenders a space within, one where a moment of awareness can be created. Participants spoke of having the "openness to challenge one's perspective", being "open to view another possibility", and facing a "choice to be open".

Theme 4: Tipping point

For most participants, there was a pronounced temporal dimension to their moments of intense awareness. Several participants experienced this phenomenon as a time of change. The imaginary language of a tipping point illuminates this incident and brings the experience alive. Some experienced having the choice to allow the awareness to arise later, at a time when they were ready to manage it:

> It's a timing thing and it's an inner resource thing I think, there's also this idea of you can't handle the truth, you have to be in a position to be able to manage what you're going to find out for yourself, because those blind spots are not always beautiful. Like finding out the person you're in love with is in the throes of an addiction is not a wonderful truth to become aware of. (Annabelle)

Other participants experienced a 'tipping point': whether out of the blue or as the culmination of a sequence of smaller revelations. This tipping point was presented as a turning point or breaking point in one's life: the exact moment of change from an unconscious state to one of awareness. "Timing is everything" and "appropriate timing" were among the expressions used.

Susanne told of how her epiphany moment had been preceded by years of turning a blind eye to her own unhappiness. Then things reached the point where she could no longer look away: she had to confront the truth:

> I was in this relationship for decades, there was a lot of blind spots, or blind sighted, or turning a blind eye…But it feels like that moment was a tipping point and that was the moment of awareness, which was 'I have choice!'…There had been other moments over the previous years… And I had tried to deal with them… I turned a blind eye to the truth and to the behaviours, until it became so bad I couldn't do it anymore that was a breaking point, or my tipping point into awareness. (Susanne)

Also present within this theme was the sense that epiphany moments could have a domino or ripple effect: that they could engender further moments of awareness:

> By opening a smaller blind spot, or by creating a smaller moment of awareness, it has a kind of a ripple effect on other parts. I suppose you could say that awareness kind of creates more awareness.(Roisin)

For me personally, this experience felt like a 'dropping of awareness'. It came slowly and subtly over years of frustration and feeling lost. Small nuggets of awareness guided my way until one day a climax of awareness presented that alerted my every sense. It whispered and shouted at the same time' Leave your job; fear not'. It felt like a moment of truth; a moment of perfect clarity. This insight begot further privileged moments.

Theme 5: Vacillation

In some cases, participants' lived experience of moments of self-awareness presented as a form of oscillating awareness:

a fluctuation between moments of self-awareness and the absence of such perception. Moments of awareness could be

fluid or unsettled in nature, involving a rise and fall of awareness. A number of participants' understood this moment as changeability in awareness that was instable. The narrative below exemplifies this idea

> [That] I'm ready and able doesn't mean I always act on the awareness. Yes and no, I slip back. And, here and there, I'm kind of back and forth a bit with awareness.(Samantha)

The proposal of a semi-awareness where one is divided between awareness and blindness of awareness was evident. As if that moment was somehow visible and invisible almost simultaneously.Samantha's encounter with a client elucidated her experience:

> That client said something I had semi-awareness around already. She actually brought to my attention something I half knew. It was a truth, and it highlighted for me, 'how does this impact my work? (Samantha)

For some participants, moments of awareness were made up of levels and layers, or were experienced as occurring in stages and steps:

> Creating moments of awareness which are layers in that cake, that multi-tiered cake layers. That depth of history. (Jacob)

This perception of awareness-in-flux stands in contrast to the notion of an instantaneous moment of self-enlightenment and illumination.

Discussion

The findings of this research shed new light on psychotherapists' understanding of moments of self-awareness. Specifically, self-awareness manifestations appear to take place within four existential categories: those of spatiality, corporeality, temporality and relationality.

Spatiality

Moments of self-awareness took place within a spatial domain. Lived space involves more than the mathematical dimensions of length, height and depth (Heinonen, 2015). It is also 'felt' space, the feeling aroused by the space in which

one finds oneself. Participants understood epiphany moments as something new coming to light, as clouds parting, as the dawning of a new reality. They experienced a spontaneous moment of clarity that allowed them to see more clearly and with fresh eyes.

Neville and Cross (2016), too, found that personal experience/observation type epiphanies increased clarity and awareness. One participant in a study by Kounios and Beeman (2015) spoke of seeing things in a new light.All the participants in McDonald's study (2008) reported experiencing significant insights which had the effect of illuminating previously hidden elements of their identity.

For many of the participants in the current research, epiphany moments were sudden and unexpected. They were described as 'light bulb', 'bingo' and 'aha' moments, ones that 'pop up' or 'bubble up out of the blue.' This appears to be a prevalent experience. In research conducted by Miller and C'de Baca (1994), more than half of participants (58 per cent) claimed their experience had taken them by surprise. In a later study (Miller & C'de Baca, 2001, pp. 18-19), a participant described an epiphany moment thus: "It was really this bubbling up – like a bubbling and the words just sort of popped."For McDonald (2008, p.90), an epiphany moment is: "a sudden, abrupt, and positive transformation that is profound and enduring." It is distinct from other types of positive change and transformation that are typically gradual in nature.

The current research adds several spatial elements, including the types of space that may engender a moment of clarity: the natural environment, for example. Through the use of hermeneutic phenomenology, the current study also captures participants' nuanced experience as a sense of crossing a threshold into a conscious milieu.

Corporeality

A key finding of this study is the degree of body awareness psychotherapists experienced during moments of epiphany. Participants' accounts encompassed moments of awareness that manifested within the body, with some matching my own personal experience: that being connected to one's body in both physical and emotional terms encouraged moments of awareness. Connection with the body enabled one to disconnect from the busy mind; it altered one's state of awareness. As Heinonen puts it, "Lived body refers to the phenomenological fact that we are always bodily in the world" (Heinonen, 2015, p. 37). One of Murray's (2006, p.290) participants felt the experience had come from the centre of his soul and "without thinking". For Ilivitsky (2011), the epiphany moment arose from a deep inner bodily wisdom just 'knew'. When co-researchers in Fletcher's (2008) study were asked about what was happening within them as they were recounting their experience, several reported being aware of some physical body sensations and emotions.

These findings were confirmed in a workshop I subsequently designed and conducted as part of an effort to disseminate my findings to trained psychotherapists. A surprising number of participants shared the narrative of how the body is a vehicle for creating epiphany moments: a significant finding which increases the understanding of moments of self-awareness. Although, the existing literature made some mention of this sense of bodily presence, the findings of my research appeared to emphasize the body's ability to communicate such awareness and new knowledge. This finding encourages one to connect with one's body at a deeper level and engage in dialogue with it.

Temporality

For the psychotherapists participating in my study, time was a critical element of a moment of heightened self- awareness. Some participants felt as if they had the choice to let the awareness arise at a safe time, when they were ready to manage it. For others there was a gradual, unfolding element to the experience. For others still, their epiphany moment seemed to strike "out of the blue" – out of time itself.

Lived time, rather than clock time, is our temporal way of being in the world. As Heinonen (2015, p. 37) notes, "The dimensions of past, present and future constitute the horizons of a person's temporal view." For von Franz (1975, p.120),"the unconscious has its own ways of revealing what is destined in a human life just at that moment when it is ready to be integrated."

In my study, the 'tipping point' theme revealed how the development of awareness culminated in a critical moment when awareness became manifest. Participants understood this as a precise moment in time, one that signified a shift from an unconscious state to a momentary state of awareness. This could then have a domino effect, begetting further moments of insight.

As Ilivitsky (2011) notes, the term "sudden" does not imply that change occurs all at once, free of preceding circumstances. Bien (2004, p.494) argues that while change may occur continuously, "at some point this change is manifested in an apparently dramatic manner." For participants in the current study, life changes could be triggered either by an 'aha' moment (epiphany) or by a series of events (encounters) resulting in increased insight and the

reinterpretation of meaning (Neville & Cross, 2016). For some participants, their epiphany moment proved to be a tipping point: an experience that went on to shape their lives more generally.

Such findings highlight the elusive nature of the phenomenon. Rather than conforming readily to a worldly sense of time, a moment of self-awareness adheres to its own idiosyncratic gauge of time, one that is immeasurable and unpredictable.

Relationality

Participants' accounts pointed to an oscillation between the manifestation of, and retreat from, awareness. For Heidegger, perceiving the world is akin to looking through a fog; those elements in the foreground of awareness take on an arresting prominence while other aspects fade flawlessly into the background (1993, cited in King, 2020). Heidegger (1927/1962) availed of the metaphor of light in relation to consciousness, noting that in moments of consciousness other aspects of our worldview become hidden or withdraw into the shadows. He called this exchange of ideas between what is revealed and what is concealed, *Alethiea* (Heidegger, 1993, cited in King, 2020).

For Sokolowski (2000), life involves a push and pull between presence and absence, between clarity and obscurity. Something that has come sharply into focus may then retreat into vagueness. For most participants, their lived experience of a moment of awareness was a process that involved stages and steps of awareness. This is in tune with Rochat (2003), who argues that self-awareness involves a continuous, dynamic process, a multiplicity of levels.

The relational dimension of the phenomenon was also evident in the element of dialogue revealed by participants. Such dialogue could take the form of communication with another or it could involve gentle self-questioning. Bohleber, & Jiménez (2017) argue that unconscious processes are co-constructed and come to life during the process of relating with significant others. For Duval and Wicklund (1971), it is the immediate social environment that enables the individual to view him/herself objectively and from another's point of view; the self is challenged from the subject of self-awareness to the object of self –awareness.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study offers fresh perspectives on moments of self-awareness as experienced by psychotherapists: a hitherto little explored area. It provides detailed, rich description of

the phenomenon on the basis of participants' lived experience. As Smith (1997, p.80) notes, such description may "enable one to connect with the experience of all of us collectively."

One of the challenges associated with hermeneutic research is dealing with minute detail: elements in the text which might generally be taken for granted or overlooked (Wilson &Hutchinson, 1999). Hillman (1983, p.57) has described hermeneutics as "monotheistic" in the sense that phenomena are interpreted in terms of concepts with a single meaning. However, van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic approach offered a comprehensive approach to offset this limitation.

The lack of a specific method or guide for doing hermeneutic phenomenology (Finlay, 2011) could be viewed as a limitation. Given the nature of hermeneutic enquiry, it was also a great challenge to utilize the 'reduction' (Kafle, 2011). However, I was able to describe how reduction (in terms of revelation) was disclosed as structures of the lived experience of a moment of self-awareness.

The results of this study do not have empirical generalizability. However, as Ilivitsky (2011) points out, the relevance of research can be judged by those who apply its findings elsewhere. Ultimately it is up to the reader to evaluate the validity of findings and the extent to which they might be applicable in other contexts.

Three of the participants I knew in a professional capacity prior to the research. This may have engendered unconscious bias (Unluer, 2012). However, I was acutely aware to remain professionally impartial to all participants at all times. Furthermore, the validity of the research was limited to the collection of data at a single point in time. However, member checking will have accommodated any changing views or attitudes of the participants after the time of interviewing (Langdridge, 2007).

Finlay (2006) states due to the variety of criteria by which their research could be judged, qualitative researchers should not leave evaluative comments to the end, but make explicit from the beginning. Therefore, the three concepts- integrity and its constituents, components of fidelity, and utility influenced all aspects of my research (Levitt, et al., 2017). Fidelity of this study was captured through the 'intimate connection that I obtained with the phenomenon under study' (Levitt, et al., 2017, p. 10). I structured the data collection to capture the *Erlebnis*-the lived experience of the phenomenon – reaching verisimilitude through thick descriptions (Ponterotto, 2006). The strength of this study was further improved by incorporating diverse sources of data collection (e.g. participant's reflective texts, personal reflections and transcripts). This generated rich findings which illuminated the variations and comprehensiveness of the phenomenon which were relevant to the study's goals (Levitt, et al., 2017). To aid the trustworthiness and van Manen's expectations of a hermeneutic phenomenological study (Yardley, 2000; Willig, 2013), self-reflection was fundamental to establishing procedural integrity. Fidelity was enhanced through remaining transparent about the influence of my perspective upon data collection (Levitt, et al., 2017). As an interpretive investigator I made extensive use of self-reflection to ensure the 'results were grounded in data' (Levitt, et al., 2017, p. 14). Rigour was further evidenced by the thoroughness of the study, my attention to theoretical sampling, the quality of the interview and the completeness of the analysis undertaken (Smith et al., 2009). In addition to aid the strength of this research, prior to running these interviews the questions were piloted with someone knowledgeable on the phenomena to ensure that the questions are appropriately phrased, consistent, and were aligned to the research's aims and objectives (Kelley et al., 2003). A further participant checking exercise was conducted with the pilot person and all participants to carefully read through their interview transcript and make amendments as they wished, this ensured ethical autonomy (McCosker et al., 2001). It was an important part of feedback that the therapists recognised the interpretations as their own (Sandelowski, 1996). Utility was achieved by meeting the aims and objectives (Levitt, et al., 2017) of this hermeneutic phenomenology study, which for that reason I feel van Manen would approve.

Clinical Implications

This study sought to shed a light on psychotherapists' lived experience of epiphany moments and also to highlight the implications for psychotherapy research, training and practice. The types of moments of awareness that manifested for the therapists presented as, a deeper understanding, cultivation and heightening of consciousness, and an opening into bodily wisdom. All of which invited an alternative lens to view life through. Furthermore, therapists experienced this as ebb and flow of awareness in oscillatory motion with potential to climax to a tipping point of awareness, which may invite new knowledge and beget further awareness.

As Amos (2019) notes, identifying particularly meaningful moments in psychotherapy can assist the identification and cultivation of opportunities for client change. For McDonald (2007 p.28), the role of the psychotherapist is to promote "deep personal insight and changes in perspective." Chilton (2015) goes as far as to argue that it would be unethical not to promote the process of epiphanies within the context of therapy. Furthermore, according to Hawkins (2011) a moment of self-awareness creates a heightened sense of consciousness, which has the ability to completely alter a person's orientation to life including one's goals, values and a new sense of self.

For psychotherapists, encouraging greater self-awareness involves more than a duty of care. Experiencing moments of intense awareness has proved central to my own ability to create clarity in my life. Not only have moments of insight enabled alteration of the qualitative state of my routine life from one of existing to living; it has further challenged both my behavioural and interpersonal styles of relating to the world. I am in no doubt that knowledge about such experiences can assist others to make positive changes. Gaining insight into this phenomenon requires something more than additional theory or neurophysiological explanations. Qualitative research offers a way to explore individuals' actual experiences and the meanings they construct or derive from what they have lived through.

The potency of a moment of self-awareness is too great to be dismissed. In such a moment, one may view reality from another perspective and become conscious of entering a new space, a fresh temporal dimension. Suddenly blind spots or previously hidden areas of one's being may become illuminated. In a flash there's the possibility of breaking through an impasse, of starting afresh.

Personally and professionally, I feel it is vital not only to explore these rare privileged moments, in a timely and appropriate manner but also to encourage them – towards giving others the permission and the opportunity to experience life with greater clarity and a new sense of truth.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the sustained support I received from my academic advisor, Dr. Stephen Goss, during my research journey. I am also indebted to Dr. Rupert King, my academic consultant and phenomenology expert, for creating an opening of awareness on my chosen topic. I am immensely grateful, too, to Dr. Linda Finlay, Dr. Paula Seth, and Dr. Deborah Kelly for their professional expertise and thoughtful contributions to this project.

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About the Author

Melanie McGovern is a doctoral researcher and IACP-accredited relational integrative psychotherapist. Her primary professional qualification was as an ophthalmic optician, and she worked in that field for over a decade and a half. She furthered her education in philosophy, iridology, nutrition, holistic counselling and psychotherapy where she continued on to attain a first class master's degree in psychotherapy and counselling. Her work is based on evidence-based practice, including mindfulness based cognitive therapy. As her practice matures existential philosophy and reframing of old psychodynamic theories have supported her work. Melanie is the current recipient of the 2020 IACP research bursary award. She has recently disseminated her research findings at the European Conference for Mental Health.

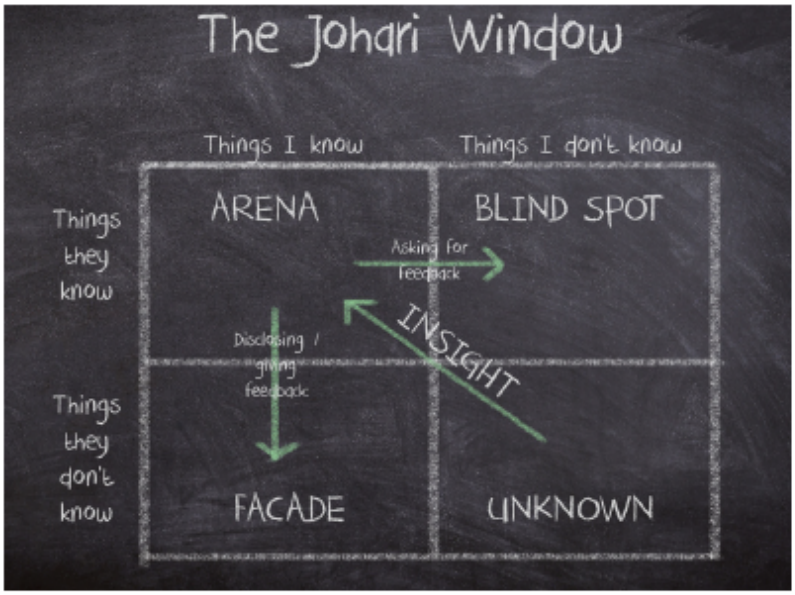
Appendix XII Academic ArticlePsychological Blind Spots

IJCP Volume 20 • Issue 4 • Winter 2020

Academic Article

Psychotherapists' Lived Experience of Psychological Blind Spots: Findings from a Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry

By Melanie McGovern



"Most people identify themselves almost exclusively with their consciousness and imagine that they are only what they know about themselves. Yet anyone with even a smattering of psychology can see how limited this knowledge is"

(Jung, 1961/1995, p.330)

The ubiquity of blind spots is evident. At some point in our lives we all have become aware of another's opacities or reluctance to look at self, whilst negating the possible bias of our own world view. Now in the second decade of the 21st century it is our responsibility to refocus the lens which informs our reality and guides our judgements unwittingly.

The purpose of this article is to disseminate my doctoral research results. However, the size of the article does not lend itself to discuss all the findings. Therefore I will focus on the findings germane to this issues theme of *'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion'*. The research proposed a study of psychotherapists' understandings of the phenomena of 'Psychological blind spots' and 'Moments of self-awareness' by means of an exploratory qualitative study. For the purpose of this article, I intend to highlight a portion of the main themes including a number of meta-themes of psychological blind spots. This will exclude the findings from moments of self-awareness. The aim of this study was to explore a cohort of experienced psychotherapists, and to seek a greater understanding of their lived experience of psychological blind spots. This naturalistic exploratory study took a hermeneutic phenomenological epistemological stance to generate descriptive knowledge and analytical concepts through semi-structured interviews and dialogic engagement with the participants, including reflections and the transcribed text via analyses (van Manen, 1990, 2014).

Psychological blind spots

"Vision waits for us, ready to give itself; we use countless techniques to cut ourselves off from it" (Kennelly cited in Romanyshyn, 2013, p.30).

