AN EXPLORATION OF THE COUNSELLOR’S EXPERIENCE OF INTEGRATING CHRISTIAN FAITH WITH CLINICAL PRACTICE

A Thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities.

2011

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School of Education
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Submitted by: Ann Scott  
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This study is based on heuristic methodology and looks at counsellor/therapists’ experience of integrating Christian faith with their clinical practice. The researcher overtly includes her own material and documents her own internal process as part of the research journey. Some of this is achieved by the inclusion of portions of creative writing.

The literature review covers a wide field, looking at the relationship between spirituality and counselling from both historical and contemporary writers. It includes both US and UK material and representation from both secular and Christian sources. It examines the ethics and the practicalities of integrating faith with practice.

Interview material is presented from twenty-two practitioners, together with that of three named academics in the field. Initially three exemplars are described in their entirety, as representatives of different groups of counsellors within the whole sample. Four major themes of interest emerged from the academic interviews. These themes were:
   a) Attention to the spirituality of the counsellor
   b) Support for the counsellor working with the spiritual dimension
   c) The effect of context, culture and language of the counselling
   d) The effect of client’s spirituality on the counselling process.

Material from all interviewees is discussed using these themes, in relation to the literature. Specific unmet needs of the practitioners are identified.

Major findings were that although counsellors with a Christian faith generally agree with the concept of their spirituality being an integral part of their work, there is variation in the level of attention paid to this. The availability of support for this integration is often problematic. Most counsellors desired more ‘safe space’ to explore the issue.

Following the heuristic process, a model linking the psychological and spiritual perspectives emerged. This has enabled the researcher to further reflect on her own integration journey. It has since been used in workshops to facilitate other practitioners in reflecting on their individual integration.

Recommendations for further research are made. The limitations of the research are noted.
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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A big ‘thank you’ also goes to my supervisor, William West, for his inspirational support and his infectious passion for the research.

Most of all I thank those who have given of their time and of themselves in interviews, feedback and the sharing of their experience. Without them there would be no thesis. I hope I have done them justice.

Ann Scott
Pembrokeshire
2011
The Author

Ann Scott is a practicing psychotherapist, supervisor and trainer working in both the Christian and secular fields. Her research interests lie primarily in the integration of faith and psychotherapy practice, and also in the research process itself. Her goal is to present research findings in a way that is accessible and relevant to practitioners.

Publications


Spring 2009  Disc world; the edge-dwellers view *Thresholds*, Journal of the APSCC (Spring 2009), Lutterworth, BACP.

Previous degrees

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PART ONE

SETTING THE SCENE
CHAPTER 1 ROOTS OF THE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

The Research

Introducing the reader to this research feels like introducing someone to a very precious and longed-for child. Only in this instance the pregnancy has been one of over five years, rather than nine months.

The whole project was born of a very personal angst; that of integrating my Christian faith coherently into my psychotherapy practice. For me this was a task with a multiplicity of levels, academic, spiritual, personal and social. On an academic level I wanted to find a way of working that had congruence with the subject matter and validity in the academic world. I also wanted to know myself better and grow in my relationship with God. Most of all I wanted to find peace with myself, peace with God and peace with all those who matter in my life; family, friends, Christian or not, colleagues and clients. I was in a place where I always seemed to be walking on eggshells. I was being careful to say the ‘right thing’ or at least in the ‘right language’, not wanting to evoke looks from colleagues or Christian friends that said that I was most definitely out of step with them. I had some ad hoc knowledge that other therapists that I had known over the years seemed to have a similar internal question. Yet it was rarely spoken about in either a professional or faith context.

The question immediately arose, what did I mean by ‘integration’? There are many meanings to that word (For example: Cooper and McLeod, 2007, Lapworth, Sills and Fish 2001, Hollanders 2000, Murphy and Gilbert 2000). For me it was recognising the various ‘selves’ that are part of my make up (Etherington 2001b) and finding a way to construct a coherent self-story (Holman-Jones 2005). This meant understanding my ‘spiritual’ self and my ‘psychological’ self, knowing where they supported each other and where they were in opposition and being able to be congruent in both worlds without losing my integrity.
I decided that if this project was to be worthwhile then it had to be more than a personal quest. I therefore formulated two main aims that I hoped it would accomplish. These were:

1. To find a way of integrating my Christian faith with my psychotherapy practice and to hold onto my integrity in both worlds
2. To throw light on the topic in general so that the findings might be useful to other practitioners who wished to work on their integration of faith and psychological understanding.

There was also the thought that clients may benefit if the counsellors/therapists were more self-aware with regards to how their spirituality, Christian or not, might affect the therapy process

If this was to be a project useful not only to myself but to the profession in general and of eventual benefit to clients, then the project had to be conducted in a systematic and well resourced manner. I therefore began by reading all I could on the topic to commence equipping myself as an academic researcher.

The debate concerning the irrelevance or integration of spirituality with psychological thought has been present since the beginnings of psychology as an academic discipline and the application of psychology in clinical practice. Initially as Christianity was by far the most dominant religion in Europe, most of the early writing on the subject would inevitably have this kind of spirituality/religion in mind. Many of the early practitioners saw spirituality in a negative light (Freud 1921, Skinner 1971, Rogers 1980), whilst others saw it as either an inevitable part of the psyche or a positive resource (Jung 1933, Erikson 1950, Winnicott 1971). This debate continues in contemporary literature (Smail 2001, West 2011a, Swinton 2000, Rowe 2001, Thorne 2004).

Certainly in recent years there has been a much greater acceptance in the profession that spirituality is an integral part of many people’s experience (Grof and Grof 1989, Sperry 2001, Woodruff 2002, Foskett 2001, West 2011b, Thorne 2001), although organised religion is perhaps less favoured than a more generalised spirituality (Clarkson 2001). Many people continue to look towards their spiritual belief systems in times of stress even though society at large has moved significantly in the
direction of secularisation (Pargament 2007, Hay 2002). However, there remains a mismatch between clients who wish to have this addressed in counselling and the profession’s readiness to do so (Jenkins 2005, Jenkins and West 2006, Kingdom, Siddle and Rathod 2001).

The question then became; if there is a question ready to be asked and some literature to base the research on, how should one research such a topic? It seemed clear that if the topic was about integration, then the methodology needed to allow the exploration and inclusion of numerous different elements in an attempt to work out how they fitted together. Therefore a qualitative pathway was chosen, in order to safeguard the richness of the data. From the wide array of possible qualitative methodologies I looked for a way of working that was congruent with the topic of the research, was practical in the context and could allow the exploration of meaning and spiritual issues. I finally settled on the heuristic methodology of Moustakas (1990) as one that was ‘fit for purpose’.

Although this formed the backbone of my way of research I found that in reality my process did not follow the route described by Moustakas exactly. It seemed that Moustakas envisages a process that on paper at least looks quite linear, going through six distinct stages until a ‘creative synthesis’ emerges (perhaps best described as a new holistic expression of understanding of the meanings and details of the experience under examination). I found that my path was more cyclical, going through the stages repeatedly and each time emerging with a slightly different perspective on the topic. Finally I arrived at a stage where I collected together all my new understandings, found in a section of this thesis called ‘emergent thoughts’.

Slowly this project evolved. It was never really about finding a research question. I needed to construct a fitting way of expressing my topic, but the focus was blindingly obvious to me. I knew my angst so well! Having found a ‘fit for purpose’ methodology and got my support systems in place, I started out on what has turned out to be a most satisfying adventure. I have come out at the end of it all a very much changed person, with my angst more or less settled, but just enough remaining to keep me on my toes, keep me alive to future growth.

In essence this thesis is the story of that journey, interwoven with the stories of those I meet along the way. It documents what is going on in the field (i.e. with
counsellors/psychotherapists who have a Christian faith) and how that resonates with my own experience. It is I think that resonance that causes me to reflect and the reflection gives space for growth and change within me.

As a psychotherapist I work closely in relationship with my clients, focusing on being present (Rogers 1980) for them, being as available as I can manage. However, I am not purely person-centred in my approach and there are times when it is as if I hover above the interaction, working out what exactly is going on in the dynamic. So there is this constant in-and-out of the relationship that it is so subtle that it often feels as if both happen at the same time. This kind of dynamic is reflected in this research. The relationship I have with it is also constantly in-and-out. Sometimes I am thoroughly immersed and at other times more analytical and again the two states overlap and meld into each other. Yet I am aware of the difference.

This I think relates to the part of me that was once a scientist, the part that likes order and predictability. Yet within those sections when I am slightly removed from the stage of the research, I hope that my specific voice can still be heard. The finished thesis is definitely not just a record and analysis of bald facts. There is a great deal of my presence permeating the writing.

It was important to me as well that the voices of those I interviewed were heard. Consequently there are many quotes from them as I work my way through the journey.

Through the course of the research I have found parts of my personality that I did not really know existed. I have found an ability and a freedom to write creatively in a way I have never done before. This creative writing has enabled me to express my state of being much more accurately than I previously could. It is as if I have found a new voice, a new way of communicating. Samples of this writing (labelled CW) are placed throughout the thesis to illustrate my internal process at various stages in the research.

The emergent thoughts that come out of the research process are an expression of what I have learnt not just from the findings, but from the experience of the research itself. They also include consequential steps as I continue to move forward in my journey and provide a way to help other clinicians to think about issues involving integration.
Original contribution to knowledge

Finally at the end of the journey some material emerges that I hope will be of use to the profession, to those who want to work on their spirituality/psychological integration. Major findings were that although counsellors with a Christian faith generally agree with the concept of their spirituality being an integral part of their work, there is variation in the level of attention paid to this. The availability of support for this integration, both formal (from supervision and/or training) and informal is often problematic. Also, those that straddle the counselling/Christian faith divide often feel like edge-dwellers. Most counsellors would value more ‘safe space’ to explore the issue.

The researcher

Traditionally when writing a thesis, it has been the convention to keep the researcher almost invisible and not to use the first person when writing descriptions, findings or analyses (Pumphrey et al 1997). However, in many qualitative approaches, the researcher is regarded as having a particular perspective, and as such will have a vital role in the process of the research.

"The researcher is an extremely important component of any research effort. Personal characteristics may have a profound impact on the outcomes of the research.”

(Braud and Anderson 1998)

It seems therefore important that I introduce myself as fully as I can in order to show how I arrived at the research question, what in my experience was instrumental in prompting me to explore a particular area. Why this and why now?

I was brought up in a family where the Christian faith was a matter of duty, with no real understanding of church doctrine or even the possibility of a personal relationship with God. There were some, what I would call ‘folk beliefs’ tangled up in there such as, “You must go to church at Christmas and Easter in order to keep on the right side of the Almighty”. It all seemed very impersonal and was rarely talked about. It was just something we ‘did’.

During my university days I began to question and search for deeper meaning and came across evangelical Christianity for the first time. I encountered people with a faith that was alive to them, meant something in the whole of their lives and wasn’t just a matter of a visit to church on Sunday. Over a period of about a year I realised that I
could have a personal relationship with God. I made a commitment to Him and so began a very important part of my life’s journey. I was twenty years old at the time.

This being so, I have been a Christian in the evangelical tradition for all of my adult life (I am now in my late 50’s). I think for many years my faith was a pragmatic one. I prayed and read my bible regularly, stuck more or less to church doctrine and stayed within the socially acceptable norms of my church. In general it worked, but I have to admit it wasn’t always particularly exciting. I had a lingering doubt about my acceptability, both to God and to other people. Approximately fifteen years ago I was a member of a Church which was quite conservative in its doctrine. I did not really fit the mould of ‘Good Christian wife’ in this setting. I became unsettled and less sure of myself. Then a wonderful thing happened that changed my view of myself for ever. I read Philip Yancy’s book, ‘What is so amazing about grace?’ In it he says

*There is nothing I can do to make God love me more... and there is nothing I can do to make God love me less.*  
(Yancy 1997 p 70)

This resounded through me. I was loved and accepted by God come what may. Since then, this has been my bedrock belief. Not only do I read it in the scriptures (NIV: John 3:16), but I experience it in my life every day. The consequence of this is that I no longer worry whether I am acceptable, whether the questions I ask are ‘politically correct’ in the church context. I don’t go out of my way to disturb, but my identity lies in my relationship with God. Relationship with others, although important to me is not the defining factor it once was. In psychological terms I think I had established a firm attachment (Bowlby 1969) and from it I could go out and safely explore those parts of my world that were previously off limits.