Nietzsche, Plato, Shakespeare and Freud were all aware of the deep non-conscious processes of the human mind which many are oblivious to (Kahn, 2002). We are called to bear witness to those hushed whispers which

would otherwise be forgotten (Romanyshyn cited in Brooke, 2015). In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell reminds us of the beauty and power of being in touch with the underworld of our mind (Kahn, 2002). For Jung, psychology means, first and foremost, an empirical investigation of the unknown part of the psyche which manifests in many ways (Von Franz, 1975). Romanyshyn considers creating awareness of non-conscious motives, ideas and fears not only an ethical imperative but a productive one (2006).

Consciousness, no matter how extensive it may be, must always remain the smaller circle within the greater circle of the unconscious, an island surrounded by the sea; and, like the sea itself, the unconscious yields an endless and self–replenishing abundance of living creatures, a wealth beyond our fathoming (Jung, 1954, p.178).

Much of our mental life is not obvious to us and therefore we remain ignorant of our motives (Kahn, 2002). Motivated cognition influences distort self–perception that help to create blind spots (Vazire and Carlson, 2011). Previous research asked clients to rank in order, sixty factors in therapy according to their degree of helpfulness (Yalom 1980). The research concluded that the single most frequently chosen item was by far "discovering and accepting previously unknown or unacceptable parts of myself" (Yalom 1980, p.354). Further research shows that "many aspects of ourselves are hidden from conscious awareness" (Vazire and Carlson, 2010, p.107). Hoedemakers (2010) stated the need for more research to identify elements that unfold outside our direct awareness.

Hillman states that an area of unawareness generally lies hidden behind one's routine, dogmas, fixed beliefs and values (Drob, 1999).

In order to maintain mental homeostasis and protect the conscious mind from the effects of inner conflicts, the ego utilises miscellaneous defence mechanism

(Wagas, 2015)

Therefore, psychological blind spots may be stored knowledge we are unaware of, but that influences our everyday behaviour and conscious experience (Norman, 2010). Furthermore, a blind spot may be defined as a prejudice, or subject area, that one has but is often unaware of (Webster, 2010; Cambridge, 2017). It could also be an area of ignorance or direction in which somebody's vision is obscured (Encarta, 2019).They are the part of our mental life which we are unaware of and may include impulses, ideas, wishes and fears that operate unwittingly and influence our everyday behaviour (Kahn, 2002).

Motivated Cognitive Barriers

People's perceptions of their own personalities, while largely accurate, contain important omissions. Some of these blind spots are likely due to a simple lack of information and awareness, whereas others are due to motivated distortions in our self-perceptions. (Vazire and Carlson, 2011, p.104).

Despite one's awareness of their feelings, thoughts and behaviours, informational and motivational barriers often prevent one from seeing oneself accurately (Carlson, 2013). Two majors barriers to self-knowledge exist: informational barriers (i.e., the quantity and quality of information people have about themselves) and motivational barriers (i.e., ego-protective and coping mechanism) (Carlson, 2013).These operate together and are the primary explanations for blind spots in self-knowledge (Vazire, 2010). Broad, (1968) stated that sometimes it is a conscious and deliberate process to block awareness and other times it is habitual. It is important to re-think some psychoanalytical and unconscious concepts in light of modern neuroscience (Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017).

In order to maintain mental homeostasis and protect the conscious mind from the effects of inner conflicts, the ego utilises miscellaneous defence mechanism (Wagas, 2015).Techniques were developed for distorting or rejecting from consciousness some features of reality, to avoid the unbearable psychological pain (anxiety) from consciousness (Erdelyi, 1985).In poor self-awareness, avoidance and defensive attributions to external causes are clear (Silvia, and Duval, 2001). Research by Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, (2003) has demonstrated decreased self-awareness among individuals in negative social situations is a defensive strategy designed to buffer the self from the acute distress (and feelings of rejection).

Illusion of Objectivity

There can never be absolute freedom from prejudice, for even the most objective and impartial investigator is liable to become the victim of some unconscious assumption upon entering a region where the darkness has never been illuminated and where he can recognize nothing. (Jung,1954, p.168).

Blind spots in people who are confident of their objectivity are common in everyday life (Pronin& Kugler, 2007). Pronin, Lin, and Ross (2002) found that people thought that blind spots or cognitive biases were more prevalent in others than themselves. "Because our peers

and especially our adversaries often fail to share our views, we inevitably infer that they are less objective than we are" (Pronin, Lin, and Ross 2002, p.378).Research shows that individuals maintain an illusion of objectivity (Bazerman and Banaji, 2005); that is, they incorrectly view themselves as more objective than others (Epley et al., 2006). This asymmetry in perception of bias arises from naive realism (Pronin, Lin, and Ross, 2002). This fosters the impression of an objective self in a world of biased others (Pronin, Linn and Ross, 2002). However, the tendency to see bias in others, while being blind to it ourselves, has been shown across a range of cognitive and motivational research (Pronin, Gilovich & Ross, 2004). Pronin& Kugler's, (2007) study found that only after being educated about the importance of unconscious processes in guiding judgment and action and the fallibility of introspection did participants cease denying their relative susceptibility to the bias blind spot.

Reflexivity

My own interest on this topic originated mostly from my psychotherapy practice, where several of my clients have undergone moments of heightened awareness that encouraged an opening of their blind spots and ultimately challenged their personal perspective, including their worldview. Through awareness, I personally grew cognizant of the obstructions to knowledge that had impeded my growth. Blind spots akin to implicit fear ('stay in the comfortable job'), latent self-views ('not being good enough') and placatory styles of interpersonally relating had eclipsed my awareness for most of my life (McGovern, in press). Illumination of my blind spots highlighted the depths of my shadow. Genuine curiosity including passionate interest on this chosen topic would prove the bedrock of my doctoral research. Throughout the research process, it was important for me to remain transparent, acknowledge my implicit assumptions (Kafle, 2011) and ensure they fed into the research in creative, useful ways (Kelly, 2019).

Focussing on the phenomenon of psychological blind spots two main categories emerged

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

I sought out a research methodology and design that resonated with my chosen topic whilst also remaining loyal to my natural research disposition. This engendered fidelity and heightened the truth value of the research (Levitt, Motusky, Wertz, Morrow, and Ponterotto, 2016).Ultimately, therefore, it was the dialogical, reflexive and richly expressive methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology, with its epistemological underpinnings in making visible that which is invisible (Seth, 2017) that would facilitate and enable expression of the essence of psychotherapists lived experience of psychological blind spots.It rejects the ideology of suspending personal opinion (epoche) or bracketing (Annells, 1996), with a move towards interpretation (Van Manen, 1990), as interpretations are all we can have (Kafle, 2011). Therefore it places importance in the hermeneutic engagement with texts, either as a source or expression of the phenomenon being studied (King, 2020).

Findings and Discussion

Focussing on the phenomenon of psychological blind spots two main categories emerged; 'Blind self' and 'Blind self – other'. The former emphasising psychotherapists understanding of a blind spot in relation to self, the latter was where one experienced a psychological blind spot in relation to another. 'Blind self' manifested as one evaded an emotion or other in the context of themselves. At times this was achieved by unconscious habituation and other times it was an unbeknownst reaction to a situation. 'Blind self – other' presented where another, be it through dynamic interpersonal relationship or a brief encounter, invited this area of unawareness. (Figures 1 and 2)

Blind Self –Other

From the category 'Blind Self – Other' emerged two main themes; 'Polarised perspective' and 'Familial opacities'. Blind spots within the context of the family were of note.

Polarised Perspectives

From the theme of 'Polarised perspective' emerged three meta-themes; 'Seeing subjectively – blind to the bigger picture'; 'Concealed judgement'; 'The enemy is within not without – everyone is my mirror'.

Seeing subjectively – Blind to the bigger picture

There is no thought or perception that is not mediated by a complex unconscious perspective, but not even a psychologist is prepared to regard their statements, at least in part, as a subjectively conditioned confession.(Romanyshyn, 2013, p.26)

The findings disclosed participant's experience of psychological blind spots as a *'particular perspective'* or *'polarised vision'*. Participants described the blind spot as *'seeing in one direction'* which gave *'a slanted, subjective view'*. Jung stated (1954) just as he finds himself shaped

Figure 1: *Hierarchy of psychological blind spots themes*

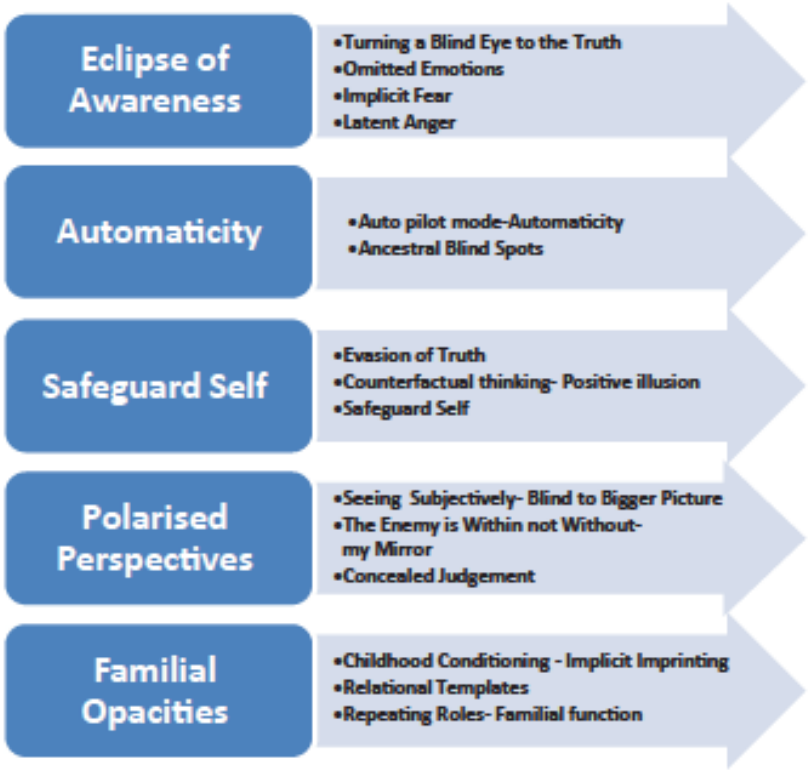


Figure 2: *Themes and meta-themes of psychological blind spots*

by external and objective social influence, so too is he influenced by internal and unconscious forces, which he summed up under the term the subjective factor. In subjective self-awareness, the focus of attention is directed outward (Duval, & Wicklund,1971). The person will neither be aware of the viewpoints of others, nor will he/she be even cognizant of oneself as a distinct entity to be compared against standards (Duval &Wicklund, 1971). One therapist shared their understanding; "It's *like I'm coming from a particular perspective that I believe to be a fact or truth or obviously the only way to think or see a thing*"(Participant 5: Annabella). Pronin, Lin, and Ross (2002) stated that one's peers and adversaries see events and issues through the distorted prism of their world view and often see themselves in a positive light.

Concealed Judgement

"Prejudice cripples and injures the full phenomenon of psychic life." (Jung, 1961/1995, p.33).

Various participants noted how concealed judgement in the form of *'preconceptions'*, *'ignorance'* and *'biased opinions'* presented as blind spots that people were not aware of. Biases typically operate unconsciously, thereby leaving their influence hidden from introspection (Wilson & Brekke, 1994). Personal and theoretical prejudices are the most serious obstacles in the way of psychological judgment (Jung, 1954). Tunnel vision manifested for the participants in the form of *'social prejudices'*, *'latent judgements'* and *'narrow mindedness'*. Therapists experienced psychological blind spots as implicit attitudes and a non-conscious resistance to a different perspective. This finding confirmed the literature that found bias blind spots are easy to recognise in others but often challenging to detect in one's own judgements (West et. al., 2012). "When one fails to see or understand their unconscious prejudices, they are apt to think no bias has occurred and that their decision was indeed objective and reasonable" (West et al., 2012, p.515). However, bias and preconceptions are a natural and universal part of being human, and it is important to differentiate bias from malicious intent (Sandeen, et. al. 2018). One participant referred to the power of supervision in challenging concealed opinion. The following is a fitting exemplar of how one can judge without awareness; *"My supervisor said, you have to let go of the judgement because you don't ever really know the full circumstances. And sure enough, as weeks unfolded, she was right."*

(Participant 4: Samantha). In this case, the insight of her supervisor was fundamental to bringing awareness to the blind spot.

The enemy is within not without-Everyone is my mirror

"Our ordinary life still swarms with projections. You can find them spread out in the newspapers, in books, rumours, and in ordinary social gossip. All gaps in or actual knowledge are still filled out with projections." (Jung, 1938/40, p.83).

In reduced self-awareness, avoidance and defensive attributions to external causes are prevalent (Silvia, and Duval, 2001).The research findings evidenced participants' awareness of blind spots as a form of '*projection*' or '*attribution* 'where one ascribes their personal opinions or irritations onto another unconsciously. Consciousness, instead of being widened by the withdrawal of projections, is narrowed, because society, a mere circumstance of human existence, is set up as an aim (Pronin, Lin, and Ross, 2002). Existential/Analytic psychotherapists have used the expression implicit world projection to state the ways one projects their world designs from meaningful fore-structures and backgrounds of their lives (Tratter, 2015). "Projection is involuntary transposition of something unconscious in ourselves into an outer object" (Von Franz, 1975, p.77). In addition, projection is attributing to others one's own unacceptable thoughts, feelings or intentions (Cramer, 2015). Numerous participants experienced this blind spot as '*attacking another as opposed to dealing with self*' or '*ascribing something of self onto another*'.This finding added to the existing literature by exposing the qualitative essence of the experience which presented for one therapist as *'the enemy is within not without....I had deeper awareness and realisation that any person that irritates me or that annoys me; that's coming from within me, it's not them ... I realised that everyone is my mirror'*(Participant 7: Joe). This quote aptly elucidates the participant's lived experience of a blind spot;"What one is not aware of in himself, he may recognize in another' (Macintyre, 2004). Jung expressed that, "A person realizes that he himself has a shadow and that his enemy is in his own heart" (1954, p.198) and 'Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves' (1961/1995, p.275).

Blind Self

'Blind self'emerged as a category under psychological blind spots. This predominately emphasised blind spots in relation to self. Themes such as; 'Eclipse of awareness', 'Automaticity' and 'Safeguard self' were found in the data set.

Automaticity

Various participants understood psychological blind spots as a form of automaticity. A number of therapists used the terms '*recurring blind spots*' or '*repetitive behaviour*' to describe their sense of automatic reactions. This finding validated the literature where previous studies have shown that low self-focus was associated with automaticity (Silvia, and Duval, 2001). Attention typically operates on automatic; we go with familiar habits (Palmer, 1998). Many participants likened their blind spot to the notion of being '*on a treadmill*' and '*sleepwalking through life*'. This custom like any other may eventually become so strong that it cannot be overcome by deliberate volition (Broad, 1968). A fitting quote shared by a participant disclosed his understanding of psychological blind spots as a form of auto pilot living. This image creates the notion of repetitive behaviour in unawareness; '*Like being on the treadmill of life...I liked that metaphor or that image because it feels like the automaticity or the habitual or the auto pilot of life that when we have a break or we stop, we can be a little bit more mindful'*(Participant 6: Jacob). The sobering reality is that placement of attention is largely habitual (Palmer, 1998). Research on self-awareness show how impenetrable this automatic evaluation process can be (Silvia, and Duval, 2001).

Ancestral Blind Spots

Philosophy attempts to recover the original sense of things by a kind of archaeology, by striving to move backwards through the genetic constitutions that lie within the categorical formations we inherit (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 167).

A small number of therapists interpreted psychological blind spots as being inherited from previous generations. Freud believed in genetics and the preserving of memories that were experienced by our ancestors (Easthope, 1999). In addition, Jung affirmed that the mind is an active principle in inheritance (Von Franz, 1975). It consists of the sum of the ancestral minds, the unseen fathers whose authority is born anew with the child (Von Franz, 1975). The idea that blind spots can be handed down from one's ancestors was understood as a blind spot. A therapist avowed; *"I think these blind spots carry through generations. It's very important to break that"* (Participant 7: Joe).

Clinical Implications

Nowadays, the loss of systems of meaning and value, as well as feelings of insufficiency within a more closely intertwined, globalised, mediatised and technically dominated new world is challenging our level of awareness(Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017). Psychoanalytical therapists Robert Stolorow stated the crucial aspect of therapy is making the invisible

visible (cited in Kahn, 2002). May (1967) affirmed the uncovering of blind spots, the creation of self-awareness and actualizing the potentialities of one's being are the primary concern of psychotherapy. Jung concurred stating psychotherapy means, first and foremost, an empirical investigation of the unknown part of the psyche which manifests in many ways (Von Franz, 1975). All participants in this study discussed the heightened sense of awareness and potentiality to change through the revelation of a blind spot, although it is sometimes a challenging and arduous task.

Conclusion

We must always inform the kaleidoscope of knowledge in order to recognise commonalities as well as differences to individual conceptualisations of the unconscious and enable further discussions This is a prerogative for any innovative advancement of psychotherapy as an internationally acclaimed science (Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, 2017, p. 9).

Counselling psychologists are recognizing therapy as a culturally contextualized practice whereby counselors' own beliefs, expectations, values and bias blind spots influence professional practice and research (Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994). The one constant that therapists can count on is that they will carry their own lifetime of accumulated cultural assumptions, experiences and biases wherever they go (Sandeen, et al., 2018). The culture and identity of Ireland has essentially transformed producing the environment for a multicultural Ireland (Banks, 2008) that strives for equality, diversity and inclusion of its entire populace. Given the multicultural demographics of our current social landscape, there is an increasing need for cultural competence and creation of awareness is paramount for this to transpire. Cultural competence has been described as the appropriate response to the dilemma of misunderstandings and impasses preventing effective practice as a result of cultural gaps between service systems, practitioners and clients (Williams, 1999; Martin & Miracle, 2001). CORU is Ireland's multi-profession health and social care regulator. It specifies "demonstrating cultural competence" as a means of promoting social justice in practice within the *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics* (2011, p.5). One of the defining properties of psychotherapy is the fundamental concern with issues of social justice, equality and a commitment to working with diversity and oppressed groups. "If the world is always revealed according to the way one stands within it, this self-disclosure as a world is especially apparent when that revealed world is uncluttered with social platitudes and empirical literalism"(Brooke, 2015, p.136). Supervision, according to Brown & Bourne (2002), is the primary means by which to explore reflective practice. It necessitates 'hard systematic thinking and soft initiative insight' (Drew & Bingham, 2001, p. 221). Self-focus attention engendered through supervision or reflection increases self-attribution (Silvia, and Duval, 2001) which is fundamental for the disclosure of blind spots.

Where are the answers to deal with the psychological problems raised by the development of modern consciousness? Future work that explores poor self-knowledge is necessary to help "shed light on these blind spots" (Gallrein et. al. 2016, p.2). If each of us can attempt to disembark the treadmill of life, create a morsel of awareness, be it through therapy or other and challenge the negative content of our polarised vision including concealed judgements, it would be a worthy moral achievement. The withdrawal of blind spots is an arduous task that demands much rigorous honesty with self. Psychological blind spots present in various guises, some more obstinate than others but most an impediment to growth, awareness and cultural competence. In this ever-changing world we exist in the praxis of equality, inclusion and acceptance of diversity feels like an ethical urgency. In the responsible position that psychotherapy holds it is more than a duty of care to question not only our own subjectivity but others short-sightedness in a timely and appropriate manner, for it is only through the potency of awareness that we have the potential to change.

Melanie McGovern

Melanie McGovern, Doctoral researcher and IACP accredited therapist. Her primary professional qualification was as an ophthalmic optician. She held the position as head optometrist in a busy practice before deciding to return to college to further educate completing diplomas in nutrition and holistic counselling and psychotherapy. Melanie continued on to attain a first class Masters degree in psychotherapy and counselling. She works as an integrative psychotherapist from her private practice in Salthill, Galway. Currently, her work is based on evidence –based practice including mindfulness based cognitive therapy. However, as her practice matures existential philosophies and reframing of old psychodynamic theories have developed. Melanie is the current recipient of the 2020 IACP research bursary.

Contact:
melaniepsychotherapist@gmail.com

www.galwaycounsellingpsychotherapy.com

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AppendixXIIIPoster

A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry into Psychotherapist's Understandings of the Phenomena of Psychological Blind Spots and Moments of Self-Awareness

Melanie McGovern

March 2020

METANOIA INSTITUTE

O X

Figure 1: Anatomical Blind Spot Exercise

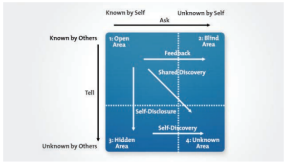
With both eyes look at the X, then cover your right eye whilst continuing to look at the X. If you haven't noted the disappearance of the O move closer until it disappears. This is your blind spot. Repeat procedure on the opposite side, this time covering your left eye.

Extensive Literature Review	• Comprehensive literature review, including historical and present-day literature. • Personal reflections
Participant Recruitment	• Posters positioned in ethically appropriate places • Word of mouth • Advertisements in professional magazines such as *Etherarch*
Purposive Sampling	• Information-rich cases: experienced psychotherapists (Merriam, 1998).
Semi-structured Interviews	• Open-ended questions with psychotherapists (90-120 mins).
Pilot Interview and Analysis	• To help guide the later-stage data gathering by evolving the interview schedule.
Participant Reflections	• Written reflections from participants
Participant Feedback and Input	• Participants checking transcripts to verify truth factor (Polkinghorne, 1989).
Data Analysis	• Data is recommended to be processed, uncovering the thematic aspects (Van Manen, 1997). • Data analysis in an hermeneutical circle of reading, reflective writing and interpretation in a rigorous fashion (Laverty, 2003) • Personal reflections
Research Synthesis	• Revised findings
Products	• Workshops • Articles • Conferences • Foundation of book

Figure 2: Overview of the Research

Aims: This document proposes a study of psychotherapists' perceptions of their moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots by means of an exploratory qualitative study. The aim of this study is to explore a cohort of experienced psychotherapists, and to seek a greater understanding of their moments of self-awareness, through the use of semi-structured interviews held in the professional and confidential environment of a counselling practice.

Methodology: This naturalistic exploratory study will take a hermeneutic phenomenological epistemological stance to generate descriptive knowledge and analytical concepts through dialogic engagement with the participants and the transcribed text via analyses (Brooke, 2011). *Design:* Qualitative data will be collected through semi-structured interviews that will be audio-recorded and transcribed, using the hermeneutic phenomenology cycle (Laverty, 2003) within the meta-theme of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots. Analysis: Rigorous steps of analysis will be followed, which will include in-depth content analysis of both the interviews and reflexive material to help fully understand the research findings. I intend to use critical reflection of my own personal and professional experience of moments of self-awareness to aid interpretation and analysis (Etherington, 2016).



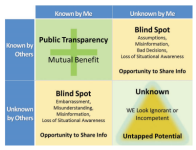


Figure 3: Johari Window. Building Self Awareness and Opening Blind Spots

Moments of Awareness

Romanyshyn, (2015) writes about too often unnoticed, ordinary extraordinary epiphanies or moments of awareness that rises us and halt us in our tracks, turning us around and taking us down into the depths where in a different light, in the dark light of the underworld, we learn to see in another way. The majority described moments of awareness as epiphanies or awakenings, it was characterised as an experience that triggered personal explorations of one's self (Neville, and Cross, 2016). A state of objective self-awareness is one in which individuals experience heightened awareness of their internal feelings and beliefs (Hess and Pickett, 2010).

Psychological Blind Spots

Psychological blind spots are part of our mental life which we are unaware (Kahn, 2002). They may include impulses, ideas, wishes and fears that operate unwittingly and influence our every day behavior (Kahn, 2002). Informational barriers such as implicit attitudes, motives and self-views, including motivational barriers (Vanier, 2010) such as coping/defence mechanisms (Clemens, 2012) which resist conscious access (McConnell et al., 2011) and operate together are the primary explanations for blind spots in self-knowledge.

Existential Duplicity

Consciousness or awareness can be thought of as that presence that is present-we-are-always within existence, an absent presence that calls for revelation into consciousness (Brooke, 2015). The unconscious is inherently ambiguous for the pre-reflectively lived is a moment of perceptual opening and world-disclosure that is both revealing and concealing (Brooke, 2015). In our physical or bodily presence, we reveal and conceal things about ourselves simultaneously (van Manen 2006a, Adams and van Manen 2008, van Manen 2008, van Manen and Adams 2010, cited in Heinonen, 2015, p. 37). The ontological constitution of Being is a fundamental characteristic of existential duplicity of both showing and hiding itself, ontological characteristics of the concealment of Beingness is both visible and invisible (Craig, 2008). Therefore the attitude of consciousness and the face of the unconscious form a reflexive unity. Psychological blind spots tend to be revealed as a reflection of consciousness or awareness (Brooke, 2015).

The Literature

Psychological Blind Spots

- Luft and Ingham (1955) were the first to systematically address the relationship between self-perceptions and other-perceptions in personality psychology
- Johari window, in which they contrasted the views that people have of themselves with the views that others have of them was called the 'Blind self' (Ibid)
- Sheeran (2007) stated that the Johari window is one model that has potential for enabling users to gain greater insight and create awareness.
- Pronin, Lin and Ross (2002) research concluded that people thought that blind spots or cognitive biases were more prevalent in others than in themselves.
- Galbraith's (2013) study found clear evidence for the existence of distinctive blind spots. There is increasing evidence that blind spots are substantial (Vanier and Carless, 2011). People make inaccurate self-assessments introspective information can be misleading (Gilbert et al., 1988).
- Bias blind spot is rooted in part in one's introspective illusion limitations of their own introspection (Pronin and Kugler, 2007). One's peers and adversaries see events and issues through the distorted prism of their worldview (Pronin, Lin and Ross, 2002).
- In 2016, Galbraix investigated blind spots using a more diverse set of informants, from different cultures. Their research revealed that the phenomenon of blind spots is robust across participant samples and language communities.
- Unconscious and implicit attitudes have an important role in shaping-in-the-moment experiences (Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006; McConnell et al.'s 2011).
- Informational (i.e., regarding the quantity and quality of information people have about themselves) and motivational barriers (i.e., ego-protectives motives) operate together and are the primary explanations for blind spots in self-knowledge (Vanier, 2010).
- Furthermore, Pronin (2007) states that two reasons for bias blind spots are naïve realism and overreliance on introspection.

Moments of Awareness

- The idea that our sense of self, which we assume to be relatively stable and enduring, is actually constructed anew each moment out of a ceaseless flux of thoughts, images, and sensations (Palmer, 1998).
- Man learns about himself only through his acts, through the extroiorization of his life and through the effects it produces on the others (Ricoeur, 1994). He comes to know himself only by the detour of understanding, which is always an interpretation (Ricoeur, 1994).
- We have enormous power added by the existence of self-awareness, by the existence of qualitative subjective conscious states (Searle, 2013).
- Neville, and Cross, (2016) study is among the few empirical studies to provide a discussion of triggers in potential changes. For many these changes were spurred by either an 'aha' moment (epiphany) or a series of events (encounters) that lead to increased insight and reinterpretations of the meaning. (Neville, and Cross, 2016).
- Research has made progress in understanding links between self-awareness and causal attribution and the effects of expectancies on self-standard discrepancy including blind spots (Silvia, and Duval, 2001).
- Given that moments of awareness or psychological blind spots are process- oriented, there is a dearth of empirical studies uncovering critical events promoting a perceived change in one's thinking and meaning making (Neville, and Cross, 2016, p.103).

Levels of Awareness

- Legrain et. al., (2010) research concluded that the notion of self-awareness is not a monolithic, all-or-none ability but rather consists in different levels of awareness.
- It is worth speaking of self-awareness along specific dimensions rather than blanket self-awareness (Duval & Wicklund, 1971).
- According to James (1980), there are at least two fundamental and interrelated levels of the self. The first level is the 'I', the implicit level, at which the self is merely a subject of experience. The second level is the 'me', the explicit level, at which the self has become an object of knowledge for oneself.

Implicit versus Explicit Knowledge

- When people consciously reflect on knowledge, they draw on information that is structured by logic and reasoning. Information can be consciously brought to mind and verbally reported (McConnell et al., 2011).
- Implicit attitudes are automatic judgements without conscious reflection (McConnell et al., 2011).
- People decisions are often guided by conscious evaluation (explicit attitude) and yet their automatic response are influenced by the unconscious (implicit attitude) (McConnell et al., 2011).
- McConnell et al. (2011) study provides direct empirical support for Gawronski & Bodenhausen, (2006) theoretical argument that unconscious evaluations help shape spontaneous affective experience.

Methodology

Phenomenology

- Phenomenology is guided by the call to return to the things themselves (Brooke, 2015). It is a stance, an approach to life that is curious and patient– a style of thinking and being (Romanyshyn, 2007, p.88).
- Barrios (1989) stated the term phenomenology refers to a set of philosophical doctrines sharing assumptions as to what the world is like (ontological) and how it can be known (epistemological) and description of mental images to such a world.
- Phenomenologists reject the persistent dualism of "mind versus body" (or the traditional distinction between object and subject) found in contemporary scientific thinking (Crotty, 1998).
- The aim of phenomenology is therefore twofold: to stay as close as possible to a description of lived experience while allowing an essence of how something is experienced to emerge (as interpretation) (King, in press).

Dasein

- The phenomenological reduction involves the bracketing (epoche) of the natural attitude and the return to existentially original experience in the life-world (Brooke, 2015).
- King,(in press) states it is less about bracketing and more about being open and acknowledging what we bring to the research. It can be understood as a world disclosive openness Heidegger called Dasein (Brooke, 2015).
- Heidegger's, Being and Time , places emphasis on Dasein , the being-there that we are, this Dasein is not a subject for which there is an object , but is rather a being within a being (Ricoeur, 1994).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

- Hermeneutics elucidates the essence making the invisible visible (Laverty, 2003, p. 27).
- It rejects the ideology of suspending personal opinion (epoche) or bracketing (Annells, 1996), with a move towards interpretation (Van Manen, 1990), as interpretations are all we can have (Raffe, 2011).
- It is an approach to interpretation of unexamined assumptions, biases, and theories to allow things to speak for themselves (Craig, 2008).
- To unveil the world as experienced by the subject through his/her life world stories (Hartley, 2006). The lived experience is described through writing. Dialogue between text and reader requires openness. Interpretation both of text and of the lived experience is an iterative process (hermeneutic circle) (Laverty, 2003).
- Use of imagination (metaphor, image, myth) when engaging with the phenomenon (Kafle, 2011).

Figure 4:

Finlay (2011) states that the hermeneutic approach in phenomenology uses four main tenets

Research Design and Methods

Figure 5: Data Gathering

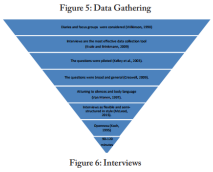


Figure 6: Interviews

Research Questions

What are therapists understanding and felt sense of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots?
What types of psychological blind spots and moments of awareness, both implicit and explicit, are therapists aware of in their clients?
What is the significance of a therapist's perceptions of blind spots and moments of awareness from a psychotherapeutic perspective?
What are the risks and benefits of opening psychological blind spots and creating self-awareness?

Findings

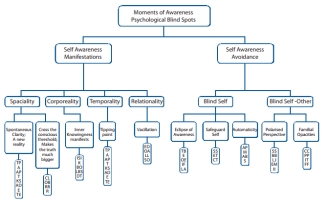


Figure 7: Overview of findings

Understandings of moments of awareness
Self Awareness Manifestations

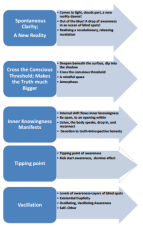


Figure 8: Overview of categories, metathemes and subthemes

Understanding of blind Spots
Self Awareness Avoidance

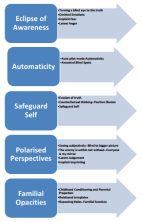


Figure 9: Overview of categories, metathemes and subthemes

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Appendix XIV Certificate of Attendance

A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry into Psychotherapist's Understandings of the Phenomena of Psychological Blind Spots and Moments of Awareness

Melanie McGovern

CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE

Organiser certifies that

has participated in the following activity

Workshop
In
Galway

iacp
CPD Approved

Date of IACP CPD Activity:
10th March 2020

No. of IACP CPD Points: 2

Signed Melanie McGovern

Appendix XV Workshop Participant Feedback Sheet

Participant Evaluation of Workshop-DPsych

Name...G. K....Date...24 March 2020...

Workshop Title: **A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry into Psychotherapist's Understandings of the Phenomena of Psychological Blind Spots and Moments of Awareness**

Location: Galway Date: 10/3/20

What were you expecting from this workshop?

How much were your expectations met? (Please X the appropriate answer)

Expectations fully met (1)X	Expectations met (2)	Expectations Somewhat met (3)	Expectations barely met (4)	Expectations not met at all (5)

What did you find helpful or missing?

Practical role plays with each other and listening to other people

Please indicate on the scale below an overall impression of how helpful or unhelpful this workshop was? (Please X the appropriate answer)

Extremely helpful (1) X	Helpful (2)	Neither helpful or unhelpful (3)	Unhelpful (4)	Extremely unhelpful (5)

How do you think this workshop might be enhanced in the future?

More information on the types of blind spots within a clinical domain

Any other comments?

I thoroughly enjoyed this workshop and felt it was most insightful. Thank you

Participant Evaluation of Workshop-DPsych

Name...O. G..... Date 26/3/2020.....

Workshop Title: **A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry into Psychotherapist's Understandings of the Phenomena of Psychological Blind Spots and Moments of Awareness**

Location: Galway Date: 10/3/20

What were you expecting from this workshop?*No expectations*

How much were your expectations met? (Please X the appropriate answer)

Expectations fully met (1) X	Expectations met (2)	Expectations Somewhat met (3)	Expectations barely met (4)	Expectations not met at all (5)

What did you find helpful or missing?

I liked the style of presentation; varied and interactive.

Please indicate on the scale below an overall impression of how helpful or unhelpful this workshop was? (Please X the appropriate answer)

Extremely helpful (1) X	Helpful (2)	Neither helpful or unhelpful (3)	Unhelpful (4)	Extremely unhelpful (5)

How do you think this workshop might be enhanced in the future?

Sorry but I have nothing to add here!

Any other comments? *We were invited to bring and share our individual experience through the lens of 'moments of awareness', which brought home the relevance of remembering this as therapists and the impact these moments have. This felt quite powerful and relevant. Thank you! Personally, I think that is something I could take further.*

Best of luck with it all and thank you for sharing your research

Appendix XVI European Conference on Mental Health

CERTIFICATION

Melanie McGovern

How do we Know what we do not Know' Psychotherapists' Lived Experience of Psychological Blind Spots and Moments of Self-awareness. A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Enquiry.

Has presented an Oral and Poster Presentation at 9th European Conference on Mental Health (Online) on September 30 – October 2, 2020.

On behalf of Conference Scientific Committee,

Mr. Lauri Kuosmanen

Adjunct Professor, PhD, RN, FEANS

European Conference on Mental Health

Secretary, Scientific Committee

Appendix XVII Academic Article Reviewers' Feedback

European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy

Title:

Spontaneous Clarity-A New Reality Dawns:

Psychotherapists' Lived Experience of Epiphany Moments

Reviewer A:

Overall, this is a very interesting article and stimulating topic. I think readers will be fascinated. I appreciate too the excellent content and that it is generally well written and clear (and good APA referencing!). In all, a very nice piece of research. I have a few suggestions for improving the article – see below.

Reviewer B:

Thank you for sharing your wonderful research. Overall, its competently done and all well written and structured. Lots of food for thought and I could really identify with it all. Talking about epiphanies is such a lovely topic!

The paper will be of interest to readers of EJQRP. The topic is relevant for professional practice. The author has explicitly addressed the relevance of their topic to the field of psychotherapy. The author writes very clearly which readers will appreciate. The author has demonstrated critical thinking, evaluating others' methodology and method. The paper is organised clearly. The research appears ethical.

Reviewer C:

A BIG Salute to the author for engaging with such vast topic.

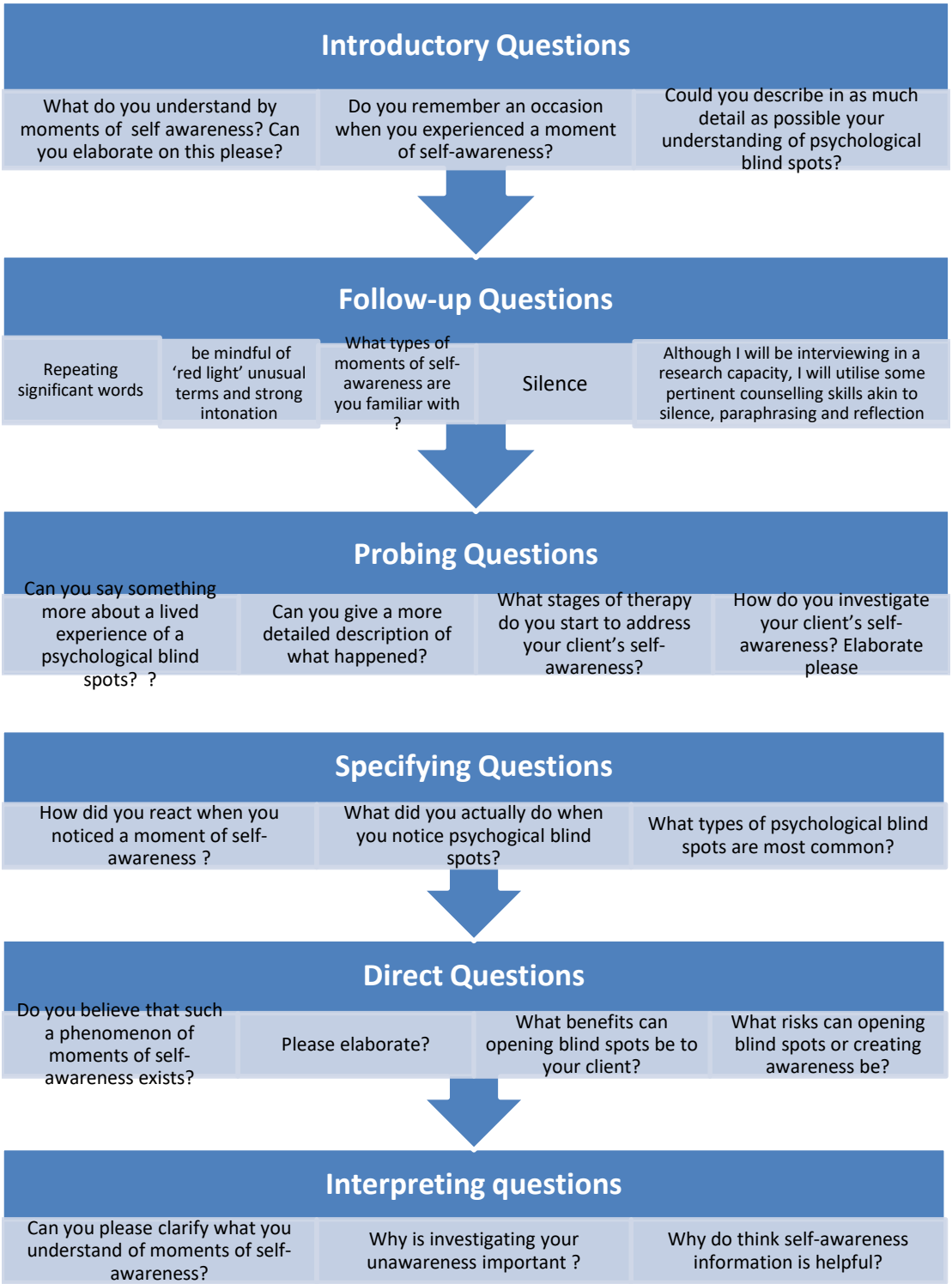
it is clearly a vast topic for exploration, so very well done of attempting to create that holding space; sometimes breadth is only possible when we sacrifice depth; I don' think that was the case for your piece of research; so well done on striking that balance. However, zooming into even just one small aspect of your findings will certainly be enough for offering even more layered and nuanced meaning of lived experience.