For much of the time in my thirties and forties I was involved in pastoral care. Over the years it became obvious to me that although faith was a huge support to many people when dealing with personal problems, some seemed not to be helped by it. In fact, because their faith did not cure their pain, they were sometimes left not only with that pain, but with a feeling of failure and guilt as well. As the years went by numerous hurting people came to talk. I had little idea as to how to help them and realised very quickly that I could do more harm than good if I was not very careful. So I trained, firstly on Christian counselling courses and then an MA in Integrative Psychotherapy. As part of that process I spent four years in personal therapy and was immensely helped by it.
This produced a dilemma. I knew that the most important support for my life was my relationship with God, yet the facing of my inner demons and the finding of a healthier way to be in the world came not through prayer or ministry or theological teaching, but through secular therapy. So I had two ‘truths’ to live by and I wished to find some understanding of how I could put these two together.

I found that I did not really have an arena to explore this in. My psychotherapy/counselling colleagues did not understand the importance of my faith to me. Neither were my church friends able to grasp why I had a problem. In fact it was as if discussion itself was dangerous. If I expressed doubt about any of the church doctrines, rather than have the space to work out what I really did believe about certain things and how my psychological knowledge might fit with the theological, I was more likely to be prayed for. This was good in some ways but was also an effective weapon in shutting up someone who might disturb the status quo. I appeared to be living in two countries without common language (Griffith and Griffith 2002) and when I tried to translate one to the other a huge amount of material just got ‘lost in translation.’

At this time I was living in Belgium, a country with three official languages, French, Flemish and German. I operated mainly in the English speaking expatriate community. So I was very well aware that to understand a ‘foreign’ concept in depth, one needed more than the ability to translate word for word. What was needed was the skill of bilingualism and an understanding of that concept in context. Overtime it became clear to me that if I was bilingual in the two worlds of counselling and Christian faith, then maybe I could make some sense of how they might fit together.

I first began to look at the issue in my Master’s dissertation (Scott 2005) and I found a number of therapists who also had struggled in this area. Like many dissertations it produced more questions than it answered. I began to read more widely. The practicalities of doing serious research at this point seemed insurmountable. Although I speak French reasonably fluently I was aware that I did not have all the nuances of the language. I had the black and white words, but not the grey. This is why I worked in English as a therapist, as accurate understanding of the client is I believe a precursor to forming a good therapeutic relationship. How can one empathise if one doesn’t really get the exact shade of meaning? Similarly if I was going to interview people about a subject that might be difficult to express, then I had to do it in English.
This in practice meant working with a UK university. The logistics looked prohibitive. University websites were not particularly helpful in finding a department/supervisor who might be interested in supervising me for a topic that included spirituality/Christianity and psychotherapy/counselling in its title.

I carried on reading and decided to email authors of papers and books on the issue, working in British universities, with an interest both in counselling and spirituality. As I was looking at integration I did not want to create a split by having two tutors, one with a theological and one with a counselling interest. I was aware that I was going to be living in one country (with its own constitutionalised internal splits) and studying in another.

Figure 1.1

Evidence of the deep cultural split I lived in at the beginning of the research

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I looked for a place that could accept me ‘in my entirety’. I also needed somewhere that could accept a remote student, one perhaps only appearing on campus for a monthly visit. Eventually I found Dr. William West at Manchester University.

Integration has been somewhat the theme of my life. When I was in therapy, the focus was on finding parts of myself long denied and integrating them into a more healthier whole. I had grown up with a ‘be strong’ script firmly embedded, to use
Transactional Analysis terminology (Stewart 2000). Any part of me that was vulnerable, gentle or unsure had been safely boxed away. Thus when stress occurred and these more vulnerable sides of my character emerged, I found the ensuing chaos very difficult to deal with. The work of therapy enabled me to embrace them as integral parts of myself, valued for the insights and depth they gave me. This self-awareness and development of my 'softer side' was essential if I was to work as a psychotherapist. My psychotherapy training, chosen long before I had any idea of what might happen in therapy, was integrative in its nature.

There seemed to be benefits in what I knew of many different schools of psychology (I already had a BA in psychology) and I was not convinced that any one of them had all the answers. When I looked back on my previous career as a science teacher, although my first degree was in chemistry I was happiest teaching a broad sweep of science, looking for links between areas that would aid understanding and I was often criticised for being ‘too generalist and not specialist enough.’ Even in my church affiliation I found it impossible to say precisely what denomination I was. Over the years I have attended many churches because of our travels and I was never very interested in the labels they conveyed. Always my focus was on what was in common rather than what was different. My question would be, “Does this church allow me to develop my relationship with God?” rather than, “Do I agree with all the doctrinal teaching here?” My life journey really does seem to have been about the healing of splits in both knowledge and experience.

It was with this background then that the area of exploration and finally the research question began to emerge. This exploration was enormously helped by having a peer group of PhD students, run in

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**CW1.1**

*William’s Group*

- So, you are welcome.
- This is the group.
- This is what we do.
- We just are.
- Sometimes we ‘do’ within the ‘being’
- But it is the being that is important.

**This is the place**
- To find refuge,
- From the storm,
- From ourselves.
- To allow ourselves to get lost in the company of like minds,
- And in that company, find ourselves again

**This is the place**
- Where I found my voice,
- Able to think
- Forbidden thoughts.
- And in their expression find a freedom
- To continue the thinking until clarity came.

---
Manchester by Dr William West. It gave me a space to try out ideas, to say ‘the unsayable’ and not to be dismissed (See CW1.1). I also found a mentor (Dr. Ken Evans) who enabled me to bring all the elements of my life together, spiritual, religious, academic, personal and cultural and look at how each area influenced the others. I did not have to split anything off. In conjunction with my academic study, I have continued my work as a psychotherapist, supervisor and trainer, initially in Belgium, but since 2008 in the UK. Finally I live, study and work professionally on the same side of the English Channel. I find it interesting that my choice of location is Pembrokeshire, right on the Welsh/English language frontier, reflecting I think my acceptance of and comfort in living where two worlds meet.

I have found time and again that the spiritual is evident in the room in therapy sessions, whether I am working in a Christian counselling centre or in private practice. Asking me to leave my spirituality outside of the room seems a nonsense. I might as well be asked to leave my leg in the corridor! Anecdotally I had some knowledge that others struggled to ‘put their two worlds together’. I was curious. Did they do what I did? Did I really know how I did this in any case? The PhD provided me with space to look at this very personal problem, but right from the beginning I could see that my thoughts might be useful to others. As it was important to me that the study had direct relevance to clinical practice (McLeod 2001b), I was encouraged to proceed, acting in the researcher-practitioner model as described by Nelson-Jones (Nelson-Jones 2001).

The answers to “Why this and Why now?” became evident. “This” was because the understanding of how my two ‘truths’ might fit together was important to how I conducted myself as a therapist, how I worked with clients and how I understood humanity; “Now” was because the topic was becoming insistent. I thought about it all the time. It was pertinent to my every-day work. The opportunity and funding became available and I had the support I needed to proceed. Practically the way forward was fraught with difficulty. I encountered major health problems that limited my mobility severely. I had to have two hip replacements due to arthritis and then suffered a dislocation of the hip on three separate occasions. Following these I had to wear a full leg brace for considerable periods, unable to drive or even walk more than just short distances. The research journey took on a shamanic quality (West 2004) as the pain of the splits I was investigating in the counselling world seemed to be lived out in the disjointedness of my body. The positive outcome of the difficulties was that I was, as it
were, ‘set aside’ from normal life and I had an enormous amount of time to just ‘be’ and allow the heuristic process to unfold.

My physical difficulties became a metaphor for the continuing research. Dislocation happens because there is an underlying weakness in the muscle. This could be by neglect and misuse or trauma. The actual trigger for that dislocation need only be tiny (I just got up from a chair!).

Also, although sometimes the hip in its socket can be very painful, it is nothing like the pain of dislocation. And the overwhelming feeling when the joint is put back together is one of utter relief...all that stress and strain is magically gone. However the joint is fragile and needs tender care whilst it strengthens. But more than a year down the line it really does feel secure. So what does this say to my attempts at being an integrated person?

Firstly keeping the two parts of me together is sometimes painful. They can grate on each other. If I have not paid attention to them or I suffer a trauma – a shock to my ‘psychological’ or ‘spiritual’ self – then the joint can become unsupported and the danger of dislocation (splitting) is high. It does not take much to push them apart. Once dislocated the strain is immense as nothing seems in its rightful place. Thoughts just don’t join up and it is distressing. When those things come together again it is utter relief, like a feeling of coming home and again the joint needs special attention for a while until it becomes stronger. Then regular exercise is enough to keep things in place.

So I think the steps for me were:-

1. Years of confusion and not attending to how my faith did and did not fit with my psychological understandings and no forum in which to exercise those thoughts. The muscles were very flabby!
2. Finding out that someone who I had revered all my life as an upright Christian, had been a child abuser (the trigger).
3. Resulting from the above shock, perceiving anything to do with Christianity as bad, persecutory, hypocritical, etc, yet knowing in a very profound way that I would describe myself as Christian. This was a very painful place, a real dissociation of selves. It lasted a long time.
4. Staying in that painful place long enough to recognise what it was.
5. Deciding I was ready to face the pain of integration.
6. Having the help of others to put the pieces back together.
7. Recognising that things were together, if not perfect.
8. Continuing to strengthen the ‘joint’ by finding places to talk and process how I live my life in two domains
9. Finding acceptance of the imperfect places. It is good enough to function well.

So the research project was set. I knew the area I wanted to research. I had the opportunity to work with someone who was sympathetic to my life perspective. I could do it in a way that allowed me to remain embedded in my profession. This was very important to me as I wanted to be continually in touch with both colleagues and clients. It felt like starting a great adventure and the first step was to go and look at what others had done before me, what was already known and more importantly where the gaps in knowledge were. What could I contribute that would be of use both to the profession and to academia? This question was so overwhelming it almost stopped me in my tracks! But the urge to find an answer to my own personal angst was great and provided the momentum to begin.

Practical notes

There is a difference in the spelling of counselling (UK) and counseling (US). For the sake of clarity and accuracy, in this thesis, the UK spelling is used except when a direct quote from an American source is given or an American reference is used.

For the purpose of this project the terms counsellor and psychotherapist are used interchangeably. This seems sensible as the definition of such terms is at present unclear within the profession. Also the focus on the work is how such individuals integrate their faith and their practice, not on what ‘psychological school’ they come from or how they trained.
THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis structure is as follows:

Part 1  Setting the Scene

Chapter 1  Introduction to the thesis

Introduction to the research and the person of the researcher

Chapter 2  Literature review

This includes historical and contemporary views on the spirituality/counselling relationship and existing models of integration. It addresses positive and negative aspect of including spirituality in counselling and the ethical issues that arise. It also examines the support system necessary for counsellors/psychotherapists to do this work.

Chapter 3  Methodology

A rationale for the use of heuristic methodology is presented, together with the details of both the intended and actual procedural routes. Details of the interviewees are given. Practicalities of dealing with the data are described and ethical considerations are addressed.

Part 2  Findings and Discussion

Finding and discussion together form a very large section of the work.

Chapter 4  Introduction to the Findings and Discussion

Rationale for the decisions made in the presentation of the research data.
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<td>A short section giving the background to all of the practitioner interviewees and the rationale for the decision to place them into three groups.</td>
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<td>The exemplars</td>
<td>Introduction to the exemplars, giving the rationale for their selection. This is followed by the presentation of three exemplars, one from each group of practitioner interviewees.</td>
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<td>The academic interviews</td>
<td>Presentation of material from interviews with Brian Thorne, Alistair Ross and John Swinton, with the emergence of a frame-work that is used to structure later discussion.</td>
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**Part 3**

Endings

Chapter 10 Emergent thoughts

Self-understandings, the emergence of a model and the application of that model for other practitioners.
This includes a review and critique of the methodology, the findings and emergent thoughts.