I always find that with phenomenology we are all back to beginner's level which offers a simplicity and tremendous richness that can often remain slightly diluted when holding such a vast topic

On reflection, I felt that was also a very tender topic, as it is so deeply intimate. It’s almost as if we are all transported into ’the epiphany land’, so moving on an embodied level and deeply felt with a sense of 'can I bear with?’ . It’s a space that brings me back to being humble as therapist. I like the word ‘humble’ in Russian as it is very relational , literally it translates : “with peace". In English humble has a more spacial connotation of ‘holding low ground’.

Excellent piece of work, I enjoyed reading it, so thank you!

Appendix XIX Sample Interview Question



Appendix XXPersonal measures to ensure trustworthiness

Procedure	Potential Benefit	Potential Detriment	Consideration
Inter-subjective reflection Personal reflection-Journal	Creates awareness Alternative perspective Open blind spots Challenges ethical blind spots	Time consuming Personal information	Make time and space daily to reflect Make reflexivity become habitual and not the exception
Relational Supervision Critical friend	Challenges Biases Critical evaluation Gives alternative perspective	May disagree Cost and time demanded	Benefits outweighs detriments worthwhile investment of time and money
Pilot interview Offer transcripts to participants	Chance to alter wording Make more precise Better interpretation	Time consuming Make contradict your finding	Makes research more valid Better rigor
Steps of analysis	Clearer for reader and examiner More transparent	Time consuming Challenging to summarise succinctly	Better clarity and understanding

Appendix XXIParticipant Demographic Details

Participants	Aliases	Orientation	Gender	Nationality	Date	Length	Form	Location
1	Roisin	Integrative	F	Irish	29/08/19	90mins	face to face	Private Practice
2	Lucy	Integrative	F	Irish	7/09/19	75mins	face to face	Private Practice
3	Susanne	Psychodynamic	F	Irish	12/09/19	65mins	face to face	Private Practice
4	Samantha	Integrative	F	Scottish	17/09/19	75mins	face to face	Private Practice
5	Annabelle	Humanistic Doctor of Psychotherapy	F	Polish	31/10/19	85mins	Face to face	Consulting Clinic
6	Jacob	Psychoanalytical	M	English	28/11/19	100min	Face to Face	Private Practice
7	Joe	Existential Mystic	M	Irish	09/12/19	90mins	Face to Face	Private Practice
8	Anita	Integrative	F	Irish	12/12/19	85mins	Face Face	Private Practice

Appendix XXII Full Transcript Example Participant 7

In the left column are my reflective notes that were made immediately after the interview and upon transcribing and reading the transcripts. The right column is stage one in theme analysis where unit meaning are highlighted.

Reflexive Comments	**TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe**	**Thematic Analysis Stage1:** **Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)**
I'm nervous and excited	**Mel 00:00** you're very welcome Joe to take part in this interview, [thanks] As previously explained this is a phenomenological exploration on moments of awareness and psychological blind spots So let's start with the beginning G , what is your understanding of a moment of awareness in your life? **G** Ah for me uhm awareness would be continuous [okay] because uh for the simple reason it's not something that you have to work at, it's, it's uh automatic. [ah] So people think you know they have to work or they don't, it's automatic. **M** Tell me more about that understanding please? **G** For example uhm, uh, when, when you realise what you are, uh, for example that you're not your body. I had an experience back in 2008 where uh I was watching somebody who died. And all of a sudden their spirit was watching their body in the coffin and they had no interest whatsoever in it. **M** Could you please tell me about that experince? **G** They were able to speak uh telepathically. It was non verbal, you know, I'm a lot happier where I	1 Continuous 2 Automatic 3 Realisation 4 All of a sudden
Those are new adjectives to describe his understanding of MOA		
What? Am I hearing this right? I wasn't expecting this, feels very left field		
This feels way out		

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
there and yet I too believe in telepathy, but I fearful might not be well received by others **I'm feeling more relaxed and think that was the most lived description yet. Well he did refer to himself as existential with a branch in mysticism. Still though, I need more clarity** **I worry he's going off track** **This material is interesting. I am totally immersed, engaged and fully present. It feels like I'm drawing this wonderfully rich material out of him and that it is a inter-**	am now. So from that moment on my understanding rule was that, uh, I'm not the body. Yes it meant, uh, there was no fear of death whatsoever. And uh his wife who had died four years previously was standing there waiting to meet him. And I could feel what she was feeling. I could feel what he was feeling and it was extraordinary joy. [oh my goodness] And the, the joy of being together again. So uhm, uh, all fear of death that I never knew I had disappeared, and as quick as lightening, uh I was allowed to see this, it disappeared. So from, from then onwards, it was more or less being the witness observer of life. So that moment ,was a big kick starter. [yeah] So realising you're not the body, you're not your thoughts, [yeah] you're just passing phenomena. It's like you're driving along in the car and you're watching the clouds, you're not, you're watching, they're just passing phenomena, they're not yours. [okay] A part of collective. **M** That's a powerful experience of a MOA, could you please elaborate?. **G** I wouldn't say it was deep awareness [okay] it was more being the witness observer. [okay] That was the first step and for months I was the witness observer. The next step is awareness. [okay] And, you know, it's, it's like putting your attention on the field of awareness all the time. And you're, like as we're speaking now you can observe and witness oneself speaking. What's doing- **M** Tell me more about your felt sense of that moment please? **G** What's doing the work- that moment of	5 Non-verbal 6 extraordinary joy 7 Fear of death disappeared 8 As Quick as lightening 9 Granted sight/clarity 10 Kick starter 11 Realisation 12 A collective experience 13 Level of awareness- not deep – shallow 14 Attention on the field of awareness

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
subjective experience. **Feels like he has an understanding of phenomenology and the lived experience. It feels like I am learning from him. So far this is an interesting experience** **I'm feeling a little unsettled as he branches into discussion on another dimension. I tried to remain open but worry that we're getting side tracked.** **That's interesting his understanding of a blind spot** **Sleepwalking as a form of a blind spot sounds familiar. I'm thinking of the last participant who spoke about**	awareness was consciousness beyond awareness is consciousness. [mm] So it's, it progresses. As one evolves spiritually the understanding, uh, arises as an inner knowingness. Iit's a step beyond. [it's a step beyond] You know, like, awareness, you know, you become aware that everything is consciousness. [mm] And it's, it's to a state of beingness. It's difficult to explain it in that it can only be experienced as an experiential reality.So for example, if you're connected to, consciousness, your intuition guides you and tells you certain things, and people have different modalities for their intuition. It could be for example, some people could have the hair rising on the back of their neck. Or, for example sometimes for me a deep truth would be a little flash of light. Yeah, so I know it's the guardian angel. M Please can you elaborate more on your experience of this moment? **G** For a good number of years, 20 I'd say [okay] 'Cause I've always believed in angels, but very few people ask for their help. [mm] And if you ask for help, [mm mm] the more you ask and you're grateful for it, the more it comes into your life. it's not, it's, how will I put it? It's knowing what one is. [mm, mm] You know, upon reflection, my biggest blind spot I think is ignorance. **M** Tell me about your experience **G** Eh, a lot of people just go through life and, for me they're like, they're sleepwalking. [mm] They've no idea what they are. [mm] All, all the mystics, they pose a question, not who am I, what am I? So what am I? So the question is what am I, what am I, what am I? I realised after a while, I am the	15 A level beyond 16 Progressive 17 Arises an inner knowingness 16 A step beyond 17 Difficult to explain- in effable 18 Experiential reality 19 Intuition guides 20 Disclosure 21 A flash of light 22 knowing who one is 23 Ignorance- PBS 24 Sleepwalking –PBS

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
automaticity. My mind has wandered a little I become aware and return back to openness in the present moment	universe. Everything is within me. So then the experiential reality would be for example, how could the universe be in the tree? And the tree would light up in illumination. Or the universe would show you everything. Everything! The source of everything is divinity. Now this has been an experiential reality. What I'm sharing is experiential reality not from uh reading books or whatever, it's just…[oh that's interesting] ...It's in experience of my own life. So everything, the essence of everything is the divine.	25 Realisation 26 Everything is within 27 Light up in illumination 28 Experiential reality
I had many moments of awareness whilst reading. I am familiar with this author he talks about. I have found his book powerful too.	**M** So this has been your own personal lived experience [yep] that has informed your experiential reality **G** I would have read Power vs. Force by David Hawkins in 2007 and a lot of what, nearly everything that happened in that book would have happened to me experientially. [okay] So when I read that I realised this guy really knows what he's talking about. So he, would pose the question what am I?	29 Realisation through reading
That sounds interesting and true. I'm thinking of some of my clients who don't know what they are but I never thought of that as a blind spot. Good awareness.	**M** So, my understanding of one of the largest blind spots that people have is perhaps-not knowing what they are. They think they're their body, they associate with their body, they see separate, separateness: you and I. So when, when one is aligned with the feel and knowing that one's source is divinity, I realised that any person that irritates me, or that annoys me. That's coming from within you, it's not them. Everyone is your mirror.	30 People not knowing what they are- PBS 31 Realisation
This example feels a bit vague and he's talking in the third party. I continue to remain	**M** Tell me more about your lived experience of that blind spot and realisation please. **G** So what I would do if, for example if an anger arose. I'm talking in the third party. [okay] The	32 Everyone is your mirror. PBS

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
open and surrender to his discourse **This is fascinating and feels like the blind spot of projection that other participants shared. I'm delighted he's not using psychotherapeutic terminology and I try too to resist labelling** **A truth! I love the simplicity yet potency** **This sounds familiar. That was my experience of a blind spot**	anger arose is watching the energy field. I'm not saying my anger, [okay] I'll say anger arose within me. And somebody irritated me, let's say, irritated this consciousness. I would look within and see, you know, is there something I need to forgive in myself? Is there an anger, what you give out, you get back? So it is fantastic to do mirror work. Everybody that irritates me in any way, for example if you say that person, they're really ignorant. Is there something within me that's ignorant about something? Is there something that needs to be let go? Is there something that needs to be looked at, forgiven, transcended?, I asked the Oh Lord, the holy spirit to show me the truth of this situation...and you forgive the one in yourself who has behaved like that towards others. [mm] You ask for their forgiveness, you ask for God's forgiveness with a deep filled regret and move on. That's David Hawkins teaching now, it's not mine but it's brilliant. **M** That seems so powerful G. Tell me about your personal experience or understanding **G** The devotion has to be the truth. I had that moment of awareness. It felt like a truth, devotion to the truth, whole time, nothing else. Power - devotion and prayer. So, if you for example, the 12 step program, - step 3, step 11, so step 3 is surrendering your will to God and asking for his will for you. Step, sorry step 3 is surrendering to God.Step 11 thanks be to God, I was never an alcoholic, but step 11 is prayer and devotion and asking for God's will for you. [hmm] He'll take you all the way, to any old step... And it takes a lot of inner honesty but, you know as you evolve spiritually you begin to ameliorate the ego. And what I mean, you begin to soften it, and suddenly I realised that, I've been programmed. We've been programmed by life, by our parents. Upon reflection its a major blind spot	33 Look within and see 34 Any person that irritates me or that annoys me. That's coming from within you, it's not them.PBS 35 A truth 36 Devotion to truth 37 Soften the ego 38 sudden realisation 39 Programmed from

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
	M Could you please elaborate more on your personal experience of that ?	parents- PBS
It feels like he has gone off the topic and he's generalising **I'm fascinated with the idea of a generational blind spot** **Although, I feel some of his examples are vague and he sometimes speaks in the third party. I am remaining open.** **There's great wisdom in his narrative but I'm unsure where this is in relation to my topic** **I feel very present and a strong element of inter-subjective exploration is**	**G** A blind spot of me was not being good enough. you know I'm not worthy. A whole other things. You know, one of the most profound lectures I was ever at was by doctor David Hawkins and he asked everybody, look in the mirror. And every morning he says I look in the mirror and I say I'm perfect and I'm beautiful. And I want ye guys, I want you to say that. And very few people were able to say it with honesty. [ah] It was half, half hearted. So he said uh, he says uh, I'm perfect and I'm beautiful because that's the way God sees me. [mm hmm] And that's the way God sees you. So what's judging is the ego persona with a small 's'. The self with a Capital 'S' is the spirit is perfect. ...I was in my mother's womb for 9 months [mm] and I picked up on her energy. [mm] So a lot of the mystics would say that we pick our parents because we've similar energies or similar, similar lessons to transcend. So you often see like father like son, like mother like daughter, in my case I'm very like my mother . Its an intergenerational block ...then I had a moment of awakening I need to re-parent myself. I had to look at somebody that I thought is an incredible example like Jesus the Christ. And he said love one another like I've loved you or, you know, unconditional love is the key to everything. Be kind to everybody. And everything. [yeah] Including yourself. That was a big blindness for me. I hadn't realised for, for many years I was empathizing too much **M** Tell me more about your understanding of that blindness **G** First of all, I didn't realise I'd taken on that role. It was a blind spot. So, I'd noticed a lot of my family were empathizers. All my sisters. it's like	40 Not good enough-PBS 41 Not worthy –PBS 42 Similarities to parents-PBS 43 An intergenerational block-PBS 44 Awakening 45 A blindness- PBS 46 block of awareness-

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
obvious. **I would like more detail of his actual lived experience** **I am interested in his understanding of a blind spot as a sort of family programme** **Interesting how his moment of**	an energy of sacrifice. We would all..keenly get up in the middle of the night for you, do anything for you. So, four of them are sick. One of them's got breast cancer, uh, one of them has had a colonoscopy. Uh third had a stroke, fourth has diabetes. Actually the only one that's healthy is, is my eldest sister who is a nun. So she prays a lot, so. Empathizers tend to give and give and give and don't recharge their batteries. Until they've nothing to give. [mm] And especially if you're a physical empathizer. Like, I would be a physical empathizer an example was I was walking into a shopping centre and I could feel the energy of...everybody, you wonder what's, what's you're energy and what's not. Or I remember a time when my friend was angry, all of a sudden that energy, I was beginning to feel it. And I can feel, if I'm sitting with somebody, I can feel if they've a pain in their left shoulder, I can feel it in my left shoulder. But I hadn't realised this, I was blind to it, then I had a moment of understanding [mm] I'm not meant to take on the lessons of others. It's just showing you, it's not karmically good karma either to do that. You know everyone has to learn their own lessons. **M** That's interesting, so am I right in thinking that your understanding of a blind spot was similar to a unconscious programme? and staying with your lived experience of revealing that blind spot could you please elaborate ? **G** My mother was an empathizer. And I think my father too certainly would be as well and, he died of lung cancer and I think there was a lot he didn't express and kept it within, he wasn't able to express. Icame into awareness that I quite possibly learnt from my parents and didn't know any better.... And to the point where it made me sick. [yeah. I needed to recharge my batteries, number one. I went walking in nature. I went for a swim. In that meditative moment I became aware. I needed the time alone to recharge. And there I	PBS 47 Family patterns/ roles-PBS 48 Blind to ways of relating to others –PBS 49 relational styles similar to parents-PBS 50 Moment of awareness in nature/swimming

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
awareness is still unfolding and not a static moment **I feel this interview is rich but I want him to stay as close to his lived experience as possible** **A learned**	grew into awareness I'm just like my parents **M** How did that moment of awareness transpire? **G** I'm still in the process of that realization. I noticed it recently when people were coming to the house and they were talking about things like, sometimes you'd pick up a discordant energy, [mm] and I really noticed it, for example, in, in the gym. [mm] I'd have a shower and the jacuzzi. I was picking up energies that weren't my own. [that's interesting] And all of a sudden I'd meditate, and I'd sit with that energy, do the sedona method, uhm, don't call it anything, sit with it. Don't give it a name. Radically letting go hold of unconditional law then it disappeared [k] But it would have been better if I was aware of this programme to start with and have boundaries because empaths don't have boundaries. **M** Could you please give me a concrete example of that moment please? **G** Yes sure A major one! there was somebody who came to my house and, they were speaking with uhm, somebody who was a international teacher. So I had came into the room in my own house and I said, I'm sorry to interrupt but can I do this for you because there's somebody else waiting. And she said to me, the lady who was listening to the teacher, uh, would you excuse me she says, we're in the middle of something, come back later. ...well I just realised, the penny dropped I have to be very firm with this lady. I was a little bit irritated . And it was me who was doing the favour to her, And she kind of tells me to get out of my own house,So, the realisation was I don't have boundaries and I need more boundaries, I was blind sighted, I couldn't see the full picture **M**	51 A process of awareness 52 All of a sudden through meditation 53- Unconscious programmes-PBS 54- The penny dropped 55- blind sighted, couldn't see the full picture-PBS