It presents the surprises that emerged in this project and looks at the limitations of the research. It ends with recommendations for training, supervision and practice.

Chapter 12  Final Thoughts

A final acknowledgement.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

As would be expected, my initial literature review preceded the main thrust of my research project. However, the field is a large one and constantly growing. Therefore literature gathering continued through the duration, culminating in a final push as I started to write the thesis. This process had a number of benefits.

1. I am firstly a practitioner and this meant that my research activities were very much part time. By spreading my literature search over a long period it meant that I continually stayed attached to my research topic, when the practicalities of life and client work tended to pull me away from it.

2. It gave me time to digest the literature and come to a clearer understanding of what had been covered in the past and where present research interest lie.

3. Some of the literature was researched after the interviews with practitioners were conducted. This meant that I could then include areas of study that were important to the practitioners in the field, but which I had previously not considered.

Generally speaking I used the on-line services provided by the John Ryland University to access bibliographies and on-line data bases. I also used Zetoc and Google Scholar. I kept up to date via journal alert systems such as SARA, by attending research conferences and networking with others in the field as much as possible. The main area of interest was “The counsellor’s experience of integrating Christian faith with clinical practice” but the details of the research question emerged as the project proceeded. This is in line with the intended heuristic approach to the process.

This research topic sits on the cusp of at least two very large bodies of knowledge, those of psychological and theological understandings of the individual. It touches on not only secular counselling and psychotherapy but also Christian pastoral counselling. There is also a large amount written on the integration of the two major perspectives, and on the personal integration of different parts of the self within the individual (practitioner). There are ethical questions to be asked if the counsellor is to work safely within the spiritual dimension. What about their supporting framework? This
might bring in material from training and supervision literature. So, the question that needs to be asked is “How much of this really relates to the actual research question?”

Like many research students I felt the task of writing a relevant but sufficient literature review was overwhelming, rather like the research question itself. In order to contain this review to a manageable length I needed to make a number of decisions as to what needed to be included. These were as follows:-

Firstly, the research needs to be set in context. Therefore a short history of the literature pertaining to the relevance of spirituality to counselling and psychotherapy is given. As the research was carried out in the United Kingdom I have tried to include as much from European sources as possible. It is necessary to include also much from American sources, although here there is a tendency for the research to be quantitatively based and this is a piece of qualitative research. Findings however remain useful providing good background material.

The US system is interesting as there are two separate streams of resources available. There is material available from US Christian Universities. They seem to be conservative in their viewpoint and to run almost completely separately from the main secular research institutions, producing ‘Christian Counsellors’ who tend to follow a biblical model of counselling, rather than an integration of faith and secular psychological theories (Pawlinson 2010). We have no institutionalised or academic parallel in the UK even though there are many different Christian based counsellor training organisations (see the Association of Christian Counsellors website: www.acc-uk.org).

There is a wealth of material from Pastoral counselling sources accredited by the American Association of Pastoral Counsellors (AAPC) and from mainstream secular US universities. It is from these latter two sources that most of the US literature is here presented. Historically there has been hostility between the two streams, that is Biblical counsellors (Conservative Christian counsellors) and mainstream Christian psychologists, with each denigrating the other’s work. However in recent years there has been some movement towards each other (McMinn 2001). Even though there is some convergence, the conservative Christian thread would still see the care of the soul being primarily in the domain of the church and psychological theories as sometimes useful but always defective models of the human psyche (Pawlinson 2001). However, it is interesting to note that pastoral counselling remains a major provider of
Mental Health Care in the US (Woodruff 2002) and Pastoral counsellors accredited by the AAPC are highly qualified.

The typical education for a US pastoral counsellor would consist of a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university, a three year professional degree from a seminary, a specialised masters or doctoral degree in a mental health field and a minimum of 1375 clinical training hours (AAPC website: www.aapc.org). This is in contrast with the requirements for accreditation with the British ACC, where the minimum level is only 200 hours training on a recognised course and a minimum of 50 clinical hours, rising to full accreditation based on 500 hours training and 500 clinical hours (ACC website: www.acc-uk.org). With the higher academic requirements for Christian counsellors in the US, it is not surprising that much of the literature in this field is US based.

Also, perhaps the fact that the place of Christianity in North American culture is very different from that in the UK is pertinent here. More Americans attend Christian church regularly and a higher percentage of the general population profess a belief in God (Swinton 2001). To give some idea of the difference here, figures for regular church attendance are: US 43% (Gallup 2010); UK 10% (BBC News Channel 2007). So although there is a complete separation between church and state in the US, it seems that it is still more within the social norm to at least have an outward expression of faith. Taking all this into account, the appropriateness of some of the literature to a British project has to be carefully evaluated.

Secondly, it seems fitting, to look at the British pastoral counselling literature as this is where writing on counselling practice within a UK Christian context appears. Also Pastoral counselling has contributed historically to the formation of a professional base for counselling by its connections with the British Association for Counselling (BAC), now the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). The strength of this influence has lessened over the years, but BACP still has a thriving division of practitioners interested in all forms of spirituality. This is the Association for Pastoral and Spiritual Care and Counselling (APSCC) which produces its own magazine (Thresholds) and holds a successful and popular biennial conference. Current ASPCC membership is approximately 840 individuals, with 50 member organisations and a circulation of about 1250 per issue for ‘Thresholds’ (Personal Communication from C Jenkins, Chair of ASPCC and Editor of Thresholds 2010).
Even though there is such evidence of grass-roots interest, because of the fragmentation of the discipline between evangelical and more liberal elements and the lack of sustained academic interest in the area, the UK literature is rather sparse (Foskett and Lynch 2001, Jenkins 2006).

It seems appropriate that Pastoral counselling literature is included because in doing so it avoids the faith/academic split that seems almost inevitable when looking at the literature in this topic. The inclusion of pastoral care literature also fits the breadth of the sample for this study. One definition of Pastoral counselling that I found helpful was that of Brian Thorne, who states:

*Pastoral counselling is explicitly shaped by a particular religious tradition or with someone who explicitly wants to engage with their spiritual connectedness.*

(Thorne 2001 p 437)

This is amongst other things, is what my interviewees engage in.

Thirdly, there is support for the inclusion of spirituality in therapy work from the psychiatric field, both in the US and in the UK (for example: Ellison et al 2010 {US}, (Swinton 2001 {UK}). This is noteworthy for two reasons. There is an obvious overlap between psychiatric and psychotherapeutic care of the individual, with the difference for many being a matter of degree of mental and emotional disturbance rather than a difference in kind, e.g. mild to severe depression. Also, the roots of pastoral counselling both in the US and the UK evolved from those working in psychiatric hospitals (Foskett 2001). It follows then that at some level its influence is relevant to what happens in the therapy room. So although this work majors on the counselling/psychotherapy arena, some literature from the mental health sector will be included.

Lastly, I have included little from theological literature as this study is not about particular theological frameworks. It is about the individual beliefs of therapists interested in the research topic and how they interpret and act on those beliefs in light of counselling knowledge and experience. Appropriate theological principles will be examined only when relevant to particular therapist’s experiences.

Bearing all this in mind, the sections of the Literature review will be as follows:-

**SECTION 2.1:** Definitions and assumptions of Spirituality and Religion, including different understandings of the terms
SECTION 2.2: Provenance of the spirituality/counselling relationship
SECTION 2.3: Contemporary views on what integration means to the process of therapy and to the person of the therapist.
SECTION 2.4: Recognition or non-recognition of spirituality in present day counselling
SECTION 2.5: The contribution of Pastoral Counselling literature
SECTION 2.6: Existing theoretical models for integrating the spiritual into the rest of human experience
SECTION 2.7: Positive and negative aspects of including spirituality in clinical work
SECTION 2.8: Culture and language
SECTION 2.9: Ethical Issues
SECTION 2.10: Support for the therapist working in the spiritual dimension
SECTION 2.11: Summary
There is a tendency in the psychotherapy and counselling worlds to give the message that spirituality is “OK” but religious beliefs are “Not OK” (Zinnbauer et al 1997). In line with this there has been a significantly upward trend in the number of articles looking at spirituality and a comparable downward trend in those dealing with religion in the years 1965-2000 (Weaver et al 2006).

There is debate about the meaning of the terms ‘spirituality’ and ‘religion’, but there seems not to be definitive agreement on this (Swinton 2001). In general terms in the counselling world, spirituality seems to refer to the individual, experiential relationship with something beyond the self which is growth enhancing (Luckoff, Turner and Lu 1993, Schreus 2002). In terms of Christianity this would be a personal relationship with God. Religion on the other hand is seen as tradition, organisation or formally structured institutions. These are often perceived to inhibit human potential (Pargament et al 2005). More positively religion can be seen as the vehicle for the expression of human spirituality (Swinton 2001).

Both spirituality and religion are about our belief systems and because of this, are related to therapeutic work (West 2009). However, the concept of spirituality is perhaps the more relevant as like counselling and therapy it addresses personal relationship (Schreus 2001). There is evidence that the concepts of spirituality and religion have considerable overlap and in fact nearly all religions are concerned with spiritual matters (Richards and Bergin 2005, Schreus 2002) and Pargament reminds us that historically, religiousness encompassed spirituality (Pargament 2007). For some, such as atheists, spirituality can be a reality not connected to traditional religious structures (Tanyi 2002, Schreus 2002).

Despite the onslaughts of modernism, religion and spirituality remain an important factor in the lives of many people (Hill et al 2000). This is in contrast with those in the mental health professions who are overall less interested in spirituality than the general population (Seybold and Hill 2001).

This thesis targets the Christian faith specifically, rather than spirituality in general, because it is where my interest and my pre-research knowledge were
greatest. Other equally fascinating studies could be done with respect to other forms of religious and/or spiritual experience.

Before beginning we need to decide on what we actually mean by terms such as ‘Christian’, ‘Religion’ and Spirituality. One definition of the term ‘Christian’ would be:

*Adjective: Of persons and communities: Believing, professing, or belonging to the religion of Christ.*

*(Oxford English Dictionary 1989)*

However, how this belief might be expressed will differ not only between person and person, but also between different Christian groupings.

In this thesis then, the following understanding of these terms will be used.

*Religion* refers to formal and/or structured ways of expressing belief systems, which may or may not be an expression of individual and/or group spirituality.

*Spirituality* is concerned with experiential relationships beyond the self. These are often individual, but can occur in groups.

*Spirituality and Religion* are not mutually exclusive. The two are often interconnected, one supporting the other.

*Christianity* is a specific kind of religion and spirituality where the followers belong to the religion of Christ and have a belief system based on the Bible. This faith may have a variety of forms, depending on the specific interpretation of the bible by individuals/groups. This interpretation will not be defined by the researcher, but the participants will self define as necessary.

It is pertinent to remember that under the two major ‘umbrella’ perspectives of spirituality and psychotherapy there are within each, many groupings/religions/denominations/psychotherapy schools etc that have very large differences between them on how they view healthy human development (Hurding 1986, West 2000). This inevitably affects how the possibility of integrating psychological and faith based factors is viewed.
SECTION 2.2: PROVENANCE OF THE COUNSELLING/SPIRITUALITY RELATIONSHIP

Historically, the mental health of individuals was seen as the business of pastors and theologians, being voiced in terms of ‘the care of souls’ (McLeod 1998, West 2000). This link between the faith of the individual and his/her psychological well-being was for the most part lost as the positivist scientific view gained ground from the beginning of the 19th century (Richards and Bergin 2005). This being so, the inclusion of the spiritual dimension has inevitably been a contentious issue (Shafranske and Gorsuch 1984). The fathers of what might be called the three original schools of psychological thought all found religion to be at best irrelevant to psychological health and at worst destructive. For example:-

Freud saw human nature as basically destructive (Jeske 1984) and was very dismissive of religion.

“Such (religious) ideas which put themselves forward as dogmas are not deposits from experience or end products of cogitation; they are illusions, fulfilling the oldest, most powerful most pressing desires of the human race: the secret of their strength is the strength of those desires.”

“The premises of the religious system......represent a wonderful relief for the individual psyche when the never entirely surmounted conflicts of childhood arising out of the father complex are lifted from its shoulders.”

(Freud 1921, p36-37)

From the Behaviourist school, Watson (1924) and Skinner (1953) found religion an irrelevancy. They saw human beings being driven by sociological factors and ruled by cause and effect (Jeske 1984); they have no real autonomy of thought or action and are considered neither good nor bad.

Behaviour is shaped and maintained by its consequences. This means that we have moved forward by disposing of autonomous man. (Skinner 1971 p18-19)

Later behaviourists softened their approach to allow the inclusion of reflective thought (Jeske 1984) but religious or spiritual material is just not mentioned by them.

Carl Rogers, from his person-centred stance, would see the individual as basically good and with the right conditions being able to reach his/her full potential, without any kind of divine assistance. Rogers came from a Christian fundamentalist background, but moved away from this belief system as a young adult (Thorne 2002).
There is a body of steadily mounting research evidence which by and large supports the view that when these facilitating conditions are present changes in personality and behaviour do indeed occur.

We can say that there is in every organism at whatever level an underlying flow of movement towards constructive fulfilment of its inherent possibilities. In human beings too there is a natural tendency towards a more complex and complete development. The term that has most often been used for this is the ‘actualizing tendency’. (Rogers 1980 pp 116-118)

It is interesting to note that Rogers began to include more of the spiritual in his thinking

Our experience in therapy and in groups, it is clear, involves the transcendent, the indescribable, the spiritual. I am compelled to believe that I, like many others, have underestimated the importance of the mystical, spiritual dimension. (Rogers 1980 p 130)

He also recognised the validation of this experience from other fields.

From theoretical physics and chemistry comes some confirmation of the validity of experiences that are transcendent, indescribable, unexpected and transformational – the sort of phenomena that I and my colleagues have observed and felt as concomitant of the person-centred approach. (Rogers 1980 p 132)

It needs to be noted that although the main thrust of psychological research ignored any input from the spiritual dimension, there has been a thread of interest in this area throughout. Most early theorists did not major on the topic, but mention it in the course of their writings. Development of this interest can be traced back to the time of James in 1901 (West 2001, Wulff 1997). For example Jung, Winnicott and Erickson:

"Man has everywhere and always developed spontaneously religious forms of expression and the human psyche from time immemorial have been shot through with religious feelings and ideas. Whoever cannot see this aspect of the human psyche is blind and whoever chooses to explain it away or “enlighten” it away has no sense of reality.” (Jung 1958 p 124)

Erikson, when speaking about the developmental stage of integrity, says,

"It is a post narcissistic love - not of the self – as an experience which conveys some worldly order and spiritual sense, no matter how dearly paid for.

The style of integrity is ‘the patrimony of his soul’." (Erikson 1950 p 268.)
Winnicott tends not to use the word ‘spiritual’, but rather talks about the creative space that is present in all relationships. It is something beyond the ego boundary of the individual.

The potential space between baby and mother, between child and society, between individual and society or the world, depends on experience which leads to trust. It can be looked upon as sacred to the individual in that it is here that the individual experiences creative living. (Winnicott 1971, p 139)

It is these cultural experiences that provide the continuity in the human race that transcends personal existence. (Winnicott 1971, p 135)

...great feelings of pleasure belong to the intimate bodily and spiritual bond that can exist between a mother and her baby. (Winnicott 1964 p 32)

So then, the evidence of spirituality being recognised in the world of psychotherapy and counselling is there from its earliest beginning, even if some of the main protagonists felt it either unhealthy or irrelevant. Certainly the interest was expressed as a general interest in spirituality rather than in any particular form of religion.

However, until about the 1960’s, in general, spirituality and psychological thought were seen as incompatible (Spero 1990). Psychology research followed the scientific paradigm as it sought to establish itself as a true science (Rennie 1994a). Since then there have been a variety of efforts that have shown the relevance of spirituality to psychotherapy (for example: Calestro, 1972; Bergin and Jensen 1990; Spero 1990; Luckoff, Turner and Lu 1992) and since the 1970’s, more academic papers have been written linking the two areas (Luckhoff, Turner and Lu 1993, Bjork 1997, Boadella 1998, Tisdale 1990). Wulff in his all encompassing review of psychological history and theories comes to the conclusion that:

What cannot be denied is how comprehensively religion reflects ordinary human experience; of the body and other aspects of the self; of other human beings and a person’s relation to them; and of the many facets of the natural world.

(Wulff 1997 p 633)

However, there are those who continue to say that spirituality should remain within the realms of theology and only the effable, that is ‘that which can be described in words’, should be the domain of psychology.

There is very little point trying to talk about them (the notions of soul or spirits) in anything other than an essentially theological context. I have nothing against
theology - but it is, or at least in my view should be, different from psychology.
(Smail 2001 p 49)

…and also, from a Christian perspective:

No conceptual synthesis or essential equivalence can be developed between the
two disciplines (Psychology and theology) because the intertwined factors to be
interpreted represent fundamentally different levels of reality.
(Van Deusen-Hunsinger 1995 p 236)

Yet strong voices for integration remain. From a Christian perspective the
psychiatrist, Frank Lake, developed a model integrating his Christian beliefs with
psychodynamic theory. His intent was:-

To create a model which correlates the biblical material concerning Christ and
the Churches witness to Christ and obedience to him on the one hand, with the
sum of our knowledge of human personality growth and development and the
disorders that affect them on the other  (Lake 1966 in Yeomans 1986 p 29ff)

In support of Lake, Grof and Grof asserted that spirituality is “an extremely
important and vital dimension of life” (Grof and Grof 1989 p xiii) and “We needed to
develop effective approaches in therapy that did not treat spiritual experiences as
pathological” (Grof and Grof 1989 p 7). However, even though dealing with spiritual
matters in psychotherapy became more widespread, it was very rarely addressed on
training courses or in supervision (Shafranske and Maloney 1990).

So overall the relationship between spirituality and psychotherapy has a
pedigree in the academic world. Despite denigrating voices the interest remained alive
and provided a platform for later research.

SECTION 2.3: CONTEMPORARY VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS
RELATIONSHIP

The whole debate on the counselling/spirituality relationship is set against a
cultural background where anti-religious books such as those of Richard Dawkins
(2008) are very popular and polarisation of attitudes towards any kind of religious belief
system has increased since the 9/11 attacks in the US (West 2011a). In general,
mental health professionals in Western society remain less religious than clients. For
example, many psychiatrists are antagonistic towards religion, seeing religious beliefs as primitive (Rowe 2001) and detrimental to mental health (Dein 2004).

Traditionally there was no distinction made between psychosis and mysticism (Grof and Grof 1989). Yet spirituality can be of high significance to people with mental health problems, even if they do not have an interest in traditional forms of religion (Swinton 2001, Foskett et al 2004). Many people look to spiritual resources in times of stress and for some it is their primary way of coping with difficulties, whether they are physical or psychological (Pargament 2007). A positive attitude toward Christianity is associated with a higher level of self-reported general health (Francis, Robbins, Lewis, Quigley and Wheeler 2004). There remains a reluctance to validate any experience that might be described as mystical as anything other than indicative of delusion or psychosis. Certainly there is overlap here and it is often difficult to assess those issues better dealt with via spiritual resources. Perhaps the best guide is to look at what would be normal/abnormal beliefs in the faith community that the client lives in (Foskett et al 2004). The community emphasis on the understanding of spirituality would again be supported by Swinton:

_Spirituality is an intra, inter and transpersonal experience that is shaped and directed by the experiences of individuals and communities within which they live out their lives._ *(Swinton 2001 p 20)*

There can still be a flavour of ‘taboo’ around the subject of spirituality in the therapeutic realm, even if it is a commonplace experience in the general population (West 2000). Even when the presenting issue brought by the client may not have obvious spiritual content, spiritual factors may underlie their world view (Lines 2006) as there is a growing interest in all things spiritual in our present culture (Clarkson 2001). However, Thorne notes that although there is more acceptance of spirituality within the counselling and psychotherapy profession, suspicion and hostility remain (Thorne 2011). Richards and Bergin would agree with this.

_In recent years there has been an acknowledgement that spirituality has been neglected when looking at mental health issues, resulting in client needs not being met._ *(Richards and Bergin 2005 p6)*
Research in the US and UK shows a growing recognition of spiritual values being important in dealing with the problems of life (Sperry 2001, Woodruff 2002, Foskett 2001) and more psychological friendly terms, such as ‘mindfulness’ and ‘being present’ are emerging more regularly in the psychological literature (Pargament 2007, West 2011a). There is some support for the view that Christian theology and contemporary psychology, although from diverse traditions, are both involved with personal transformation processes of the individual (Watts 2006). Somehow, spirituality is back on the agenda and interest in spiritual issues endures (Jenkins and West 2007). One estimate is that at least 75% of the UK population is aware of a spiritual dimension to their life experience (Hay 2002) and many see it as of crucial importance (West 2000, 2011a, Thorne 2001). There is certainly a more positive attitude towards all things spiritual in the psychotherapy profession even though problems remain (Richards and Bergin 2005, West 2011a). Echoing this interest, during the last ten years there has been a plethora of work in the area of spiritual/psychological integration, from a variety of psychological perspectives (Woodruff 2002, Richards and Bergin 2005) and concerning a number of different issues. These include:

1. Ethical considerations (Frame 2000)
2. The effect on therapy of the belief system of the therapist (Gerson et al 2000)
3. The use of non-traditional interventions such as prayer in the counselling room (Gubi 2001, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2011) and forgiveness as a therapeutic technique (West 2001)
5. The need for better training of counsellors and therapists to include the spiritual dimension (Foskett et al 2004, Thorne 2011, West 2011a).

Some of these areas are addressed in more detail below.

The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy has responded to the demand for spiritually inclusive counselling. Its guidelines on working with clients who have issues involving faith/spirituality and religion state that the approach should be the same as that with other client material, i.e. one of acceptance, empathy, suspending judgment and a willingness to enter the client’s frame of reference (Harbourne 2008).
It is therefore becoming more difficult for the profession to ignore the spiritual dimension as the need within the client base is becoming more intense and the level of dialogue at a theoretical level increases (Thorne 1998). It is just becoming too important (West 2009) and perhaps impossible to be ignored (Thorne 2001) when engaging in a therapeutic relationship. The profession needs to develop spiritually skilled counselling to meet this need (West and Biddington 2009, Benner 2001). Perhaps one of the reasons that there has been resistance to working with the spiritual in therapy is that there is a necessity for therapists to be open to uncertainty, to move out of their comfort zone into a place of ‘not knowing’ (Clarkson 2001). Yet this is surely what person-centred counsellors (and many others who have a person-centred ‘flavour’ to their work) purport to do when they accept their client totally without judgment, as set out by Roger’s core conditions of genuineness, empathy and unconditional positive regard (Rogers 1980).

**Personal Reflection**

It all feels such a struggle. In my experience, to admit to having an interest in spirituality or perhaps particularly to having a Christian faith has an aura around it of ‘coming out’ as a Christian in a professional world that still has many reservations about the whole topic. Maybe we have been too focused on our own professionalism as practitioners and researchers and not enough on client need, but perhaps things are slowly changing.

**SECTION 2.4: RECOGNITION OR NON-RECOGNITION OF SPIRITUALITY IN PRESENT DAY COUNSELLING WORK**

Thorne notes that it is almost impossible to engage in a therapeutic relationship without acknowledging the spirituality of both therapist and client (Thorne 2001) and that to duck the issue completely is no longer possible (Thorne 1998).