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
behaviour as a felt sense of a blind spot is interesting **I'm feeling pleased that feels like a good concrete lived experience of both MOA and PBS**	Good Gerry tell me about your felt sense of that experience **G** It was a learned behaviour, I wasn't aware of yes and I, it was learned first in work, over years in my own work. [okay] And it was kind of, spreading yourself so thin that you're just exhausted. But you know through awareness, I've gotten much better with that over the years and I've no problem saying no now. But it came with maturity and awareness **M** Tell m more **G** I gained awareness I'm a bit of perfectionist.and a pleaser, it was a learned behaviour I wasn't aware of [mm] it's what my mother was like mm, mm, yeah] So I was the yes person, the positive person just like my mum..but I came into awareness I am the most positive person ever and always say yes. But I was feeling overworked, or overwhelmed, I was not being honest, not being authentic. **M** Can you please clarify you're understanding **G** Awareness isn't just a moment, its needs to be worked at. It has to be worked at every single day. Well sometimes, I can be daydreaming about something. And then out of nowhere I was brought back very quickly with a new insight that I needed to look after my energy. [yeah] So uhm how it happened to me first, I was thinking about something else and a police man stopped me. [ah] And, said you're not wearing your seatbelt. You know it's a 3 point fine. [yeah] And then I had realised,I always wear my seatbelt, [yeah] always. As it happened, I was driving an older vehicle, and I, I was minding a dog in the front and I was after getting a phone call to say my sister was in	56- Learnt behaviour –PBS 57 Learnt behaviour- interpersonal relational style- PBS 58 Came into awareness 59 Out of nowhere 60 New insight 61 Not mindful –PBS

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
Its funny he said that, but he's right this interview although different to what I thought I am learning, mostly just to be open to his understanding and experiences of the phenomena **I feel he could be talking about me. I am definitely naive and tend to see the world trough a loving lens, maybe this is a blind spot of my own!! I've just created my own moment of awareness through active listening and remaining open. It feels like clarity, its feels like a truth**	hospital so I was a little bit distracted not mindful. So uhm, that was a, a signal from the universe - safety. Mind your energy. [mm] Buckle up! [yeah] So it's just being an empathizer I need to recharge my own batteries every single day and become mindful not mindless...I think you'll learn something in this interview! **M** I have learned an awful lot in this interview and, that is why I chose you because I knew by your credentials that you not only have a depth of life experience but a depth of awareness that is very great- **G** Well I'm an empathizer I can find it difficult in life. Im a highly sensitive person. So, I get over-sensitised to what's happening. So when I realised the gift and it's being able to help people, I became like the lifeguard. Now i'll throw the person the life buoy, without jumping into the water with them and half drowning if they can't swim, you see? And learnt to protect my self by, prayers every morning [mm, mm] and ask Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit or the angels to protect **G** One of my biggest lack of awareness, would have been naívity especially as I was very loving, [mm] I tended to view the world or often projected that love into the world. [yeah] And what, the world is made up of, [yeah] of different spiritual evolvement. So if I was dealing with non-integrity, I was naive to that, I became aware I need to be careful. [mm] You know you don't lend them your car, for example. **M** Would you like to say more about that. Please? **G** A moment of awareness is an energy, it's an intuition. Everything is energy. I am the youngest	62 Realisation 63 (Safeguard self) 64 certain outlook perspective on life- PBS

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
	of 12 children. My sister used to tell me, when she had a miscarriage, my mother rang her and asked are you alright, what's wrong, are you ok? [yeah] All of a sudden she'd picked up the sadness even though she was 50 miles away. Mothers are, able to do that with all of their children including their sons as well. Another blind spot in relation to my mother was every relationship I've ever had, I'd pick my mother (Laughs)	65 An energy 66 An intuition
	M Ah that's interesting. Tell me about that blind spot, that's very honest.	67 Relational templates-PBS
I think this idea of a generational blind spot is profound	**G** Yeah, I dated many women like my mother, unbeknownst to me.And I've decided since that moment I will never marry my mother. [ah that's interesting] Ever, ever, ever. So it would have to be somebody who would uhm, or if I ever did, it would be, it would have to be completely unconditional where you'd accept the beingness of the other person completely, to be whatever they want to be without trying to control them in any way. my mother would have been controlling. And get up in the middle of the night for you too. And her way of loving would be to feed you, [okay] you had to be fed and that was it and I hadn't realised until she used to say, make sure you go to mass. And I'd be 50 years old, did you go to mass today? [yeah] And it used to irritate me. And then I realised, what's this in me, that I need to let go? [yeah] Then I dropped into awareness it was her parents that taught her that. And she was afraid, her parents passed it on.	68 Relational templates-PBS 69 Dropped into awareness
This feels like implicit fear, it's a good example..I wander momentarily thinking of my own catholic instilled fear	**M** Ah! That was a blind spot then, a generational- **G** And then the realisation came. Only last week this realisation came. [well] She was afraid of purgatory. The teachings of the Catholic church. 'Cause she said to me, do you think is there a God? And I was stunned. I said to her course	70 Generational blind spot PBS 71 The Realisation

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
I love the idea of truth as an expression of a moment of awareness **These are great adjectives to describe his felt sense of the experience** **How lovely a dawning ...it feels like giving birth to**	there is. [mm, mm] And I organised a friend of the family priest just last Wednesday, and I said to her My mother's heading for 102, [wow] and she's surrendered to God with two feet in heaven and two feet here in fear unwittingly, [yeah] and it's pulling her back from going. [mm] So he said of course, I'll give her absolution. I'll talk to her in that so. I was talking to a friend of mine then a few days ago and I said to her, uh, I hope I wasn't a priest in another lifetime that preached purgatory. And at that second, like a flash of light I realised my mother was teaching me as well that maybe I had to let go of something in myself. **M** that's very profound. **G** So that resonated with me as true. [okay] like a flash of light at that exact instant I knew it was a truth .. its a 100% certain. **M 27:05** So the truth was the moment of awareness? Can you describe your sense of that moment please? **G** it's beyond doubt. It's just an inner feeling you know, all of the mystics will tell you, and from my own experience, [yeah] when, you meditate and you're in silence and the mind's completely silent, and in fact the mind will only take you so far. [yeah] Then you have to be it's more prayer and surrender and devotion. The mind will only take you so far. It is out of the silence arises an inner knowingness that's non verbal. I remember one time surrendering to God, surrendering to God. And I was surrendering, and I was walking up the steps to my apartment and this inner knowingness came, non verbal but 100% rocklike, 100% clear, you're only surrender to your own higher self. [oh] And I just laughed,] I just laughed. I know exactly where I was standing. I was standing in behind the grocery store walking up steps to the apartment. And this inner	72 Implicit fear-PBS 73 At that second .like a flash of light... a realisation 74 A truth 75 Beyond doubt 76 Inner Feeling 77 out of the silence arises an inner knowingness that's non verbal 78 inner knowingness came, non verbal but

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
a new reality **I'm moved by his insight. A warm feeling that is light in my chest is lingering.** **I feel very relaxed and at peace. I am grateful as I feel I have just witnessed and observed a true mystic who has experienced profound realities** **There feels like mutual appreciation and respect. I feel like I**	knowingness came non verbal out of the blue, silence. You only surrender to your own higher self, surrendering to God, your own surrender **M** That sounds like a very powerful moment of awareness **G** Yes it was. .It dawned on me. [dawned] out of the blue.... the way I've learned to pray is I ask the Oh Lord, what's this about? So that's supplication divinity which divinity cannot refuse. And I ask the Oh Lord can you help me with this problem? [mm] I ask the Oh Lord, uhm, what's this about? Give me anything. And then you just leave it be. So you finesse an answer out of prussia or or the divine within as such. [mm] So it's like it comes as a knowingness washing the dishes the following day. It's not like a voice. **M** That's beautiful **G** Having a shower, going into the sea. They're all, leaving this space for the mind to be silent. And the mind is silent, like, thinking is sometimes, it's like a form of madness. [mm] Complete madness. [mm] 'Cause our true source, our true beingness is silence. **M** That's absolutely beautiful Gerry and that feels like a very strong truth. Thank you very much for sharing such personal insightful stories. I am moved by all your experiences. This was a very rich interview and I am very grateful to you for giving up your evening to come here. I look forward to transcribing the audio recording. Is there anything that you would like to add or subtract at this point ? **G**	100% rocklike, 100% clear 79 out of the blue 79 Silence 80 A dawning 81 Leaving a space to be silent

Reflexive Comments	TranscriptParticipant 7: Joe	Thematic Analysis Stage1: Units of meaning which relate to the lived experience of psychological blind spots (PBS) and moments of awareness (MSA)
could walk on air	No that's fine. You made it very easy for me to share. You're warmth was obvious and I felt very safe and not judged. **M** Thank you, that's very kind of you to say that, we'll turn off the recorder so.	

Appendix XXIII Clustering of cross-participant themes on moments of awareness

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of moments of awareness**
FS- Curtain being drawn back I 1- Spontaneous clarity I 2- insightful experience I 2- Sense of understanding something more I 3- Something that surprises I 3- Awaken curiosity I 4- Comes to light I 4- A dawning I 5- See clearer with new eyes I 6- Uncovering I 6- A new reality	Comes To Light, Clouds Part; A New Reality Dawns!
FS-Inner knowingness I 1- Internal shift I 2- Beyond doubt I 3- Opening within I 4- Flow of awareness I 5- Implicit made explicit I 6-Non-verbal knowingness	Inner Knowingness Manifest
FS-Moment of clarity I 1-Aha	Out Of The Blue! A Drop Of Awareness In An Ocean Of Blind

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of moments of awareness**
I 2-objectively catching self I 3-Out of the blue I 4- It pops up I 4- Clarity comes like a rocket I 5 -Epiphany I 5 –Finding missing piece of the puzzle I 6- A drop of awareness in an ocean of blind spots I 7-Bingo moment/ Light bulb moment I 7- Catch an insight	Spots!
FS-Deepening I 1- More than meets the eye I 2- Much deeper than surface I 2- Invite us into our shadow I 3- Not all surface I 3- Heightened self-awareness I 4- It deepens an understanding	Deepen Beneath The Surface, Dip Into The Shadow
FS-Ineffable I 1- Hard to describe I 2-Subtle I 3-Elusive I 4- Wonder	Indescribable, Ineffable, Elusive

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of moments of awareness**
I 5- unbelievable, uncanny	
FS-kick starter I 2- Infinite amount of blind spots I 1-Awareness begets awareness I 2- A gradual thing I 3- Bit by bit I 4- Knock on effect I 4-Ripple effect	Kick Start Awareness, Domino Effect
FS-Turning point I 1-Breaking point I 2- Societal Tipping point I 3-Tipping point	Tipping Point Of Awareness
FS-Timing is everything I 1- A Point in time I 2- Appropriate time I 3- A type of pause I 4- Patience and time I 5- crisis and crossroad in life I 6- Stage in life I 7 – Comes a point in life	A Point In Time

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of moments of awareness**
1 8- Good time to listen I 9- A certain time	
FS- Spatiality I 1-Paying attention I 2-Mindful living I 3-Moment in nature I 4-Notice I 5- A mindful space	A Mindful Space
FS- Openness I 1-More open I 2-Make room I 3-A choice to open I 4-Courage to open the door, to have a look I 5-Open to another possibility I 6-Opening within I 7-Open to see another side I 8-Open to challenging one view I 9-Be open I 9-Openings of awareness	Be Open, To An Opening

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of moments of awareness**
FS- Body awareness I 1-Corporeality & physicality I 2-The body is speaking I 3-Listen to your body I 4-What the body holding I 5-Body reconnection I 6-Bring the body in I 7-Drop into the body	Listen, The Body Speaks, Drop In, And Reconnect
FS- Willingness to look at self I 1-Honestly reflecting I 2- Rigorous honesty to self I 3- Devotion to truth I 4- Self-reflection I 4- How I contribute to the situation I 5- Re-evaluate honestly I 6- Questioning honestly I 6- Get to know self better I 7- introspective honesty	Devotion To Truth; Introspective Honesty
FS-Self –Other I 1-Value another's opinion I 2-Bring to another's attention I 3-Reaction from others	Self- Other

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of moments of awareness**
I 4-Reflected back I 5-Helpful insight I 6-Relayed from others I 7-Reflection from others	
FS Process of awareness I 1-Stages and Steps of awareness 1 2- Layers of superimpositions I 3-Levels of awareness-Layers of blind spots	Levels Of Awareness-Layers Of Blind Spots
FS-Interconnectivity I 1-blind spots precede awareness I 2- Two sides of same coin I.3-Duality I.3 -latencies and manifestations I 4- Existential Duplicity- the quality of being twofold	Existential Duplicity

Appendix XXIV Clustering of cross-participant emergent themes on psychological blind spots

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of psychological blind spots**
FS- To choose to not understand I 1-Not the full truth I 2- Keep the truth out of awareness I 3- Blind to the truth I 5- Staying with what one knows I 6- Constructed Illusion of Reality I 7- Blind sighted I 7- Blinded myself I 8- Turning a blind eye to the truth	Turning a blind eye to the truth
FS-Particular perspective I 1-Seeing in one direction/ one sided I 2-Tunnel vision- inability to see around a corner I 3- Judgmental I 4- Bias blind spot I 5- Polarized vision I 5- Obfuscation of light I 6- Slanted and subjective view I 6 -Blind to the bigger picture	Seeing subjectively- Polarised perspective- Blind to bigger picture
FS-Reoccurring Blind Spots	Auto pilot mode; Automaticity

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of psychological blind spots**
I 1-Stuck in rut-automatic I 2-Repetitive behaviour I 3- On the treadmill of life I 4- Sleepwalk through life I 4- Automatic reaction I 5- Automaticity	
FS-Choice to remain blind I 1-Survival skill I 2-need to keep stuff out of awareness I 3-Necessity I 3- Safety mechanism I 4- Protection and Defence I 5-Coping with certain situation I 6- Implicit motives	Safeguard Self
FS-Ancestral Blind Spots I 1-Intergenerational blind spots I 2- Generational behaviour I 3-Generational Blind Spots	Ancestral Blind Spots
FS- Narrow mindedness	Concealed Judgement

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of psychological blind spots**
I 1- Preconception and Ignorance I 2- Resistant to another side I 3- Subjectivity 1 4- Non-conscious implicit attitude I.5 Personal perspective and social prejudices I 1-Obfuscation of light I 2-Closed to the opposite I.3- Latent judgement I.4- Subjective opinions I 5- Tunnel vision	
FS- Perennial Fear I 2- Fearing worse case scenario I 3- Projected fear I 4- Unbeknownst Fear I 5- Implicit Fear	Implicit Fear
FS- Latent anger I 1- Something Stirs I 2- Triggered anger I 3- Passive Aggressive	Latent Anger

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of psychological blind spots**
FS-Blocking progress and growth I 1- Impede self-awareness I 2- Suit yourself society- avoid hard work I 2- Better to hide I 3- Unconscious avoidance I 4- Evasion	Evasion of truth
FS- It was actually them who had the issues I 1- Attack another as opposed to dealing with self I 1- The enemy is within not without I 2- Passing one's view onto another I 3- View the world as one sees themselves I 3-Ascribing something of their own on somebody else I 4- Attributions I 5- Implicit Societal/World Projections I 6- Everyone is my mirror	The enemy is within not without; Everyone is my mirror
2 FS-Early influences I 1- Past affecting present I 2- Interpersonal blind spots I 3- Similarities of old I 4- Relationship pattern big blind spot	Relational templates

Provisional themes expressing a cluster of similar units of meaning from cross participants. **FS=Felt sense** **I= Interpretation**	**Tentative themes of psychological blind spots**
I 5- Relationality I.6- Parallels between past and present relationship	
3 FS- Roles coming from home I 1- Sibling Role I 2- Roles unbeknownst I 3- Reflection of home I 4- Repeating roles I 5- Need to Re-parent I 5- Familial function	Repeating Roles- Familial function

Appendix XXV Comparative findings on moments of awareness

Main Themes in the Literature	**Research Findings**
Insight Schwartz, (2010)	Realising a revolutionary, releasing revelation
Clarity Broad, (1968) McDonald (2008) Commins (1999) Jung (1995)	Spontaneous Clarity
Eureka! Aha! Kounios, and Beeman (2015) Neville and Cross (2016) Timothy Carey (2007)	Out of the blue! A drop of awareness in an ocean of blind spots!
Awakening Neville, and Cross (2016) McDonald (2008) Commins (1999)	Be open, to an opening within
Illumination Carey (2007) Kounios &Beeman (2015) Commins, (1999) Heller, (1921)	Comes to light, clouds part, a new reality dawns!

Main Themes in the Literature	**Research Findings**
Timms (1987)	
Truth Commins (1999) Suzuki cited in Kounios, and Beeman (2015)	Makes the truth much bigger Devotion to truth-Introspective honesty
Indescribable Jung,(1995) Searle (2013) Commins (1999)	Amorphous
Series of events and encounters Neville and Cross (2016)	Levels of awareness-Layers of blind spots Kick start awareness, domino effect
Certainty and belonging Commins (1999)	Internal shift flows inner knowingness
Pause that people learn to listen to silence and create a moment of awareness May (1981)	Listen, the body speaks, drop in, and reconnect
Qualitative feel to that state, something it feels like to be in that state Searle (2013)	A mindful space
Thinking about the familiar in a novel way Kounios, and Beeman, (2015)	A New Reality
It is in the pause that people learn to listen to silence and create a moment of awareness	Listen, the body speaks, drop in, and reconnect

Main Themes in the Literature	**Research Findings**
May (1981)	
New insights leads to different behaviours, that led to establishing a sense of connection to something broader than the individual Neville and Cross, (2016)	Makes the truth much bigger
Reveal something of a different reality Commins (1999).	A New Reality
Levels of Awareness Lu and Wan, (2017) Searle, (2013) Legrain et. al., (2010) Duval & Wicklund, (1971) Timms, (1987) Rochat (2003)	Levels of awareness; layers of blind spots