In more recent literature there is quite an insistence in the counselling/psychotherapy area that spirituality is relevant to therapy work. Some would go as far as saying that therapy was rather like a religion with its organised beliefs,
structures and rituals. Academics both from the UK and US and also from secular and overtly Christian institutions seem to support this view. For example:

Lines (2002) (UK Secular: Schools Counsellor)
Watts (2001) (US Secular: Center for Research & Doctoral Studies in Counselor Education, Sam Houston State University, Texas)
Lyall (1999) (UK Department of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology, University of Edinburgh: retired)

It is evident that there is a need and a desire to see people as a whole and that includes the spiritual dimension (Kelly 1995, Anderson 2007, Lines 2002, Swinton 2001, Rowan 2002, Jenkins 2011). For many, spirituality can be seen as the core of the therapeutic relationship (West 2008, Rowan 2000, 2002) and foundational to all other dimensions of human experience (Sperry 2001). It makes no sense then to separate the two perspectives (Pargament 2007). It is interesting to note that many of the founders of psychotherapy came from religious backgrounds e.g. Maslow, Klein, Buber and Rogers (Lines 2002). Although there is much diversity within human spirituality, there is also much commonality (Richards and Bergin 2005) and for some all human engagement can be seen as a spiritual activity (Lines 2002). Counselling as a specific way of relating can generate or allow a deep meeting, or as Rowan puts it:

*In the transpersonal way, the boundaries between therapist and client may fall away. Both may occupy the same space at the same time, at the level of soul.*
(Rowan 2002 p 102)

Thorne describes the therapeutic process as a spiritual journey (Thorne 2007) and although many would wish for a broad understanding of the term ‘spiritual experience’ Richards and Bergin put forward the argument that theistic spirituality deserves special attention as more than 80% of the western hemisphere would profess adherence to a theistic religion (Richards and Bergin 2005). Thus a project such as this looking at specifically Christian spirituality gains some validity.
Psychological growth and spiritual growth often go hand in hand (Ross 1993, Swinton 2007). Spirituality often helps people come to terms with human limitations, when we cannot have control over life’s circumstances or the actions of others (Pargament 2007). This is often a major part of therapy work. For counsellors who take the spiritual dimension seriously, if part of the nature of the self is spiritual, then it is an essential part of the counselling encounter (Thorne 1998, Lines 2002) and a necessity if we wish to care for the whole person (Swinton 2001). Propst et al (1992) suggest that working with clients’ deepest-held beliefs promotes healing.

Rowan has a useful picture here:

\[\text{Psychotherapy as the three-faced goddess: one face looking back to childhood and the repression and hang-ups of the past; one face looking into the present, the existential now; and the other face looking forward to spirituality and the divine, something fundamentally ambiguous and hard to contain, something much more risky and dangerous than we had supposed, something much more deep and wonderful than we had ever imagined.} \]

(\text{Rowan 2005 p 6})

If counsellors are going to be available to clients in this three-fold way, then they need to tend to their own spiritual lives because this is the resource that enables them to work in an integrated way with their clients (Thorne 1998, Sullivan 1998, West 1998) and allows them to tap into a huge resource (Mearns and Thorne 2000). In fact, doing this whilst simultaneously being aware of the client and their needs can be seen as a spiritual practice, leading to further spiritual development (West 2000, King-Spooner). Van Kalmthout would extend this to seeing person-centred counselling itself as a spiritual discipline (Van Kalmthout 2006).

Thorne goes further, seeing the Christian doctrine of the Trinity as a template for the relationship between individuals including therapist and client (Mearns and Thorne 2000). Spiritual awareness is something that has to be developed and practised over time (Rowan 2002). Understanding one’s own spirituality helps the understanding of that experience in the lives of clients (ibid). In fact, exploring one’s own belief systems can lead to congruence within the therapist, enhancing his/her ability to enter into a genuine therapeutic relationship (Eliason et al 2001). Swinton would see it as much a way of being as a way of acting with a client (Swinton 2001). Thorne talks about offering the ‘quality of tenderness’ to the client, in other words the possibility of a deep empathy and spiritual connection (Thorne 2004). Rowan is emphatic that it is not possible to ‘do psychotherapy’ if the therapist cannot at least work in the beginnings of
the transpersonal realm (Rowan 2005) and Thorne would go as far as saying that a spiritual discipline is necessary to equip the person-centred counsellor to work with clients (Thorne 2002). Swinton similarly notes that it is interpathy that is needed. By this he means actually to step into and genuinely be involved in the experience of the other and see the world from their cultural perspective (Swinton 2001).

The recommendations from the literature therefore are that:

1. Therapist prepare themselves for working in a spiritual dimension by tending to their own spiritual development
2. The development of therapist spirituality is a facilitating factor enabling the offering of deep empathy and spiritual connection with their clients.

Whatever the therapy perspective, becoming reflective about how spiritual material is affecting both counsellor and client, in other words, developing an internal supervisor on this issue, is essential to safeguard the wellbeing of clients (Lines 2006).

Swinton proposes that whether or not the person is religious, spirituality is addressing the same basic human needs for meaning, value hope, purpose connectedness and transcendence and that through this quest, the mental health of the person is maintained (Swinton 2001). He would also say that spiritual care in its broadest sense is an essential element of treating those with more severe presentations of mental illness (delusions, paranoia etc) and that this is the kind of care that can be offered in a therapeutic relationship (ibid).

Working within the spiritual dimension with clients in some respects is no different from working with any other material that the client might bring. It is simply tending to what is there (Benner 2001) and if we are to really be of use to the client it is essential that we accept their belief system (Foskett 2001). A therapist who is familiar with the spiritual terrain can accompany the client appropriately (Thorne 1998) and one who is prepared to risk some self disclosure on this topic can give the client permission to risk sharing their experience (Hay and Hunt 2000). Yet if the therapist is not sensitive to this need then the client can easily feel missed (Jenkins 2005) and will omit such material in the future (West 2000).

This was brought home to me when I was talking to a colleague of twenty years experience. He remarked that I often mused on the spiritual issues that clients brought to therapy whilst he had never come across it. It seemed important that he was an
atheist and closed to the spiritual dimension whilst I was committed to the Christian faith and worked on my own spirituality. It could be of course that no-one had ever tried to raise spiritual issues in his therapy work. Alternatively, because he was not tuned in, when they had been tentatively raised, he had missed them. As Melissa Griffith comments about her work with clients’ spirituality:

*What seems to arise naturally as a path to me may not be noticed by another therapist or, to yet a third it may seem to be a distracting detour to be avoided.*

(Griffith and Griffith 2002 pp 30-31)

So perhaps the client/therapist match on spiritual awareness was important here (Trautmann 2003).

There has been work in recent years about meeting the client at depth within secular therapy. This has been called a refinement of empathy (Hart 1999), transformational empathy (Ryback 2001), transcendental empathy (Hart 1997) and relational depth (Mearns and Cooper 2005, Cooper 2005). The presence of relational depth seems to have factors of connectedness, love, respect and intimacy most strongly associated with it (Wiggins, Elliott, Cooper and Balmforth 2009). It seems to have many of the same qualities of a spiritually aware therapeutic relationship, with the therapist being more ready to take the risk of disclosing some of his/her own process to the client (Knox 2007). The result of this is the creation of the possibility of further healing for the client (Knox 2008).

Deep empathy has also been identified as a possible indicator of the best therapeutic outcomes (Cooper 2005). In this way of working, the client is offered a specific type of relationship that allows him/her to also take a risk and access parts of themselves normally out of contact (Mearns and Schmid 2005). Congruence and openness on behalf of the therapist appears to be the key factor here (Cooper 2005), with a letting go of aims, anticipations, and techniques (Mearns and Cooper 2005).

In order to offer relational depth to a client, the therapist needs to know him/herself well and to have done sufficient personal work to integrate the different parts of the self or self-configurations (Mearns and Thorne 2000) into a coherent, congruent whole. This then allows those self-configurations to be of use in the therapy room, as a bridge into the experience of the client (Mearns and Schmid 2005). When working at relational depth, there seems to be a softening of the boundary between client and therapist (Hart 1997, Hart 1999, McMillan and McLeod 2005), allowing a
sharing of ‘existential togetherness’ (Ryback 2001); both parties report experiencing this as a ‘timeless encounter’ (Hart 1999, Cooper 2005). Most of the literature reports this as a mutual activity (Cooper, 2005, Hart 1999, Knox 2007). However, McMillan and McLeod dispute this. From their research on the client’s experience of relationship depth they found that although the therapists describe I-Thou experiences (Buber 1958) between themselves and their clients, for the clients the main focus was on self awareness. So the mutuality of the experience seems in some doubt (McMillan and McLeod 2005).

It seems then that work at a profound level is not just in the province of those who would see spirituality as one of their important resources for therapy. Both spirituality and deep empathy are about meeting clients at great depth, with the relationship and the congruence of the therapist being of high importance. Perhaps theorists such as Wilber and Rowan would not be all that far from this in their initial levels of consciousness and spirituality (Rowan 2005, Wilber 2000). However, they would see the therapists’ development of their spirituality to higher levels as being desirable (Rowan 2005). (See below for further details.) For those with a theistic spirituality, then the relational aspect of the therapy encounter would also include the Divine.

For therapists who have no interest in or knowledge of the spiritual dimension, although their intention is to offer empathy to the whole client (Cooper 2005), it must mean that they have a harder task in tending to the spiritual needs of the client. While they may be able to offer meeting at relational depth, if they deny the existence of that aspect of client experience, it will be difficult, if not impossible for them to attend to it.

The gap between therapists’ interest in spirituality and client desire to have it included in therapy is well documented (Shafranske and Maloney 1990, Bergin and Jensen 1990) and still remains (Jenkins 2005, Kingdom, Siddle and Rathod 2001). So, although therapists need to honour spirituality in therapy (Jenkins and West 2006), it perhaps more important that they are clear where they stand and accept the spirituality of clients, rather than that they must have a faith themselves (Wyatt 2002, Lines 2002, Griffith and Griffith 2002). That being so, there remains a case that therapists need to be more sensitive to this issue (Benner 2001), learning to listen and question so that clients are comfortable enough to reveal their spiritual lives (Griffiths 2005).
As Pargament puts it:

*Spirituality is part of the psychotherapy process; our choice is either to look the other way and proceed with limited vision or to address spirituality more directly and knowingly.*

(Pargament 2007 p1)

If the therapist is not sensitive to client spirituality it might mean that:

- They work in a culturally insensitive manner
- They avoid an issue that may promote well-being
- They may inhibit the client’s use of a potent coping mechanism
- They may show disrespect to the person of the client by denying part of their personhood
- They may impose their life perspective in the client (Watts 2001).

It seems then that what the literature is saying over all is that working at depth with clients is the most healing route to take and for those who wish it, this needs to include the spiritual dimension. In order to meet client need, therapists must work out where they are in the spirituality/non-spirituality debate and be open to all that the client brings. This inevitably brings up issues of competency: can you really work with a client in an area if you actively deny its existence?

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**SECTION 2.5: PASTORAL COUNSELLING**

The term ‘pastoral counselling’ can mean different things in different settings (O’Kane and Millar 2002). In the US pastoral counselling has a professional identity and a place amongst competing therapies (Lyall 1999, AAPC website). In the UK, the waters are somewhat muddied. Pastoral counselling is often used to refer to the informal pastoral work done by pastors, or by others appointed to that work within their own church setting. Some of those will have Christian Counselling qualifications (for example those accredited by ACC), others, secular qualifications. A proportion will have no specific counselling or pastoral care qualification at all. Therefore the quality of work covered by this term varies considerably from those highly qualified in both faith and psychological knowledge to those with little or no understanding of even basic counselling skills (O’Kane and Millar 2002).
These differences explain the lack of academic literature from the UK pastoral counselling sector. There are nevertheless significant contributors to the field, for example, Alistair Ross, Kellog College Oxford; Brian Thorne, University of East Anglia, retired; John Swinton, Aberdeen University; David Lyall, University of Edinburgh, retired; Gordon Lynch, University of London; Paul Ballard, Cardiff University, many of whom are to be found in theology rather than psychology or counselling departments of their various universities.

The roots of pastoral counselling are deep and widespread, covering a multitude of religious traditions, including Christianity (Ross 1999). It has been in existence as long as there have been religious traditions (ibid) and it is practised using all the major therapy models (Foskett 1999). What pastoral counselling facilitates in addition to factors common to secular counselling is that it creates a space where spiritual dimensions of experience can emerge. It allows clients to raise issues that they may suppress in secular counselling for fear of being misunderstood (Pargament 2007). So it is a space where not only psychological issues can be explored, but also issues to do with faith that perhaps cannot be easily addressed within the faith community (Ross 1999).

The Pastoral Counselling literature is relevant to those counsellors who have a Christian faith because it is unique in its overt use of spiritual resources as well as psychological understandings of the individual (Woodruff 2002). The issues brought to pastoral counselling are not particularly different to those taken to mainstream counselling, even if the language the clients use to express their concerns is different (Ross 1993). Religious resources such as prayer, scripture reading and meditation can be used more easily than in counselling that does not have the overt pastoral label. Just as in other settings though, care needs to be taken to ensure that these interventions are beneficial to the clients, that they are timed well, that the therapist and client have a shared understanding about their meaning (Swinton 2001).

Therapy /Counselling can be seen as an individual endeavour and has been criticised for that (Lynch 2002). Pastoral counselling on the other hand takes place within the context of a religious community and therefore clients have different resources and different expectations than those who are seen in secular situations. The client may come to therapy on his/her own, but he is very much not alone.
We belong to a community of faith and share in the common struggle. It is possible to trust others in our weaknesses and to share together in comfort and wisdom, being formed together in the common life. The Christian does not have to live in isolation but with friends and allies which help to guide our choices and shape our perspectives. (Ballard 1992 p 33)

As clients look for more of their needs to be met, including spiritual needs, pastoral counsellors are perhaps a group specifically fitted for this role and both counselling training institutions and religious care groups need to take note of this (Foskett 2001). It is to the clients’ benefit that a dialogue takes place between them so that the most effective work can be done (Biddington 2011). There is evidence that clients prefer a counsellor who upholds their own values and beliefs and that the great majority of people equate their mental wellbeing to the state of their spiritual health; a Pastoral counsellor trained in both clinical and religious understandings would be the first choice of counsellor for many (Foskett 2001).

There is some evidence that pastors are not always open to the connections between psychological and spiritual wellbeing. Some are happier referring their members of their churches to mental health professionals who share their beliefs and values. Pastoral counsellors would be more likely to be seen to fit this description than counsellors/therapists working in a secular arena (Stanford and Philpot 2010).

SECTION 2.6: EXISTING THEORETICAL MODELS FOR INTEGRATING THE SPIRITUAL INTO THE REST OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Although some therapists do not acknowledge the spiritual realm in therapeutic work, there are many that do. It is important that the work in this area is placed on a firm foundation.

There are a number of approaches to counselling/psychotherapy that address the integration of the spiritual with the psychological aspects of the individual. It is useful to look at both their diversity and their considerable overlap. As useful examples,
four secular models are presented. This is followed by a representative selection of models that have emerged from the Christian perspective.

**Secular models of counselling/psychotherapy**

**Model 1: Petruska Clarkson**

Clarkson produces a framework in which there is one intrinsically indivisible, whole relationship of which there are five facets. These facets are not stages but overlapping states in which the client weaves his/her own experience. All of these may be present at various times in a therapeutic relationship. Not all facets would be appropriate for every client. The therapist needs to be clear as to the client need and the choice of facet that would give the best therapeutic value at each stage of the therapy.

The five facets are:

*The working alliance is that which allows the work to continue even when the client experiences a strong desire to the contrary. It included contractual agreements between client and therapist both oral and written.*

*The transferential/countertransferential relationship which is the experience of wishes and thoughts which distorts the alliance (resistance, non-compliance etc)*

*The reparative/developmentally needed relationship which is the intentionally provided by the therapist of a corrective, reparative relationship where, previous relationships were deficient, abusive or overprotective.*

*The person to person relationship, the real I-Thou relationship (Buber 1958)*

*The transpersonal relationship, referring to spiritual or inexplicable dimensions of the relationship (Clarkson 1992 pp295-309)*

Jenkins (2011) expands on this model giving practical examples as to how the five facets might work in practice. This is useful as Clarkson does not really develop a detailed procedure as to how the spiritual dimension should be worked with in psychotherapy. However, she does give a list of implications for practice that are helpful.

*Stereotypical formulas for working in the transpersonal should not be applied, but learning must be taken from other disciplines. (She is not clear about how this might be implemented).*

*The therapeutic relationship must be central to the work, rather than adherence to particular theory or manuals.*
There needs to be an integration of practice and research, with the practitioner monitoring client responses in therapy and the practitioners constantly reflecting on their practice.

‘Schoolism’ needs to be forgotten, to promote working in a way that is informed by the client goals and perspectives. (However, Clarkson shows that the transpersonal can be worked with from a number of psychotherapeutic perspectives.)

Religious/spiritual diversity needs to be valued, the therapist being able to tolerate ambivalence sufficiently and sit in the place of ‘not knowing’. This would allow clients their choice of approach to the transpersonal.

Ask the client about their spiritual background, how they make meaning in their lives and to ‘work from where each client is’.

Spend some time looking at philosophy and gain expertise in the matter of ‘thinking about thinking’.

Training needs to be changed so that the client’s voice is heard as to what they have found helpful.

Supervision needs to be inclusive of the spiritual dimension.

(Clarkson 2001 pp 69-74)

This is useful material for the practitioner in the field. It gives some guidance as to what to actually do with a client to open up the spiritual dimension. There are some thoughts on resourcing the therapist both mentally and practically. It does not provide a detailed practical framework, but perhaps this can be gained from other sources; for example Richards and Bergin (2005) or Griffith and Griffith (2002).

**Model 2: John Heron**

Heron puts forward a theory that integrates all areas of experience of the human individual, including the physical, psychological, relational and spiritual. His research was very much based on his own experiences as he developed his research methodology of co-operative inquiry. The aim of his inquiries was to recover or mend a split between the individual and the cosmos. Reality is both One-and-Many (individual and part of the Divine whole). His approach is not specific to counselling or psychotherapy but it is relevant because it investigates the personhood, i.e. the identity of the individual as a spiritual presence (Heron 1998).
Individuals work through States of personhood that move from innate impulses, through socialised cultural roles to autonomous behaviour and finally to transcendent states of being. The individual has the capacity to move between them and they are not hierarchical, although the first four states occur developmentally before the second four (eight states in total).

Heron (1998) refers to four areas of experience:

**The spiritual:** All pervasive consciousness that includes both human consciousness and consciousness of that which is beyond it (transcendent).

**Subtle:** The capacity of the human being to engage with domains, presences, energies and powers, both within and beyond the phenomenal level.

**Phenomenal:** Things manifest in the human world, biological, psychological, cultural.

**Divine:** An integrated One-Many reality which included the phenomenal, the subtle and the spiritual.

Heron gives instructions as to how an individual can enter these different spiritual states (see Heron 1998), but he does not relate them directly as to how they might be used in a therapy session. His focus is rather on the research method of cooperative inquiry and into the inclusion of transpersonal states into various experiences of life. His particular value to this project is two-fold.

Firstly he arrives at his conclusions by research on his own experience, with the co-operation of others, therefore giving validity to his findings of these different areas of spirituality. These areas of experience are available to the individual and may be manifested in either the therapist or the client who is open to this dimension.

Secondly he gives voice to criticism of other writers in this area, specifically Wilber, who has become highly influential in the integrative field. This gives some balance and reduces the possibility of thinking that Wilber is beyond criticism. Despite this, there are similarities with the categories of spiritual experience that emerge from the works of these two men, lending more weight to their findings.

**Model 3: Ken Wilber**

Wilber has produced over the years a comprehensive model based on bringing together large numbers of previous theories, which he calls an ‘Integral theory of
consciou
sness’ that links all aspects of human existence. Within that model, psychological understanding is very important and it is interlinked profoundly with his spiritual understanding of the individual.

In his model there are ten developmental stages in the individual that can be generally grouped into three major realms: the pre-personal (instinctual) through the personal (mental-ego) and the transpersonal (spiritual) (Wilber 1997). The Centaur state holds the boundary between the ego-states and the transpersonal states. (see table 2.1). When looking at the connection between the psychological and the spiritual, his model presents four levels of transpersonal states of consciousness, which are increasingly spiritual or mystical (Wilber 2000). Each level of the complete model nests or is contained within the next level and all must be worked through in turn. As one becomes more aware, these states can become less transitory and more a way of being (Wilber 2010).

Wilber seems to indicate that the initial levels of individual growth can be facilitated by conventional Western therapy, whilst the transpersonal levels (from the Centaur onward) need to be embarked upon in a framework supported by Eastern spiritual understandings (West 2001).

One of the criticisms of this theory is of its hierarchical and linear nature (West 2004). Certainly I have found my own spiritual development not to be linear, with returns to previously attended-to issues, but perhaps from a different developmental standpoint. Heron suggests that the whole set of assumptions on which the work is built is doubtful (Heron 1996). However, such an overarching theory cannot be ignored when the topic of integration is figural.

Model 4: John Rowan

Rowan develops Wilber’s theory, using slightly different vocabulary, but the general pattern is very similar. He suggests that therapy can be a way into a different form of consciousness (Rowan 2005).
### Table 2.1 Wilber and Rowan Comparison of Stages of Spiritual Consciousness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WILBER vocabulary</th>
<th>Pre-personal Realm (instinctual)</th>
<th>Personal Realm (Mental-ego)</th>
<th>Bridge to Transpersonal</th>
<th>Transpersonal Realm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Centaur</td>
<td>Psychic/ Subtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Causal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Dual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROWAN vocabulary</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Authentic or Real-Self</td>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ultimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Self identified by family</td>
<td>I am defined by others</td>
<td>I define who I am</td>
<td>I am defined by the OTHER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I am not defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Task</td>
<td>Development of ego from nothingness, identification with others</td>
<td>Socialisation, roles and personality. Development of psychological splits to maintain control (e.g. physical/ spiritual)</td>
<td>Healing of splits of previous level Responsible for own development Emergence of authenticity Liberation and self-assertion Union of mind and body Possibility of I-Thou relationship</td>
<td>Extending, letting go of knowledge, autonomy Psycho-spiritual awareness Oneness with the source of the sensory world (deity mysticism). Boundaries permeable between therapist and client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Salvation Release as a readily obtainable experience True transcendence. Individual experiences of formless consciousness (Formless Mysticism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Union of form and emptiness (Integral Mysticism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of help needed</td>
<td>Nurture</td>
<td>Physician, Analyst</td>
<td>Growth facilitator</td>
<td>Advanced Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Priest, Priestess, Sage, Guru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate therapeutic approach</td>
<td>Psychoanalysis CBT TA Therapist with some distance</td>
<td>Relational therapies of many kinds, e.g. person-centred, gestalt, bodywork</td>
<td>Psycho-synthesis, Transpersonal, Jungian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This table is adapted from West 2004 p 60, with additional information from Rowan 2009, and Wilber 2000, 2010.*

Both Wilber and Rowan suggest that each stage has its own developmental task and therefore the individual requires different types of help to complete it and move on to the next. A further implication of this model is that clients will arrive in therapy in different stages of psycho-spiritual development and therefore different therapeutic approaches may be indicated. Most therapy takes place at the Personal level with a smaller proportion taking place at the Centaur level. At the Personal level, adjustment to consensual reality takes place and the problems of life can be tackled and found some resolution, e.g. grief, depression, anxiety some phobias etc. (Rowan 2005). Some deeper therapy involves the Centaur level where the emphasis is on personal growth rather than on resolving problems. Therapist will work to facilitate an I-Thou relationship with the client (Buber 1958) and the idea of ‘healing through meeting’ is common (Rowan 2009). Perhaps Rogers’ expression of ‘presence’ fits here (Rogers...*
1980). It is this stage that holds the boundary between the ego-based stages and the transpersonal.

A small number of therapists work in the transpersonal realm. Here the therapist is much more open to the spiritual and rather than applying technique, there is an emphasis on ‘not knowing’ and ‘waiting’. Boundaries between therapist and client may fall away. There can be a connection at ‘soul level’ (Rowan 2009). Very few practitioners get beyond the Subtle (Wilber) or Soul (Rowan) level of spiritual development. Entry to the Causal level probably needs time spent in meditation and other like practices (Rowan 2005).