Appendix XXVI Comparative findings on psychological blind spots

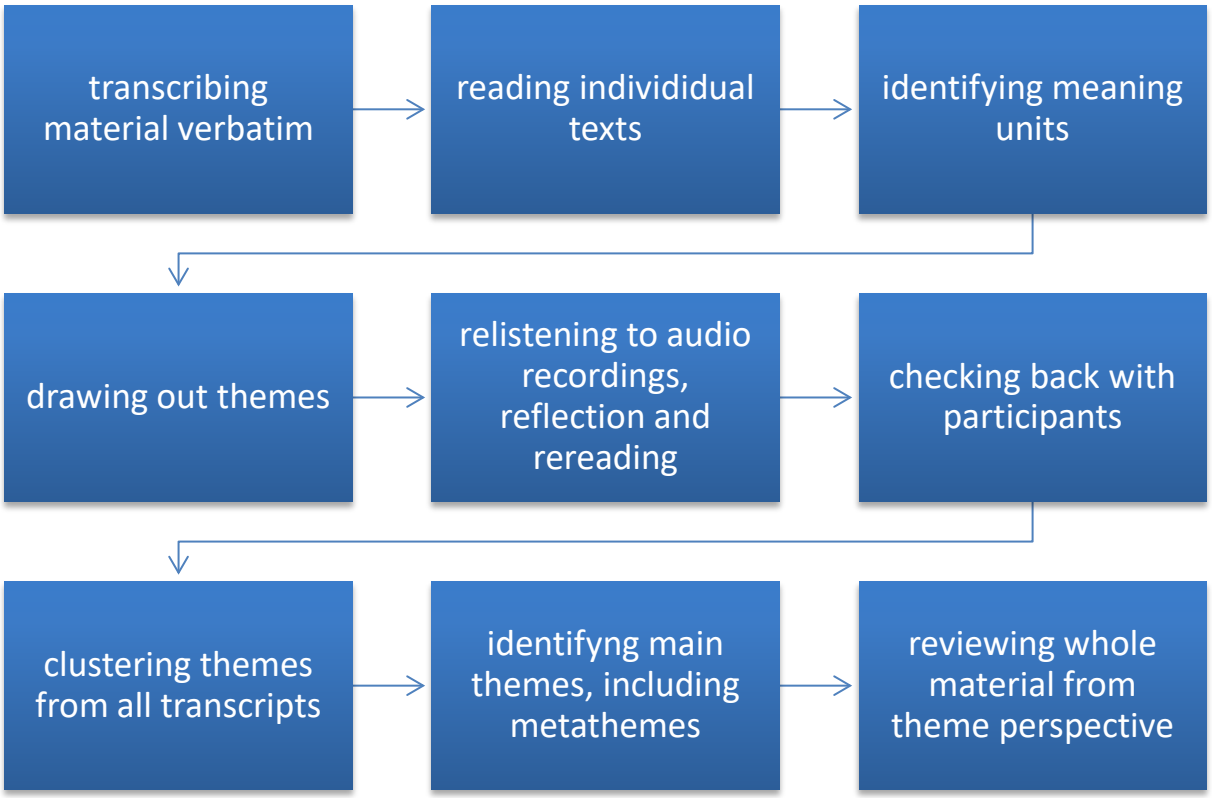
Main Themes in the Literature	**Research Findings**
Motivated cognitive processes Carlson, (2013) Vazire and Carlson, (2011) Kahn, (2002) Carlson, (2013) Tratter, (2015) Galatzer-Levy, (2017)	Concealed Judgement
One's implicit attitudes, motives and self-views resist conscious access Rydell & McConnell, (2006) Smith & Decoster, (2000) Gawronski & Bodenhausen, (2006) Tratter, (2015). McConnell et al.,(2011)	Implicit Fear Latent Anger
Avoid self-awareness Twenge, et al., (2003)	Self-awareness avoidance Blind self Turning a blind eye to the truth
Interpersonal perception. Gallrein (2013)	Blind self-other
Subjectivity Romanyshyn,(2013) Ricoeur, (1994)	Polarised vision Seeing subjectively- Blind to bigger picture
Automaticity	Automaticity; Auto pilot mode

Main Themes in the Literature	**Research Findings**
Hawkins, (2011). Silvia, and Duval, (2001). Peng, (2011) Broad, (1968)	
Ancestral and CulturalBlind Spots Brooke,(2015) Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, (1994) Lu and Wan(2017) Leuzinger-Bohleber, and Solms, (2017) Jung (1954)	Ancestral Blind Spots
Defense mechanisms Sokolowski, (2000) Antonacopoulou and Gabriel, (2001) Cramer(2000) Erdelyi (1985). Freud (1894/1962, 1896/1966) Kahn, (2002) Cramer, (2000) Wagas (2015) Timmermann (2009) Vaillant (2011) Cramer (2015) Gallrein (2016)	Safeguard Self
Introjection – Identification MacIntyre, (2004) Von Franz, (1975). Jung (1958b).	Implicit Imprinting Childhood Conditioning

Main Themes in the Literature	**Research Findings**
Cramer (2015) Cramer (2012) Heimann (1952) Bargh, & Morsella (2008)	
Projection / Attribution Jung, (1995) Von Franz, (1975) Adams (2016) Ames and Wzlawek (2014) Jung (1938/40) Badger-Charleson(cited in Goss & Stevens 2016) Adam, (2016) Cramer, (2015) Tratter, (2015) Holmes (1978) Cramer, (2000)	The enemy is within not without- Everyone is my mirror
Denial Kahn, (2002) Cramer, (2015) Cramer, (2012) Achenbach & Edelbrock(1983) La Greca & Stone, (1993) Voltaire, (1946)	Counterfactual thinking- Positive illusion
Self- Awareness Avoidance Silvia, and Duval, 2001) Duval, & Lalwani, (2012)	Evasion of truth

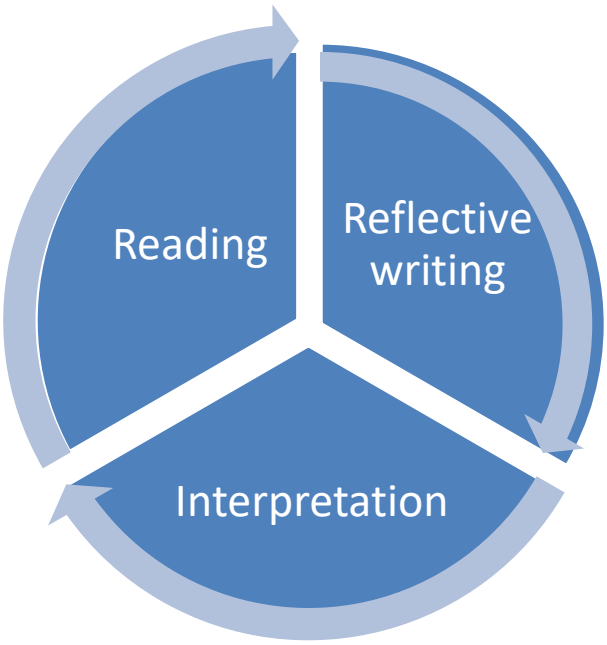
Main Themes in the Literature	**Research Findings**
Duval and Wicklund (1972) Cohan (1985) Ickes (1973) Vaillant, (1994)	
Early Influences and Learnt Behavior Palmer, (1998) Kahn (2002) Jung,(1995) Easthope, (1999) Bargh& Morsella (2008) MacIntyre, (2004) Watson, (1928) Yalom, (1980) Heimann, (1952)	Familial Opacities Childhood Conditioning Relational templates Repeating Roles- Familial function

Appendix XXVIISteps and Stages of Data Analysis

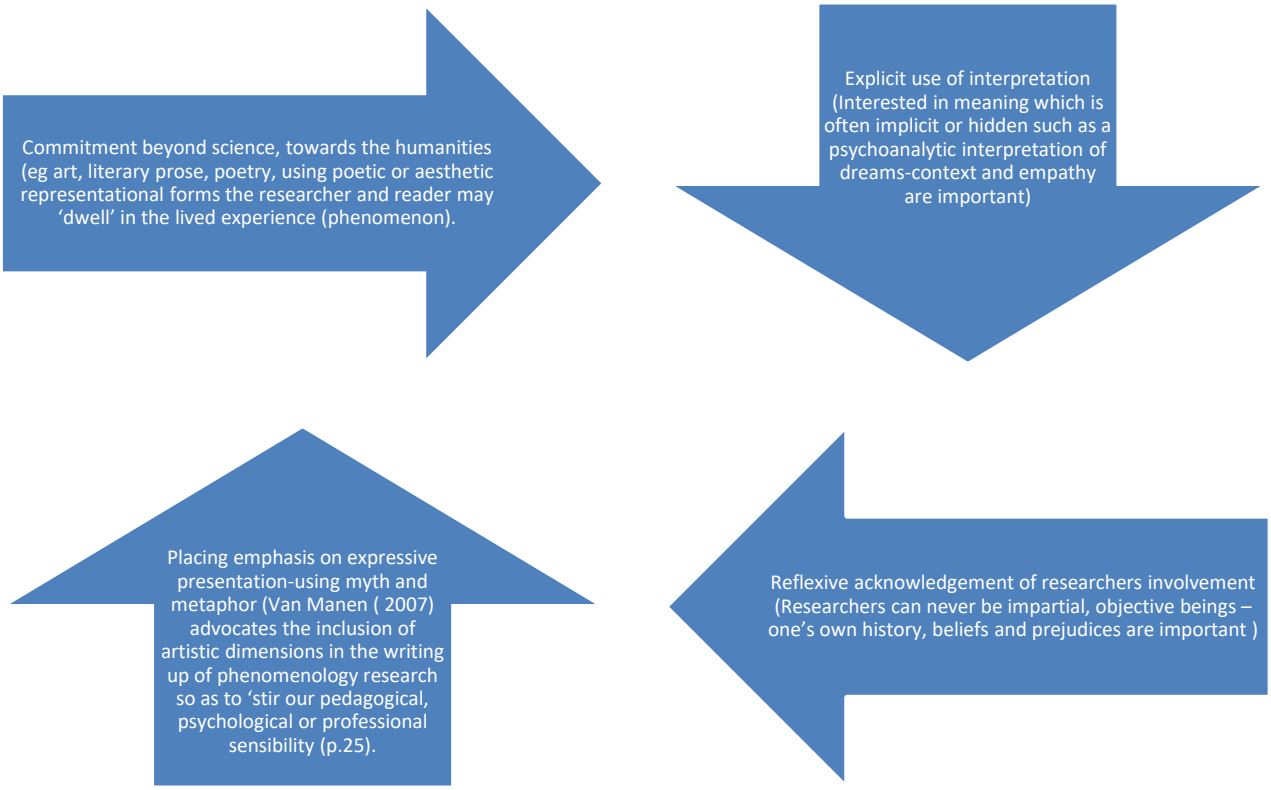


According to Kafle (2011) the only guidelines are;

The Hermeneutic Circle (Kafle, 2011; Laverty 2003)



Finlay (2011) states that the hermeneutic approach in phenomenology uses four main tenets;



Appendix XXVIII Research Ethics Approval

Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University

Metanoia's Research Ethics Committee

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Note: The items below cover all of those in the A/B categories of Middlesex University

	YES	NO	N/A
1. Will you describe the research procedures in advance to participants so that they are informed about what to expect? Please attach a copy of any recruitment letters and information sheet to be used.	*X*		
2. Is the project based on voluntary participation?	*X*		
3. Will you obtain written consent for participation?	*X*		
4. If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	*X*		
5. Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason and inform them of how they may withdraw?	*X*		
6. Will you ensure that participants are not subtly induced, either to participate initially, or to remain in the project?	*X*		
7. Will you give participants the option of omitting questions from interviews or questionnaires that they do not want to answer?	*X*		
8. Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	*X*		

9. Have you made provision for the safe-keeping of written data or video/audio recordings?	*X*		
10. Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation?	*X*		
11. Have you ensured that your research is culture/belief/ social system sensitive and that every precaution has been taken to ensure the dignity, respect and safety of the participants?	*X*		

If you have answered 'NO' to any of the questions listed in 1 to 12 above, then please provide further details on a separate page and attach it to this application.

	YES	NO	N/A
12. Is there a realistic risk of any participant experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort? If YES, what will you tell them to do if they should experience any problems (e.g. who they can contact for help.)		X	
13. Is there an existing relationship between the researcher and any of the research participants? If YES, please describe the ethical implications and the safeguards in place to minimise risks.		X	
14. Your research does not involve offering inducement to participate (e.g. payment or other reward)? If YES, please describe the ethical implications and the safeguards in place to minimise risks.		X	
15. Will the project involve working with children under 16 years of age? If YES, please describe parental consent and safeguarding procedures.		X	

16. Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way? If YES, please explain why this is necessary.		X	
17. Will you need to obtain ethical approval from any other organisation or source? If YES, please attach letter confirming their ethical approval.		X	
18. Are there any other ethical considerations in relation to your project that you wish to bring to the attention of the Research Ethics Committee that are not covered by the above? If YES, please describe on a separate sheet.		X	

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the questions listed under 13 to 18 above, then please provide further details on a separate page and attach it to this application.

CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I have read the BACP and the BPS guidelines for ethical practices in research and have discussed this project with my research supervisor in the context of these guidelines. I confirm that I have also undertaken a risk assessment with my research supervisor:

Signed Melanie McGovern…….....

Name;MelanieMcGovern……...…….....….....Date…06/03/2019…....

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR DECLARATION

As supervisor or principal investigator for this research study I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that researchers/candidates under my supervision undertake a risk assessment to ensure that health and safety of themselves, participants and others is not jeopardised during the course of this study.

I confirm that I have seen and signed a risk assessment for this research study and to the best of my knowledge appropriate action has been taken to minimise any identified risks or hazards.

I understand that, where applicable, it is my responsibility to ensure that the study is conducted in a manner that is consistent with the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (see http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm).

I confirm that I have reviewed all of the information submitted as part of this research ethics application.

I agree to participate in committee's auditing procedures for research studies if requested.

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This project has been considered by the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee and is now approved.

Signed:…

Print ..Dr. Stephen Goss

Appendix XXIX Risk Assessment

INDEPENDENT FIELD/LOCATION WORK RISK ASSESSMENT

FIELD WORK DETAILS

Name of the person carrying out fieldwork; Melanie McGovern

Name of research supervisor; Dr. Stephen Goss

Telephone numbers and name of next of kin who may be contacted in the event of an accident; Name: James Lohan Phone: +353874456262

Physical or psychological limitations to carrying out the proposed fieldwork

No

Any health problems (full details) which may be relevant to proposed fieldwork activity in case of emergencies.

No

Locality (Country or Region)

Galway, Ireland

Travel arrangements; Private car

Travel and Health Insurance; The researcher is covered by private insurance.

Dates of travel and fieldwork dependent on the time of approval from Programme Approval Panel; September- December 2019

1.LOCALITY/ROUTE

2. POTENTIAL HAZARDS

N/A NONE

3. PRECAUTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES

4. RISK ASSESSMENT 5.SAFETY/EQUIPMENT

N/A LOW

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

Having read the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, (Metanoia, p.154), the risks related to the above research projects are minimal and potential hazards are not considered to be more or other than those accepted in everyday life.

The interviews will take place in official rented premises in a quiet and confidential area to safeguard anonymity and a safe space for the participant.

DECLARATION: The undersigned have assessed the activity and the associated risks and declare that there is no significant risk or that the risk will be controlled by the method(s) listed above/over. (Those participating in the work have read the assessment and will put in place precautions/control measures identified.)

SignatureofFieldworkerMelanieMcGovern……..…Date...06/03/2018.....
....

APPROVAL:

Signature of Research Coordinator or Programme Leader Dr. Stephen Goss

Signature of candidate's Research Supervisor… …Date13/03/19…

Appendix XXX Informed Consent Form

Metanoia Institute & Middlesex University

Informed Consent Form

Contact details:

Researcher who will be conducting the research:

Melanie McGovern; melmcgov@hotmail.com

Contact number: 087-6402646

Principal Investigator who will be supervising the research:

Academic Advisor: Stephen Goss PhD

Academic Consultant: Rupert King DPsych (Prof)

Research Study Title:

A hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry into psychotherapist's lived experience of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots

Research Aims

To identify moments of self-awareness that are observed within a clinical environment.

To explore the types of psychological blind spots that can prevent self-awareness.

The goal of the research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied.

To draw conclusions from the findings and make recommendations for psychotherapists and future research.

The intentions for this research is to clarify information around moments of self-awareness and by elucidating this subject matter then consequently heighten knowledge.

This research sets out to answer the following questions:

What types of moments of self-awareness are observed in a clinical environment?

What types of psychological blind spots both implicit and explicit are engendered by society to prevent self awareness ?

What is the significance of moments of self-awareness and blind spots form a psychosocial and psychotherapeutic perspective?

How is it possible to educate and gain more awareness about this subject?

Clarification of the purpose of the research

The purpose of the research is to gain a better understanding of moments of self-awareness. This research topic was chosen because of the recognised importance of the need for more up-to-date information on this topic. The hope is that the research will inform and support greater awareness and hopefully offer more knowledge for therapists and lay people.

Understanding of what participating in this research entails

I will be asked to participate in an interview as part of this research. Before the interview I will be asked to reflect on my knowledge of moments of self-awareness. There will also be time allocated at this point for further questions or enquiries.

.

I understand that the interview will entail self-disclosure and that there is a possibility that I may become emotionally upset during the interview.

I know that I may ask to pause the interview, or to reschedule it at a time and place convenient to me.

I also know that I have the right to withdraw from this research study at any time without the need to give any explanation for so doing.

I will not participate in the research if I anticipate becoming emotionally distressed.

I understand the opportunities that will be given to me to review and amend the research findings as they relate to me.

I am aware that I will be given a copy of the findings of this research project and

that these findings may be published.

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

I have read the Plain Language Statement.

Yes/No

I understand the information provided.

Yes/No

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study.

Yes/No

I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions.

Yes/No

I am aware that my interview will be audio taped.

Yes/No

I am aware of the legal and ethical boundaries to confidentiality.

Yes/No

I am aware that this is not a therapeutic session.

Yes/No

I am aware I can avail of the Researcher's recommendation of Counselling support should I experience emotional upset during the interview.

Yes/No

I do not anticipate becoming emotionally distressed during the interview

Yes/No

Confidentiality and protection of data

I am aware that neither my name nor identifying biographical material will be used in this research. I am satisfied with arrangements for the protection, storage and destruction of data. I am aware of the legal and ethical restrictions on absolute confidentiality.

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

Name of participants .....Date.....Signature:..... Name of person taking consent.....Date.....Signature.....

Researcher.....Date.....Signature.....

Appendix XXXIPlain Language Statement Participant Information Sheet

Metanoia Institute & Middlesex University

Contact details:

Researcher who will be conducting the research:

Melanie McGovern; melmcgov@hotmail.com

Contact number: 087-6402646

Principal Investigator who will be supervising the research:

Academic Advisor: Stephen Goss PhD

Academic Consultant: Rupert King DPsych (Prof)

Research title:

A hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry into psychotherapist's lived experience of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots.

Research

Aims

To identify moments of self-awareness that are observed within a clinical environment.

To explore the types of psychological blind spots that can prevent self awareness and that are predominant in today's society.

The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied.

To draw conclusions from the findings and make recommendations for psychotherapists and future research.

The intention for this research is to clarify information around moments of self-awareness and client's blind spots and by elucidating this subject matter then consequently heighten knowledge.

Why am I doing this research?

This research is being undertaken to partially fulfil the requirements of a doctoral programme in counselling and psychotherapy. This research topic was chosen because of the recognised importance of the need for up-to-date information on this chosen topic and my personal interest in the subject. The hope is that the research will inform and support greater awareness.

Inclusion criteria

The researcher is seeking participants who have experienced psychotherapeutic work and has framed the following inclusion criteria accordingly:

Participants must be experienced psychotherapists of two or more years

What will be required of research participants?

Participants are asked to take part in individual interviews in a counselling service with the researcher at a time convenient to them. The interview will be in the form of an open dialogue between the researcher and the participants. It will explore their experiences of their clients' blind spots. The interviews will last between 60-90 minutes and there will be time allocated before the interview to ask questions. In advance of the interview participants will be requested to reflect on how they experience their clients' blind spots. They will be asked not to participate in the research if they anticipate becoming distressed. Participants will be sent a copy of the findings by registered post or email and will be invited to confirm that this accurately represents their experience, to ensure that identifying information has been excluded, and to suggest any amendments that would ensure a more accurate representation. When the thesis has been submitted all participants will be given a copy of the findings. The researcher hopes to have the information published giving an account of the research findings.

Right to withdraw

Participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any point before the completed research is handed in for marking, without having to give any explanation for doing so.

They have the right to exclude specific personal material from transcripts of interviews and from findings based on such material.

If they become upset or distressed during the interview they can ask to have a break in the interview, to reschedule it for a time of their choosing, or to withdraw completely.

Potential benefits and risks to participants from involvement in the Research

By participating in this research participants may gain some insight into their personal qualities, values and characteristics, and how they understand unawareness and their clients' blind spots. The interview aims to encourage openness and self-disclosure. While this has some similarity with a session of supervision or personal therapy, it is not in fact a therapeutic session. In order to ensure the therapists wellbeing participants are accordingly asked to confirm, in the accompanying consent form, that, in the event that they need personal support following the interview, they have the opportunity to avail of low cost counselling. The researcher will recommend two such organisations based in the city centre.

Confidentiality and protection of participant information

The names of participants will be protected by using pseudonyms in the transcripts of the interviews, in the research thesis and in any publications of the research findings. Any biographical material which might identify participants or their clients will also be excluded or fictionalised. No detailed information of clients will be used.

Interviews will be recorded and stored electronically on a computer protected by encrypted password. Any email communications with participants will be protected in the same manner. Written transcripts of the interviews, and any writings based on those interviews, will be securely stored by the researcher until submission of the thesis. All electronic and written transcripts of the interviews will be completely destroyed after a period of three years.

Interview material may be the subject of subpoena or freedom of information request, and the researcher has legal reporting obligations in the event of disclosure of past child abuse or risk of present child abuse.

Confidentiality will also be breached if the participant discloses suicidal intent during the interviews.This research is being supervised by Stephen Goss PhD and Rupert King (DPsych) and is being funded from the researcher's own resources.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent.Person, please contact: Metanoia Research Ethics Committee 00442088323085

Appendix XXXII Workshop Application Form

IACP CPD Recognition for External Events / Courses Application Form

A person proposing to organise a course / event (Organiser) applies for CPD recognition for the course / event by competing the IACP CPD Recognition Application Form. Please support the application with the course brochure and any promotional materials that might be relevant.

Completed applications including supporting documentation should be submitted by post or email to IACP Development & Innovation Department, Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy, First Floor, Marina House, 11-13 Clarence Street, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin at least six weeks in advance of the proposed date for the course / event.

TITLE OF EVENT / COURSE

Psychotherapists' Lived Experience of Moments of Self-Awareness and Psychological Blind Spots

LOCATION / VENUE, DATE(S)	
Location:	Galway
Venue:	Lets Get Talking Galway
Dates:	February 2020

ORGANISER CONTACT DETAILS, BIOGRAPHY / ACCREDITATION DETAILS (If applicable)

Full Name: Melanie McGovern

Address: 32 Grattan Park, Salthill, Galway.

Website: www.galwaycounsellingpsychotherapy.com

Telephone Number: 0876402646

Email address: melaniepsychotherapist@gmail.com

Information for the invoice (if different than above):

Do you wish to advertise your event on the IACP Website in external events section? Yes

Education / Qualifications Details:

Doctoral researcher in psychotherapy by professional studies

Counselling and Psychotherapy MA

Optometry BA

Holistic Counselling and Psychotherapy (Dip)

Nutrition (Dip)

Accreditation Details:

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF THE EVENT

The following workshop aims to discuss psychotherapists' perceptions of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots.This workshop will serve to disseminate current findings from the research and existing theory related to the phenomena. The intention is to create a deeper understanding of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots within a psychotherapeutic context. This may enhance treatment approaches and interventions by creating more awareness concerning the subject.

The objectives of this workshop are manifold;

To investigate ones' lived experience of moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots.

An open discussion about the development of moments of self-awareness

Exploration of one's' understanding of psychological blind spots?

Dissemination of the doctoral research findings including analysis of transcripts.

Education of a therapist's perceptions of both phenomena from a psychotherapeutic perspective.

SPEAKERS / FACILITATORS (If applicable)

(Evidence is required that the presenters and / or facilitators have the expertise to deliver the learning objectives using the methods chosen.)

SPEAKER / FACILITATOR 1

Full Name: Melanie McGovern

Contact Number: 0876402646

Email address: melmcgov@hotmail.com

Biography / Credentials:

Educational

Doctoral researcher in psychotherapy by professional studies

Counselling and Psychotherapy MA

Optometry BA

Holistic Counselling and Psychotherapy (Dip)

Nutrition (Dip)

Experiential

Owns a private practice

Regular presentations commensurate to doctoral standard

Managing Optometrist in city centre practice for over a decade

Qualified Sailing Instructor

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Describe the learning outcomes to be acquired as a result of attending the course / event and how they link to good professional practice.

To investigate moments of self-awareness and psychological blind spots that are observed within a clinical environment.

To explore psychological blind spots that may prevent self awareness and that are predominant in today's society.

The goal of the workshops is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied.

To disseminate researcher's findings to date and encourage a further exploratory discussion.

To draw conclusions from the findings and make recommendations for psychotherapists and future research.

Educate the participants awareness and heighten knowledge on the subject matter.

Why am I doing this workshop?

My research is being undertaken to partially fulfil the requirements of a doctoral programme in counselling and psychotherapy. This research topic was chosen because of the recognised importance of the need for advanced information on this topic including my personal interest in the subject. The hope is that the research will inform and support greater awareness. The workshop is one of the products of my research. It will be a platform to disseminate my findings and open further discussion on the topic.

LEARNING / METHODS

Which Learning / teaching methods will be used e.g. lectures, workshops, tutorials etc.

Power point

Interactive open discussion

Phenomenological exercise

Written reflection

Review

Critical feedback both verbal and feedback sheets

PROGRAMME / SCHEDULE / AGENDA

An outline of the educational content

Introduction and Contract

Power point overview of the topic

Awareness of this topic from miscellaneous psychotherapeutic modalities

---

Break

Review research transcripts and discuss felt/immediate sense

Phenomenological dyadic exercise- participants experience/understanding of moments of awareness and psychological blind spots

---

Written reflections of the therapists lived experience of the phenomena and how it enhanced their work

Break

Power point- dissemination of findings including main themes

A full schedule for the course/ event, indicating start and finish times of each activity

---

Introduction and Contract 30mins

Power point overview of the topic 30mis

Awareness of this topic from miscellaneous psychotherapeutic modalities 30mins

---

Break 15mins

Review research transcripts and discuss felt/immediate sense 30mins

---

Phenomenological dyadic exercise- participants experience/understanding of moments of awareness and psychological blind spots 30mins

---

Written reflections of the therapists lived experience of the phenomena and how it enhanced their work

Break 15mins

Power point- dissemination of findings including main themes 30mins

METHOD OF EVALUATION (feedback form, quiz or other form of assessment)

Verbal feedback

Written feedback form s

Open reflective discussion

SPONSORSHIP – provide a list of sponsors if applicable

Self funded

OTHER INFORMATION REGARDING THE COURSE / EVENT

Proposed Number of Attendees for the event:	Eight per workshop

Contact person for making reservations and enquires (link to the online reservation)

Melanie McGovern via email and mobile melaniepsychotherapist@gmail.com

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Fees and fees breakdown (what is included in the price, e.g. materials, coffee breaks, lunch)

Free of charge

Coffee and teas provided

APPLICATION FEE

This fee is non-refundable and the fee is per event. If you wish to apply for a recurring event, this needs to be clarified within the application form and the fee must be multiplied by the amount of the events planned. There is a discount of 25% for recurring events / courses.

Event organised and / or hosted by a commercial organisation(s): €300 ☐

Event organised and / or hosted by a commercial educational provider: €170 ☐

Event organised by a registered charity with registration fee: €100 ☐

Event organised by a registered charity if the event is free: €50 ☐

Event/ training organised by a Public Service Body, relevant to Counselling and Psychotherapy, offered free of charge to participants: no application fee ■

For short courses (14 CPD points or less) / online courses, it is possible to obtain an annual IACP CPD recognition of the same training course with an annual fee of €500 ☐

Number of events applying for:	2
Total Application Fee applicable:	zero

(Please note this fee is non-refundable.)

METHOD OF PAYMENT: Credit Card by phone OR Cheque included with the application form.

DISCLAIMER

By my signature, I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to the IACP GUIDELINES FOR APPROVAL OF CPD EVENTS.

By submitting this form, I attest that the information provided is true and accurate.

Signed on behalf of Organiser:	Date:
Melanie McGovern	November 2019

OFFICE USE ONLY

Application meets IACP requirements listed in IACP GUIDELINES FOR APPROVAL OF CPD EVENTS.

CPD Points Awarded for Event / Course:	2

Signed: Iwona Blasi	Date: January 2020

Application doesn't meet requirements listed in IACP GUIDELINES FOR APPROVAL OF CPD EVENTS on the following grounds:

Signed: Date:

Documents will be destroyed after an appropriate period of time as per the IACP Retention policy. Do not send any original documents unless specifically requested. Keep a copy of any application forms/correspondence you send to IACP for your own records.

Appendix XXXIII Key Studies Analysis

A comprehensive literature review was conducted using trusted databases (the academic journals listed by Taylor and Francis, Routledge, ETHOS, academia.ie, biomedical central, Pubmed, PsychINFO, science direct, Scopus, APA Summon on Middlesex University's webpage) that included interdisciplinary searches. Relevant studies are presented in the key studies analysis to allow for a general overview of the empirical studies. The other studies were archived and used as background information and included in the book synopsis.

Author/s	Title	Date	Publication	Type of study	Major findings	Key thoughts	Weaknesses	Strengths
MacMahon, P	Integrative therapists' clinical experiences of personal blind spots: an interpretative phenomenological analysis.	2020		Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)	Findings revealed how all participants' accounts contributed to revealing the complexity of the phenomena of blind spots. Blind spots were experienced as 'Avoidance' as a way of coping with feelings of vulnerability. Conclusion that all of the themes could be	Explored therapists' experiences of difficult and upsetting sessions. The efficacy of this study is visible in bringing to light participants' blind spots, i.e. personal beliefs and assumption that are not readily available to the person who	A very limited number of published studies that describe how the therapist's subjectivity is implicated in their work. The methodological challenges of exploring blind spots due to their implicit nature. IPA research is limited by participants' capacity for self-	Literature review includes a range of psychological disciplines such as; social psychology, developmental psychology, and relational psychotherapy. The strength of this IPA lies in its ability to identify meanings and develop understandings through sustained interpretative engagement (Finlay, 2011).

Author/s	Title	Date	Publication	Type of study	Major findings	Key thoughts	Weaknesses	Strengths
					conceptualised as a fear of being vulnerable due to unresolved personal conflicts.	holds them.	expression Lack of sample diversity amongst the participant's gender and clinical modalities could have implications for the rigour of this research or viewed as a limitation	Participants were experienced psychotherapists The validity of the research was aided through a second interview with the participants which took place approximately one month later to allow time for new insights. Commitment to rigour (Yardley, 2008) through immersion in the research process and use of reflexivity.

Author/s	Title	Date	Publication	Type of study	Major findings	Key thoughts	Weaknesses	Strengths
Amos, I.	"That's what they talk about when they talk about epiphanies": An invitation to engage with the process of developing found poetry to illuminate exceptional human experience.	2019	Counselling Psychotherapy Research, 19(1), 16–24.	IPA with Found Poetry	Contribution of technical knowledge to the academic discourse related to the current psychological understanding of epiphanic experiences. The experiential knowledge offered here is considered particularly relevant to professionals working in caring or therapeutic	This study highlights the 'extraordinary potential for healing, which has come to be associated with the type of sudden and profound transformation experiences'	IPA is concern with accessing participants' cognitions contradicts the intentionality of a phenomenological study (Willig 2001; Langdridge 2007).	Methodological choice of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) which enabled the ability to identify meanings and develop understandings through sustained interpretative engagement (Finlay, 2011). Found poetry aided IPA. The strength of this style of presentation invited the space and time to notice, observe and

Author/s	Title	Date	Publication	Type of study	Major findings	Key thoughts	Weaknesses	Strengths
					roles.			reflect on the impact of research poetry. None of the participants were previously known to the researcher which reduced the potential bias.
Galatzer-Levy, R.M	Concluding remarks and future perspectives.	2017	In Leuzinger-Bohleber, M. Arnold, S. Solms, M. The Unconscious. A bridge between psychoanalysis and cognitive neuroscience.	Review of 2014 Sandler Conference	This conference challenged Freudian thinking e.g Freud's implicit assumptions that consciousness is an ordinary accompaniment of mental life is replaced with the	Freud published a series of masterful studies that clearly demonstrated that mental processes that are actively barred from	Little information is made explicit as to the process of rigor these presented papers endured.	The quality of the papers presented at the conference were of a high standard. The exploration of the relationship between these two forms of unawareness is an important topic for

Author/s	Title	Date	Publication	Type of study	Major findings	Key thoughts	Weaknesses	Strengths
			Chicago		idea of consciousness as a rare mental process occurring primarily in times of challenge as a means of slow thinking	awareness result in symptoms that differ from conscious mentation		clinical investigation (Galatzer-Levy, 2017).
Lu, C., and Wan, C.	Cultural Self-Awareness as Awareness of Cultures Influence on the Self: Implications for Cultural Identification and Well – Being.	2017	Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin Singapore	Four studies that developed scale measures of cultural self-awareness and personal self-awareness	Research added nuanced knowledge to the self awareness literature by highlighting the different possible sources of self – understanding.	Individuals with high cultural self awareness would have a clearer sense of how their cultural experience has shaped who they are (Lu and Wan,	Cultural self-awareness showed no simple, zero-order association with well being. This lack of total effect could signal the presence of suppressors.	This research added nuanced knowledge to self-awareness literature. Awareness of how culture has influenced different aspects of their self, such as values and behaviours

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						2017).		
Wellington Kunaka, S.W.	Looking for their blind spots! How trainee counselling psychologists engage in informal reflective practices.	2016		Grounded theory methodology within a constructionist framework.	The need to engage in personal development groups and classroom discussions were facilitative in highlighting blind spots. This research found being surprised by something from the blind spot instigated questions in relation to one-self.	Blind spots as a regular strategy of self-monitoring, The realisation or opening of a blind spots was expressed as if it represented coming out of darkness Opening blind spots and creating awareness was expressed through	Historically GT subscribes to a positivist epistemology with little reflexivity with a lack of a literature review in advance of the research. Additional expansion on the various presentations of blind spots in the findings may have supported the rigor of this study further.	Grounded theory approach to provide the opportunity to present variation in data. A rigorous process of data collection and analysis in a simultaneous process, conceptual understanding of the data following an inductive reasoning approach, observations for core themes in the early stages of data analysis, constant

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					There was a fear of the dangers of not seeing or knowing what was in the blind spot. A moment of awareness emerged for the trainee therapists when a blind spot was revealed.	aspirations to achieve competences, be effective in their intervention skills and to develop as professionals'	Further member checks would have heightened the truth value of this study. The findings in this study are not generalizable The validity of the research was limited to the collection of data at a single point in time, omitting the changing views and attitudes of respondents	comparative analysis influenced by sampling procedures and building of a theoretical framework from the categories Relativist position provided opportunities for diversity (Barnett, 2012), in which multiple perspectives increase the value of the final theory as it is seen as inclusive (Charmaz, 2006).

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							(Dash, 1993).	
Gallrein ,A.M, WeBels, N.M Carlson ,E.N & Leising, D	I still cannot see it- A replication of blind spots in self-perception	2016	Journal of Research Personality	A person centered approach within a social reality paradigm. This current research replicated the findings of its original study using a larger set of personality ratings (107 items were measured), a more diverse set of informants (participants from different contexts and two different	This study proved that the phenomenon of blind spots is robust across participant samples, cultures and language communities Evidenced that the average person is partly unaware of how positively or negatively others view them or in the unique way they are seen	The size of distinctive blind spots varies within individuals. Individuals with poor awareness had larger blind spots and were more 'out of touch' with the perceptions others actually had for them	A limitation of this study was that they selected targets based on how much they were known by the informant.	Their study expounded on their original research using a more diverse set of informants and from different cultures to investigate blind spots. Emphasized the generalizability and robustness of this study and therefore the phenomenon of blind spots, they computed the overall effect size across all known studies to

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				cultures (American and German) and languages (English and German), including different ethnicity (62% Caucasians, 23.3% Asian. 8.5% African Amercian, 0.8% Hispanic). across these.				date. This study proved that the phenomenon of blind spots is robust across participant samples and language communities Two different studies samples were conducted

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Neville, H.A Cross, W.E	Racial Awakening: Epiphanies and Encounters in Black Racial Identity	2016	Cultural diversity and ethnic minority psychology University of Illinois	Radical life narrative interviews	Epiphanies experience that increase critical awareness. New insights leads to different behaviours, that led to establishing a sense of connection to something broader than the individual self, the 'aha' moment or epiphanic experience or a wow moment.	The study is among the few empirical studies to provide a discussion of triggers of self awareness. Identifying awakening prototypic stories and for counsellors in terms of providing opportunities to assist individuals in the meaning	An obvious gap is evident in the literature for a psychotherapist's perspective. Further member checking may have supported the rigor of this study	sixty-four participates were gender balanced from four different countries. Selected participants from different locations to reflect the diverse range of experiences. This strategy helped to minimize sampling bias

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						making process.		