It seems clear that whichever level a therapist wishes to work with in a session with a client he/she must already have personal experience of that level. So for example in order to work in a transpersonal (spiritual) way with clients, the therapist must spend time developing his/her own spiritual path, then seek contact with the client at a profound level of being. (Rowan 2002).

These models of integration seem to have considerable overlap. They talk of a developmental path that leads to increasing levels of spirituality that firstly therapists need to address for themselves. Then they can work in these areas with clients. Secondly, their complicated nature and unusual vocabulary made them somewhat difficult to access. Understanding them is made more difficult by the various authors’ use of words, giving them slightly different meanings. Certainly, the terms are better understood in the world of transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy, but the majority of therapists are not trained in this way. (Only about 10% of the therapist listed on the UKCP website have transpersonal training.) If the majority of therapists a) do not use the Heron/Wilber/Rowan vocabulary and b) are not trained in a transpersonal way, then these theories have limited usefulness in the realms of practical counselling. It is as if the ‘map makers’ have become so entranced by their creation they have forgotten that the symbols they use to describe the topography are not familiar to those who may wish to follow the spiritual trail. Perhaps the complexity of the theories is an inevitability when frameworks connecting the whole of human experience are postulated. Only the Clarkson framework seems readily accessible. This deals with the therapy relationship in terms normally used by therapists, with spirituality being a possible part of that relationship. It does not purport to be an overarching theory of integration and does not separate out increasing levels of spirituality. Rowan would
criticise it in that Clarkson does not make it clear that the therapist must have experience of the subtle level of spirituality, i.e. a personal experience of this, before she/he can enter into a spiritually-aware ‘way of being’ in therapy with a client (Rowan 2002).

**Christian-based models of counselling/psychotherapy**

There are a number of approaches to understanding the human psyche that overtly include the Christian perspective

**Mode 5: Fowler**

One that is useful in joining secular and Christian understandings is that of Fowler, a Professor of Theology and Human Development at Emory (Christian) University USA, now retired. He constructed a way of looking at Christian spirituality that was based on observation of thoughts and behaviour, rather than on creating an all-encompassing theory such as those of Wilber and Rowan (Fowler 1981). Neither does it have the evangelical overtones of many of the Christian models. Fowler’s model is a series of stages of faith that tie in with Kohlberg’s stages of moral development (Kohlberg 1963) and Piaget’s stages of cognitive development (Piaget 1972) - see table 2.2.

There are obvious correlations between the Fowler Stages and those mooted by Rowan and Wilber, although it cannot be considered a straight comparison. The meanings of the stages are different, as is their derivation, one from theory and the other from observation. However both may be illuminative for the therapist in assessing the spiritual development of a client and help in working out which kind of interventions may take their process forward. So, for example, if we look at Wilber’s Personal Stage and Fowler’s Stage 3 (Synthetic/Conventional), both are about black and white thinking (or splits) and the identification with the social group. The thinking is concrete and conventional, not wanting to be different. The task is to move from being defined by others to self definition. The understanding for the therapist may come from both frameworks. The language used within the therapy would need to be that appropriate for the clients. For clients coming from traditional religious backgrounds the Fowler material may be more suitable. Table 2.2 shows a comparison between the Wilber/Rowan stages and those of Fowler.
Table 2.2 Fowler’s Stages of Faith  
(Based on information from Fowler 1981 p119 ff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Dangers</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Possible Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1: 1.</td>
<td>Intuitive/</td>
<td>Follows beliefs of parents. Unrestrained imagination – fantasy figures in stories</td>
<td>Purposeful or unwitting exploitation of child’s imagination, e.g. indoctrination of religious norms</td>
<td>Influenced by visible faith of primarily related adults. Growing awareness of cultural practices and taboos.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>projective 3 – 7 years</td>
<td>(Ego-centric child)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2: 2.</td>
<td>Mythical/ literal</td>
<td>Takes on for self a literal rather than symbolic understanding of cultural/religious stories and beliefs</td>
<td>Over-controlled perfectionism (obeying rules). Righteousness by ‘works’. Feelings of badness or unworthiness because of mistreatment by others</td>
<td>Justice based on reciprocity important (fairness). Beliefs are focused on an external authority</td>
<td>Wilber: Pre-personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7-adolescence</td>
<td>(Emergence of concrete operational thinking)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3: 3.</td>
<td>Synthetic/ conventional</td>
<td>Adolescence to adult (Many adults remain in this stage for life)</td>
<td>Conformist belief Personality solidification Little Self reflection. Black-and-white thinking ‘Difference’ can be difficult</td>
<td>Faith provided the basis for identity Ideology is consistent but individual often is unaware of its existence</td>
<td>Wilber: Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Now involved in social world beyond family Judgment and expectation of others is very important. Autonomous thought can be lost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4: 4.</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Take on own responsibility for life beliefs and attitudes Shift from external to internal focus Self reflective</td>
<td>Can be over-confident and become narcissistic with ‘own view’ taking precedence over ‘agreed reality’ Can be full of angst and struggle</td>
<td>Tensions of group vs. individuality. Choose beliefs and values commensurate with self fulfilment</td>
<td>Wilber: Centaur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Often emerges late 30’s to 40’s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5: 5.</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Recognition of the unconscious social ‘myths’ Opening to the ‘deeper self’ Can understand symbolism of self and others that are different</td>
<td>Sees the possibility of an inclusive world but still lives in an untransformed one. Ability to see this paradox Can promote cynicism or withdrawal</td>
<td>Boundaries formed in stage 4 now become more permeable. Accepting of paradox and difference. Commitment to justice and serving others without prejudice</td>
<td>Wilber: Subtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Usually in the second half of life)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6: 6.</td>
<td>Older adult</td>
<td>Inclusive of all being</td>
<td>Often misunderstood. They are seen as subversive of the structures that the rest of society relies on.</td>
<td>Living in a way that transforms the world Often more revered after death</td>
<td>Wilber: Causal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(VERY RARE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over the years a number of Christian counselling approaches have developed, starting from the premise that faith is paramount and caring for the individual in distress grows out of a Christian world view, mostly from the Evangelical wing of the church. Hurding gives a good overview in his book, “Roots and Shoots” (Hurding 1986). He notes that there are three major strands in Christian counselling, namely nouthetic, discipleship and relational counselling. This remains helpful in thinking about the major players in the field.

**Model 6: Adams** (nouthetic)

Nouthetic Counselling can be considered the most extreme of the faith based systems and is best illustrated by, the work of Jay Adams (for example: Adams 1970, 1979, 1980, 2004, 2007). Nouthetic means, “To admonish or instruct.” This type of counselling cannot in any way be considered a model that integrates psychological and biblical understanding of the individual. Its aim is to, “Lovingly confront people out of deep concern in order to help them make those changes that God requires.” (website of the Institute of Nouthetic Studies: www.nouthetic-counseling.org). The Bible is regarded as the only textbook necessary. It specifically excludes psychology and insists that evangelism must precede counselling. In other words non-believers cannot be counselled. It is highly directive and it requires that its counsellors have an extensive knowledge of the scriptures, divine wisdom, and good will towards others. It clearly requires the client to take on the values and beliefs of the counsellor, if they do not already hold them. As such it has no place in mainstream counselling. However the Nouthetic Institute continues to publish material and it is widely used in evangelical churches, particularly in the US and perhaps has its place only within such a context.

**Model 7: Crabb** (Discipleship)

Discipleship counselling has a number of proponents (e.g. Crabb 1977, 1987, 1988, Collins 1979, 2007). The goal of counselling is not only to help those in distress, but also to encourage those clients who wish to commit themselves to Jesus Christ and to live lives consistent with biblical teaching. Larry Crabb has a clear evangelical Christian emphasis. However, his system of counselling includes material from secular counselling, particularly from a psychodynamic framework. The guiding principle is that such material must not contradict his biblical understanding. He states that man has needs for security and significance and these can only be met fully in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The aim of this counselling is to recognise the sinful nature and to be
more dependent on God (Crabb 1987). He teaches that hurt and sin are hidden in the unconscious and this is where lasting change needs to occur if the client is to become more Christ-like. The individual is not seen as a victim of the unconscious, but has choice once the unconscious motivations are revealed. Repentance, forgiveness and taking responsibility for one’s own personal choices are key to well-being. He is clear that on Maslow’s terms (Maslow 1968), only Christians can self actualise. Those without evangelical Christian beliefs can never reach their full potential (Crabb 1989). Again, this system of counselling is most appropriate in a Christian setting, where the emphasis is clear and counsellor and client share an evangelical understanding of the Christian faith.

**Model 8: Collins (Discipleship)**

Collins is someone that perhaps bridges the gap between discipleship and relational counselling. He is more eclectic than Crabb in his acceptance of psychological understandings into his counselling system, again, providing that they do not violate biblical principles (Collins 2007). He advocates mutual trust and respect between the two paradigms with the intention benefitting the clients. His work is built on the practice of general counselling skills moving through stages of connecting with the client, exploring the issues thoroughly, planning what might be the next step and then progressing to making changes. So although built on relationship he moves into a more directive style which is reminiscent of Egan’s problem solving approach (Egan 1990). His explanations of the causes of clients’ disturbance are in biblical terms and his recommendations for practice include many references to overtly Christian actions such as, “If the client is feeling guilty, has he confessed to God and asked forgiveness?” or, “If God is all powerful and in control of the universe, then the client can be reassured that there is security and a sense of peace and less cause for anxiety”. This kind of counselling may be very helpful for clients who already have a Christian faith. It encourages them to use their faith as a resource. It is far less directive than the nouthetic style and its use of general counselling skills are relevant to non-believing clients. However, it has the ultimate aim to help clients to reach their full potential by becoming “Complete in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit”. The clear inference is that those without faith cannot reach this potential. This means that it is not appropriate for the majority of the population who do not have this aim. However, for clients who wish a clear Christian emphasis it can be appropriate.
Model 9: CW (Discipleship)

Similar to Collins, is the Waverly model as promoted by the Crusade for World Revival (CWR) (Balmier 2011) and taught by the London School of Theology (*private communication, J. Penny, leader of the LST MA Integrative Psychotherapy*). This is based on the work of Selwyn Hughes (2001). Again it is biblically based, but it shows much more awareness that many clients will not have a Christian world view. It proceeds by exploring the client’s problem, understanding the reasons for its occurrence and facilitating resolution. It is only when either the context or the client’s framework is obviously Christian that biblical notions come to the fore. In these circumstances, counselling is deemed a sub-set of pastoral care and is therefore very much at home within the church context.

Model 10: Lake (Relational)

Finally, relational counselling, the third strand proposed by Hurding is represented by people such as Frank Lake (1966), Paul Fournier (1968, 1986) and Henry No-win (1990, 2000).

Lake, a psychiatrist was one of the earliest promoters of the role of the relational in a Christian based therapy. His model is based in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, with the individual initially being seen as needing to receive attention from others and in later stages of development being able to attend to others. The influence of life in the womb, our birth and our very early relationships are seen to cause turmoil that affects our lives and distort relationships with self and others. Lake views Jesus Christ as the ideal of human development and the practice of counselling is seen as both counsellor and client listening to Jesus. This model relies on basic counselling skills and also a facilitating relationship developing between counsellor and client. His explanation of the dynamic cycle, i.e. the process of gaining well-being, is explained in both psychodynamic and theological terms, specifically with reference to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is helpful in bringing psychological and spiritual paradigms together and there are some parallels here with Thorne’s proposal that the Holy Trinity forms a perfect example of what relationship should be from a person centred perspective (Thorne 2000).

There are some drawbacks to Lake’s approach. He seemed to gain little support from his peers. He is rarely referenced in mainstream journals. The idea that both client
and counsellor are listening to Jesus is attractive and may well be true if both are Christians. But what if the client is not? Lake does not address this. Also, in practical terms, following the model in application is not particularly straight forward. Lake’s diagrams are complicated and off-putting and not easily accessible to the practitioner. His system of ‘Clinical Theology’ is not taught in detail on most Christian counselling courses, perhaps because it is more than fifty years old. It was created when Christianity was far more acceptable than it is in our post-modern society and perhaps its terminology is a little outdated.