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Chilton, J. M.	Transformation from within: A concept analysis of epiphany.	2015	Creative Nursing, 21(1), 15–20.	Qualitative To explore the concept of epiphany using a modified version of Walker and Avant's (2005) concept analysis procedures.	Evidence suggests this phenomenon can be profound, liberating, and enduring. People who experience an epiphany tend to be able to make rapid, positive changes, which could potentially lead to better health outcomes. Nurses are in a unique position to recognize epiphanic experiences and	This transformative experience produces behavior change that can impact wellness An epiphany can be more than a solution to a problem; it can inexplicably transform lives in an instant	Although, within the health care profession, no psychotherapeutic perspective which decreases the clinical implications of this study.	Nursing research has not considered the potential of epiphanies as a behavior change theory to improve health behaviors and wellness. Health care professionals are in a position to identify the defining attributes and antecedents of an epiphany and to encourage individuals through the process by initiating therapeutic

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					to help individuals integrate this life-changing occurrence.			measures.
Tratter, M.D.A	A Place for existential ontology? Emblems of Being and implicit world projection.	2015	Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology	Critical Review	The concept of implicit world-projections reflects a phenomenological truth that experience with clients shows that	Motives, conflicting feelings and forces are buried out of awareness. Heidegger	Overuse of esoteric jargon	Examines many core concepts of existential ontological processes

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					meaning appears in a tangible way, as a memory, fantasy, dream, projection or many other ways and it is secondary if they are conscious or unconscious	would refer to this as pre-ontological. It can include life defining relationships or core beliefs that are integral to a person's being beyond what a person explicitly understands or expresses		
Wagas, A Rehman A	Association of Ego Defense Mechanism with Academic Performance, Anxiety and	2015	Cureus Pakistan	Cross sectional study Questionnaire with three sections	These results confirm Parekh et al., (2010) findings, who found that neurotic defence	Confirmed their finding as their study concluded that higher levels of anxiety	Advised that more research is recommended to explore neurotic defense style (amongst medical	409 medical students participated 30 medical students undertook a pilot study

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Malik A	depression in Medical Students: A mixed method study			And Focus groups And Individual interviews Analyzed with SPSS	style were more evident than either mature or immature mechanisms amongst medical students.	including neurotic ego defence was more prevalent amongst the female population	students). Spreading awareness of ego defenses is important to overcome immature defense mechanisms	The hierarchies of defense mechanism show that mature defense styles was associated with increased academic results, lower depression and anxiety.
Cramer, P.	Defense Mechanisms: 40 Years of Empirical Research.	2015	Journal of personality assessment Williamstown USA	Investigated mental processes that occur outside of awareness. Thematic Appreception Test (TAT) and manual coding systems	To summarize Cramer (2015) study, three theoretical assumptions about defense mechanisms that are all supported when defenses are assessed from	Defense mechanisms have been defined as unconscious, cognitive operations that change across developmental periods, that	More qualitative information Would have been helpful	These results support the validity for assessing and researching defense mechanisms including other blind spots. Cramer, (2015) tested the assumption, that the function of defense

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					narrative stories coded with the DMM were; a) Experimentally induced stress increases defense use b) Defense use protects children from psychological distress and c) excessive use of age – inappropriate defense is associated with psychopathology in adults, adolescents, and older children.	have a protective function, and that can be studied using both methods of personality assessment and experimental paradigms		mechanisms is to protect the individual from anxiety and emotional distress. In a clinical hypothesis (Cramer, 2015) which predicted higher defense scores following a stressful incident would be clinically assessed as showing less psychological distress. This prediction was Supported the utilization of defenses mechanisms, as determined from

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								defense coding, was consistent with theory: the participants who used more defense mechanisms at the time of stress showed fewer signs of psychological distress supported.
Ames, D.R and Wazlawek, A.S	Pushing in the Dark: Causes and Consequences of limited Self-Awareness of Interpersonal Assertiveness.	2014	Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin New York USA	Face to face Dyadic Negotiations	Research concluded work on self-awareness and meta-perceptions suggests that self-awareness exists but is limited, in part because others' views of	Concluded that some accounts propose that we often fill in the blanks by assuming the best about ourselves and our behavior (self-	Challenge of decoding noisy signals shows why self awareness might be limited and the mechanisms of self enhancement and projection show that errors in	Four studies c Increased rigor

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					us are hard to read and our attention or interpretations fall short	enhancement) and assuming others see us similarly (projection).	meta-perceptions may often fall in the direction of flattering or incorrect self – views	
Gallrein, A.M, Holstein, M, Carlson, E.N &Leising, D	You spy with your little eye: People are 'blind' to some of the ways in which they are consensually seen by others.	2013	Journal of Research Personality.	Profile analysis A social reality paradigm	Investigation into 'blind spots', acknowledged that people's knowledge of themselves is limited. Their study found clear evidence for the existence of distinctive blind spots in people's perception of themselves and	This study concluded that a 'blind spot' is an appropriate term to describe a particular kind of interpersonal perception. The study states how people are unaware of	More future research needed to investigate how people may benefit from the knowledge that others have about them	Distinction between normative and distinctive blind spots

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					their reputation	how other people see them.		
Cramer, P.	Psychological maturity and change in adult defense mechanisms.	2012	Journal of Research in Personality Williamstown USA.	Assessment of two longitudinal studies from the institute of human development	Change in the use of defense mechanisms between late adolescents and adulthood was assessed in two different longitudinal studies from the institute of human Development. The results were virtually identical	Both the use of identification (introjections) and its subsequent decrease in adulthood were found to be predicted by ego strength and committed identity, by evidence of developmental maturity at late adolescence.	It is unusual to compare results form two different longitudinal studies. The research and theory did not consider development after adolescence	The decrease in identification is consistent with predictions from the theory of defense mechanism development: defenses are related to developmental period ; once that period is concluded , the use of the related defense declines
Duval, T.S.,	Objective Self-	2012	Personality	Experiment to test	Research	A person	The experiments	Implication of

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Lalwani, N.	Awareness and Casual Attributions for Self-Standard Discrepancies: Changing Self or Changing Standards of Correctness.		and Social Psychology Bulletin CA	the hypothesis in relation to causal attribution and self-standard discrepancies	concluded awareness that the contemporaneous state of the self-to-standard comparison system is discrepant from its preferred state of self-standard identity generates negative effect.	attempts to reduce the negative affect induced by self-standards discrepancies either by changing self in the direction of standards or by avoiding the situation	are not easily repeatable	findings are important
West, R.F, Meserve, R.J and Stanovich, K.E	Cognitive Sophistication Does Not Attenuate the Bias Blind Spot	2012	Journal of personality and Social Psychology University of Toronto Canada	Two studies questionnaires including Cognitive reflection test Bias blind spots Heuristic task	There is a tendency to believe that biased thinking is more prevalent in others than ourselves.	Cognitive sophistication does not mitigate the bias blind spot and the idea that the mechanism that	Less is known about bias blind spot in cognitive domain	demonstrated indications of a blind spot regarding many cognitive biases

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						cause bias are fundamental and not easily controlled strategically		
Ilivitsky S	Making Sense of Sudden Personal Transformation: A Qualitative Study on People's Beliefs About the Facilitative Factors and Mechanisms of Their Abrupt and Profound Inner Change.	2011	Unpublished thesis, University of Victoria	interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA)	Explored brief and memorable moments that profound, and lasting personal change followed, equally known as a Sudden personal transformation (SPT). absorbed in sort of a different sort of consciousness	Given the disparate nature of the empirical literature exploring moments of awareness, the main strength of this study is its contribution of qualitative knowledge to a relatively unexplored	Use of only three participants was deemed a limitation. Lack of sample diversity. A noted limitation of Ilivitsky (2011) interview data was transcription of audio recording via a transcriptionist.	Member checking. encouraged by Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, (2002) supported the rigor and authors' interpretative claims. The results of this study do not have empirical generalizability (i.e. external validity), they are however

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						area.	For qualitative research immersion in the research findings maybe heightened due to personal transcription.	transferable to the broader literature.
Mc Connell, A.R, Dunn, E.W, Austin, S.N, Rawn, C.D	Blind spots in the search for happiness: Implicit attitudes and nonverbal leakage predict affective forecasting errors.	2011	Journal of Experimental Social Psychology Miami University Oxford, OH	Practical studies using experiential stimuli Qualitative Analysis of data	People decisions are often guided by conscious evaluation (explicit attitude) and yet their automatic response are influenced by unconscious (implicit attitude)	One's implicit attitudes, motives and self-views resist conscious access	Gender imbalance in participants may have influenced the research	This study provides direct empirical support for Gawronski&Bodenhausen, (2006) theoretical argument that unconscious evaluations help shape spontaneous affective experience.
Vaillant,G.E	Involuntary coping	2011	Dialogues in Clinical	Report	Defenses provide a diagnostic	Vaillant, states no mental	The concept of involuntary coping	The diagnostic and prognostic validity of

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	mechanism: a psychodynamic perspective. Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience.		Neuroscience Massachusetts		template for understanding distress and for guiding the clinical management of challenging cases	status or clinical formulation should be complete without an effort to identify the patients dominant defense mechanism	mechanisms (‘the politically correct’ renaming of the now outmoded term ‘ego mechanisms of defense’) is too valuable to be discarded by neuroscience because of its association with Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis Less is known about change in defense use between	such ‘mechanisms’ in longitudinal studies more than make up for any doubt of their reliability

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							adolescence and adulthood. To produce a comprehensive list of defenses will engender semantic disagreement	
Vazire, S Carlson, E.N	Others Sometimes Know Us Better Than We Know OurselvesCurrent Directions	2011	Psychological Science Washing University St. Louis	Reviewed evidence and empirical literature concerning the accuracy of self awareness and otherperceptions of personality.	Research shows that many aspects of ourselves are hidden from conscious awareness	Increasing evidence shows that when it comes to ourselves, our blind spots are substantial.	There are gaps in our self-knowledge and some blind spots are due to a lack of information.	Reviewed the latest evidence concerning the accuracy of self awareness and other perceptions of personality.
Legrain, L. , Cleeremans, A.,	Distinguishing three levels in explicit self	2010	Consciousness and Cognition	Designed three different self-recognition tasks	Research concluded that the notion of self-	People who are aware at an explicit level	The experimental tasks are not easily repeatable.	These tasks are the first attempt to evaluate the external

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Destrebecqz, A.	awareness.		Brussels Belgium		awareness is not a monolithic, all-or-none phenomenon but rather consists of complex ability that spans several levels of awareness.	should be able to think about themselves through the eyes of somebody else.		self in preverbal children
Timmermann, M., Naziri, D., Etienne, A.M.	Defense Mechanisms and Coping Strategies among Caregivers in Palliative Care Units.	2009	Journal of Palliative Care Liege Belgium	This study uses a qualitative and quantitative design. Using semi-structured interviews and TAT, DSQ-60	Research has stated defenses precedes coping mechanism are activated automatically and are the first defensive operation Defense mechanisms are more unconscious	Coping mechanisms may be differentiated on the basis of their status as conscious or unconscious processes and on the basis of being intentional or	More group exchange and introspection is necessary to create knowledge and awareness of one's defense/coping mechanisms It seems essential to address both the explicit and	18 caregivers in palliative care units participated

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					and constitute appropriate answers in extreme emotional situations Coping strategies allow for more conscious processes of adaptation to the environment	non-intentional operations. Also they can be determined by situation or disposition and whether they may be hierarchically arranged.	implicit aspects of the protective sphere so as to better understand the resources and weaknesses of the Ego confronted with internal and external conflict and dangers	
Fletcher, J	Epiphany storytelling as a means of reinforcing and embedding transformational therapeutic change.	2008	European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy, 3, 30–37.	Qualitative narrative inquiry	Clients report on experiences of an epiphany, particularly at the beginning of the working relationship, practitioners can	Argues for the relevance of the concept of a clinical epiphany, particularly within the diverse,	Opportunity sampling meant that the group was not a representative of the general population and there were obvious	Fletcher (2008) claims that eliciting stories of epiphanies can thus become a way of promoting change-orientation and therapeutic hopefulness amongst

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					gain valuable insights into the client's theories and values of change. Norcross in hubble et al (2002) identifies this as key to a successful therapy outcome. Heightened moments of engagement in therapy can lead to profound and transformational change	multicultural, multi faith, communities that characterize contemporary europe. Sought to shed light on the precise elements; the rare pivotal moments within therapy which lead to lasting and pervasive change. Interested in the client	bias (in terms of participant's familiarity to the researcher) and lack of gender diversity. The modest choice of 4 participants that were purposefully chosen could be deemed a limitation.	practitioners, whilst strengthening neural and somatic channels to inter-subjective healing and autobiographical change for the client.

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						narratives of in-session change which stand out as exceptionally memorable within a lengthy span		
Bargh, J.A &Morsella E	The Unconscious Mind	2008	Association for Psychological Science	Review of contemporary social cognition research	Propose an alternative perspective, in which non-conscious processes are defined in terms of their unintentional nature and inherent lack of awareness	The qualities of two unconscious process differ, the New look research states that the person who did not intend to engage in the process was therefore		Two centauries post the development of the unconscious or unintended behavior contemporary psychological science remains wedded to a conscious-centric model of the higher mental processes. This research , with its operational

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					Actions of the unconscious mind precede the arrival of the conscious mind	unaware. The skills acquisition stated that the person who did intend to engage in the process but then completed without conscious guidance was also unaware		definition of the unconscious as system that handles subliminal- strength stimulation from the environment , has helped challenge that helped to
Craig, E	The Human and the hidden: Existential wonderings about depth, soul and the unconscious.	2008	The Humanistic Psychologist.	Review	The ontological constitution of Being is a fundamental characteristic of existential duplicity of both	Everyday experience includes all that one has lived through, endured, suffered	Over-use of esoteric language.	This information shapes and influence how we live our every existence

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					showing and hiding itself.	regardless of the degree to which one is aware of or not		
Pronin E. &Kugler, M.B	Valuing thoughts, ignoring behavior: The introspection illusion as a source of the bias blind spot	2007	Journal of experimental social psychology Princeton USA	Explored people's lack of awareness of the limitations of their own introspection. Research supported the contention that the bias blind spot is rooted in part in one's introspection illusion.	Their study found that only after being educated about the importance of unconscious processes in guiding judgment and action and the fallibility of introspection did participants cease denying their relative susceptibility to		Lack of verbatim elucidation removed the reader from the nuance of the findings	Four studies completed added to the robustness of findings This research supports further vide Evidence for the introspective illusion as a bias blind spot

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					bias.			
Shenton, A.K.	Viewing information needs through a Johari Window.	2007	Reference Service Review	Presents a newly constructed version of the Johari window to delineate a typology of information	The paper finds that information needs fall into five broad categories.	Over several decades, the Johari window has been used in a range of discipline. It investigates a	More information is required to enable users crystallize their thinking	The Johari window is one model that has potential for enabling users to gain greater insight. No previous paper

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						region called the 'blind self' which includes characteristics of the person that are known to other people but not to the actual individual		has applied Johari window to the investigation of information needs
Murray, K.A	The unencumbered moment and life change	2006	Unpublished doctoral dissertation University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.	qualitative enquiry	What has become apparent from the information attained in this study is that once an individual enters an unencumbered moment, all internal debates	findings expressed the epiphany as indescribable… absolutely, totally powerful, totally clear	A frequent slippage away from the fidelity to the phenomenon was evident (Levitt, Motulsky,Morrow, &Ponterrotto, 2017).	An insider view was used which advocates that it was important to understand the personal logic that an individual gives events. Diversity was noted in the participant

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					about option and choices, all internal conversations and resistance and are removed and positive, second-order life change occurs.		Exact methodology not stipulated. Half of the participants were known to the researcher.	sample which was gender balanced, from varying family backgrounds, with extreme social histories, and from several different locations.
McDonald , M.G.	Epiphanies: An existential philosophical and psychological inquiry The nature of epiphanic	2005/ 2008	Unpublished doctoral dissertation .University of Technology Sydney. .Journal of Humanistic	Qualitative narrative inquiry	Epiphanies are an experience of profound change and transformation in self-identity… a sudden, abrupt, and positive transformation that is profound and enduring..	McDonald's study is significant as it is an infrequent example of qualitative enquiry into the lived experience of an epiphany	Participants were non therapists for the sample. This may have had inferences for clinical implications in that his findings were deduced not from experiences in a therapeutic	Consensual validation with the participants and credibility checks carried out by academic colleagues and a consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist with 25 years' experience (Elliott, Fischer,

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	experience		Psychology, 48(1), 89-115.		profound insight or perspective into consciousness.		context. A limitation of this study could be noted as the presentation of his findings supported pre-formed characteristics or hypotheses. The interpretive categories were often poorly matched to the corresponding interview extracts.	&Rennie, 1999; Yardley, 2000). His acknowledgement of his own experience added to the transparency of the study.
Twenge, J.M., Catanese,	Social exclusion and the deconstructed	2003	Journal of personality and Social		Demonstrated decreased self-awareness among	This study provided evidence that		

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K.R, &Baumeister, R.F.	state: Time perception, meaninglessness, lethargy, lack of emotion, and self-awareness		Psychology		individuals in negative social situations is a defensive strategy designed to buffer the self from the acute distress	social situations can lead individuals to avoid awareness of the self, thereby relieving rejected individuals of a potentially unpleasant confrontation with their social shortcomings and failures.		
Rochat, P	Five levels of self awareness as	2003	Consciousness and Cognition		Claim that self-awareness is not	Also differentiates		

Author/s	Title	Date	Publication	Type of study	Major findings	Key thoughts	Weaknesses	Strengths
	they unfold early in life				singular, but multiple. Its development is a continuous and dynamic process that can be divided into gradual levels	between the implicit self and the explicit self. There are three levels in the explicit self-awareness. The first is the identified self, the permanent self and finally the external self. The latter being when one becomes aware of how he is perceived by other individuals		
	The Bias Blind	2002	Personality	Quantitative	Three studies	Individuals	Lack of verbatim	Three separate

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Pronin E., Lin, D., Ross, L.	Spot: Perceptions of Bias in Self Versus Others		and Social Psychology Stanford USA	Surveys and Questionnaire	conclude that individuals see the existence and operation of cognitive blind spots more in others than themselves.	believe in the realism or objectivity on their own views, and are therefore likely to assume bias on the part of those who fail to share those views.	descriptions were unavailable	studies including four surveys supported the integrity of this research
Silvia, P.J and Duval, T.S	Objective Self-Awareness Theory: Recent Progress and Enduring Problems.	2001	Personality and social psychology review University of Southern California	Critical Review on core theoretical developments 1990-2000	The research summarized the links between self-awareness, attribution, and action. When people are discrepant from a	If a discrepancy was found between self and standards, negative affect was said to arise.	The review was solely concerned with situational self-awareness. The Objective Self Awareness (OSA) theory said very little about how one way of	Alternative scales and conceptualization recommended.

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			LA		standard, they make attributions for the cause of the discrepancy appraises the likelihood that the discrepancy could be rapidly reduced.	When expectations regarding improvements are unfavorable people will try to avoid self-focus	dealing with a discrepancy was selected from the many coping possibilities- people either reduced the discrepancy or avoided self-focus.	
Cramer, P.	Defense Mechanisms in Psychology Today. Further Processes for Adaptation.	2000	American Psychologist Williams College Williamstown USA	Literature review Investigation of DSM hierarchical levels of defense	Using self reports on defenses is questionable considering the over-whelming evidence demonstrating distorting self-reports By offering a	Self report measures on coping strategies and defense mechanism is questionable as the self-report is biased The cognitive	The concept of ego defenses was rejected from academic psychology a number of years ago	Empirical studies showed renewed interested in ego defenses The specificity of the rules for coding makes it possible to determine both the reliability and the validity of the

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					tentative hierarchy and glossary of consensually validated definitions, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association 1994) has included a Defensive Functioning Scale (pp.751-753) as a proposed diagnostic axis	processes involved in the defense of projection were taken into social psychology and researched under the name of attribution, or later the false consensus effect		measures

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Commins, G	Thomas Mertons Three Epiphanies	1999	Theology Today CA	Biographical review	Mertons' accounts Of epiphanies ' ordinary, everyday human existence is the material of radical transformation of consciousness'	Merton described epiphanies as 'clear and immediate knowledge', 'an illumination' and 'immediate contact with the Truth'	Method of rigor not elucidated	Qualitative descriptive account
Carver, C.S., &Scheier, M.	Attention and Self Regulation: A control- theory Approach to Human Behaviour.	1981	Springer-Verlag New York	Review	It refers to heightened attention to inner aspects of the self, including one's own thoughts, feelings and motives	It has been stated that both private and public self – awareness exist.	Historical reference now out dated	It refers to a heightened attention to public aspects of the self as a social object, with an accentuated concern about how one is viewed by others
Duval, T.S.,	Opinion Change	1971	Journal of	Three	Research	Objective self-	More possible	Research

Author/s	Title	Date	Publication	Type of study	Major findings	Key thoughts	Weaknesses	Strengths
Wicklund, A.	and Performance Facilitation as a Result of Objective Self-Awareness.		experimental social psychology University of Texas Austin	experiments were designed specifically to demonstrate OSA Questionnaires	hypothesis found conditions forcing an individual to focus on himself as an object will result in self-evaluation	awareness would be an aversive state, as the probability that at least one self-standard discrepancy exists is quite high.	effects of OSA on performance of difficult tasks by an incompetent person would have been helpful	demonstrated that objective self-awareness can mediate attempts to reduce discrepancies between opinion and behaviour.