**Model 11: Tournier and No-win (Relational)**

Paul Fournier and Henry No-win were not trained counsellors and perhaps their work comes much more into the realm of Spiritual direction. Strictly speaking they do not produce models as in the sense of Crabb or Collins (see above). However they are included because they have influenced Christian counselling, particularly in the area of developing a relational approach to clients. Their relational counselling is far less directive than the nouthetic or discipleship strands and is dialogic, creating what appears to be something akin to the I-Thou relationship of Buber (1958). However, their underlying perspective is that of health coming through a relationship with God, finding their place with him (Fournier 1968) and acknowledging that we are both broken and beloved of God (No-win 2000). Both promote a self-reflective approach to counselling.

These last six models that have grown up from within the Christian perspective are widely used within the faith boundary. Discipleship counselling in particular fits well into the evangelical wing of the church. It does seem that there is some development within Christian based systems in acknowledgement of the very different world they now find themselves in. They can be of help to non-believers, but there remains an undertow that wholeness can only be fully achieved in relationship with God. Consequently their usefulness in mainstream counselling is limited, but within a Christian context they may be the most appropriate approach.

It is obvious that there is a very large gulf between the models that emerge from the secular and Christian perspectives. They are built on very different foundations and have very different views of what the ‘good life’ for the client can be (Lynch 2002). Not accepting someone else’s spiritual position as ‘OK’ in TA terms (Ernst 1971) would not be giving that client unconditional positive regard (Rogers 1961), whether that is Christian counsellor/non-Christian client or vice versa. It points to the necessity
It is evident then from research that spirituality is a dimension often denied the client in the counselling process, yet evidence suggests that spirituality fosters positive mental health (Luckhoff Turner and Lu 1992). Ignoring it can mean that the client is missing a resource that can help in a variety of ways. Spirituality can help the client cope with stressful situations, find meaning in life and manage distressing affective emotions (Swinton 2001). It can foster hope and bring a broader perspective into the life of the client (Pargament 2007). If the person’s spirituality is expressed in terms of a religion, then the religious community can assist in providing a social network (Keys and Disuse 2003). On the other hand, if the clients’ spiritual beliefs are ignored they may feel shame (Trautmann 2003), disempowered, misunderstood or even rejected (Jenkins 2005). Having a safe place to take spiritual issues can be really important as the strands of psychological and spiritual wellbeing can be interdependent. For example if there has been a spiritual violation of some kind this can also cause psychological disturbance (Pargament 2007).

Although one of the major pillars of counselling theory and practice is non-judgmentalism, it is often not accepting of those that use clinical interventions outside the cultural norm. For counsellors with a Christian faith, interventions such as prayer, meditative techniques, encouraging forgiveness and exploring scripture might come into this category (Gubi 2002). For many it would be an impossibility to exclude at least their spiritual awareness from the counselling room (Gubi 2004) even if they do not give any overt expression to their spirituality.

However, specific spiritual interventions within therapy can be helpful. For example, prayer can be understood and used in many different ways, both inside and outside the counselling session (Rose 1996). Gubi provides several examples:

- by the counsellor as a preparation and grounding for a forthcoming therapy session (Gubi 2001, Gubi 2011)
- to provide guidance for the counsellor
— to give assistance in knowing that the client and the work is not the responsibility of the counsellor alone (Gubi 2004)
— to be able to stay with the client in uncertainty and despair (Gubi 2001).

Gubi also provides some interesting statistics on the use of prayer by BACP accredited counsellors, surveyed for his 2004 paper. Of those surveyed:

- 49% prayed for clients away from the counselling session
- 51% prayed as a means of preparation for client work
- 37% prayed for guidance within a session
- 6% used overt prayer in sessions
- 24% discussed the use of prayer in supervision.

These figures give evidence to the facts that:

1. A lot of prayer is going on attached one way or another to counselling sessions.
2. A considerable amount of this is not taken to supervision (Gubi 2004 quoted in Gubi 2008, Gubi 2011). This is mostly probably due to its contentious nature (Magaletta and Brawer 1998).

There is evidence that when clients are prayed for there is a significant impact on the therapy work (Gubi 2008) and in fact, if the counsellor believes that it is beneficial towards the client, then there is an ethical question raised if they withhold it (Gubi 2011, West 2011). If the client and counsellor have a shared understanding of the place of prayer then it can be a positive experience for both within the session. It can provide a resource for the therapy, a bond between counsellor and client, containment when coping with difficulty and access to power or healing (Rose 1996). West suggests that spiritually informed counsellors form better alliances with spiritually minded clients and may therefore produce better outcomes (West 2011a). Prayer can allow the exploration of frightening issues, bring comfort in times of distress and be part of a transpersonal experience in the counselling relationship (Gubi 2004).

Likewise, other spiritual interventions can be useful such as encouraging forgiveness (West 2001, Macaskill, 2005), using meditation to facilitate anxiety reduction, having an ability to draw on the depth of spiritual convictions (Richards and Bergin 2005). Scriptures can be to encourage, challenge or help bring understanding
(Richards and Bergin 2005) and therapist knowledge of faith doctrine can be used to challenge erroneous or one-sided beliefs (West 2008, Lines 2002).

Care needs to be taken however if the spiritual dimension is to be included in therapy. Some possible risks would be:-

1. There are dangers that the boundaries of the relationship may be confused (Richards and Bergin 1997).
2. Although inclusion of the spiritual dimension could be essential to client wellbeing, it could also be a cover for other needs (Pargament 2007).
3. Counsellor beliefs and values may be imposed on the client, particularly if the power imbalance is not attended to (Gubi 2004).
4. Prayer can lead to avoidance on the part of the client, preventing a real engagement with the issues of therapy. It can take responsibility away from the individual and lead to collusion between therapist and client about assumptions on both sides of the relationship (Gubi 2004).
5. Encouraging forgiveness before the client is really ready to forgive can cause more damage (West 2001).
6. Special care is needed in settings where the counsellor may be encouraged to hold the assumption that Christian interventions are right for Christian clients (Gubi 2004).

So as with all interventions in counselling and psychotherapy, prayer and other spiritual interventions need to be approached with care. Sufficient knowledge and awareness of any possibly difficulties ensuing must be present in the counsellor. Particular attention needs to be paid to careful integration with the counselling process and the promotion of the autonomy of the client (Gubi 2011).

SECTION 2.8: CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

The culture of the therapist or the culture in which the counselling takes place may affect understandings (Richards and Bergin 2005) and the expectations clients and counsellors have of each other (Totton 2008). There is a considerable body of
literature that points to better outcomes if the client and the therapist are culturally matched (for example: Laungani 1997, Su 1998, Lowental and Rogers 2004, Farsimadan et al 2007, West 2011c), with the therapist's belief system and culture being a large factor in the counselling dynamic (Christodoulidi 2011). If the therapist's attitude is negative towards a particular cultural factor or group then this is a real barrier to forming an empathic relationship (Moodley and Murphey 2010).

Although much of the literature on culture does not specifically mention spirituality or Christianity, if culture is seen as "a network of shared meanings that are taken as reality" (Zaf 1991), then belonging to a faith/religion is just as much a 'culture' as is having a specific nationality or ethnicity. Also, spirituality itself is very much bound up with culture (Christodoulidi 2011). Differences in culture expressed as attitudes, beliefs and values can be invisible until they come up against a different one (Adler 1975, Bogdanska 2006, Zaf 1991). So a counsellor who knows about a faith only through some minimal exposure to it may not realise that those wholly committed to that faith have a very different life perspective to the general population.

There are many papers that talk about cultural competencies in counselling, i.e. the skills necessary to work across cultural boundaries (Zaf 1991, Sue S 1998, Sue D.W. 2001, Laungani 2004, Bogdanska 2006, Collins and Arthur 2010, Collins 2010) and in the US these have had a marked effect on counsellor training programmes (Collins and Arthur 2010). The consensus is that counsellors need to do specific reflective work on themselves in order to work well cross-culturally (for example Pitner and Sakamoto 2005). Again, this could equally well work across a Christian/non-Christian boundary. This ties in with counsellors in general being aware of their own beliefs and value systems (Wyatt 2002). Other important cultural competencies would include an understanding of the world view of the culturally different client and an ability to develop appropriate interventions (Bogdanska 2006). In certain instances it may be appropriate to add more specific competencies when working with particular client groups (Collins and Arthur 2010). If we are considering the Christian/non-Christian divide as a cultural boundary, then it follows that developing specific competencies might be useful if working with clients who desire to include the spiritual dimension.

This all means then that the counsellor who has a Christian faith is perhaps better placed to understand the perspective of clients of the same faith, as the extent of the shared assumptions facilitates the counselling relationship (Laungani 1997).
However, even within the same faith there can be difficulties as assumptions can still be made (Christodoulidi 2011).

Culturally, in general people in the West tend not to talk about their faith or their spirituality (West 2011a) and even if the therapist is comfortable with spiritual matters, the wider culture can silence the client (Jenkins 2011). Also, the immediate setting can have an effect. So for example some clients entering a setting that is overtly Christian may find this helpful, with the expectation that their perspective in life would be understood. On the other hand it may alienate clients who come from different perspectives (ibid). So counsellors need to reflect on what their physical setting is saying about them and what assumptions the client might be making from that.

It is not just the immediate context of the counselling room that affects the dynamic of the counselling relationship. The wider culture is also a factor. In western culture, the credibility of the ‘Grand Narratives’, i.e. overarching theories and ways to be in the world such as Christianity, is fading (Kvale 1992). The therapist is part of the social structure in which they live and work (Laungani 2004). So the counsellor with a Christian faith has always to remember that he/she is sitting in a society that is post-modern, where the belief systems of the great majority of clients will not be in an ultimate reality such as the Divine (West 2011c) and the British cultural attitudes around spirituality are often ones of distrust (ibid).

Language and culture are inextricably linked. Words are the ‘bread and butter’ of therapy. Yet meaning of words is not always shared (Laungani 2004). The language we use to speak about spirituality can cause difficulties in the therapeutic relationship. This is partly because is often difficult to describe spiritual experiences in terms that can be easily understood by someone else (King-Spooner 2001).

Language not only describes our experience, but sometimes it also shapes that experience (Lewis-Hall 2010). So working out what language and approach is appropriate in the context is perhaps the most important factor. We can make many assumptions about our client based on our culturally embedded use of language, and understandings may differ (Laungani 2004) even if both client and counsellor are Christian. When using specific spiritual interventions such as prayer, the effects of language and the connotations it may have within a particular setting need even further consideration (Gubi 2004). When talking about this in a professional context, things become even more complicated because mixing humanistic and religious language and
concepts can cause fear and prejudice through lack of understanding. For example, what the humanistic counsellor might label as existential, others might label as spiritual (Mearns and Thorne 2000). Prayer in religious terms might be considered the same as withdrawing the ego or suspending memory and desire in psychological terms (Rose 1996). For the counsellor then it becomes necessary to be bilingual in both faith and counselling terminology and to check out any ‘faith’ language the client introduces in order to avoid misunderstanding.

Apart from the aspects of culture and language that affect what goes on in the counselling room there is another factor to consider. Individuals who have a Christian faith and then move into the counselling/psychotherapy world have in some measure to transition between cultures as they work. They need to integrate both world perspectives, both visions of what ‘the good life’ can be.

It is well documented that transition between cultures is a process often fraught with difficulties, but it is through that process higher levels of integration emerge (Matsumoto, Hiryama and LeRoux 2006, Adler 1975). There are a number of models that describe this process (Adler 1975, Bochner 1982, Zaf 1991, Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman 1995, Sussman 2000, Pantelidou and Craig 2006).

As an example, Bochner’s model suggests 4 stages which immigrants into a new culture pass through. I suggest that this may throw some light on the experience of Christians entering the psychological world. Bochner’s stages then might look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigrant into new culture</th>
<th>Christian entering psychological world</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Reject values of adoptive culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Swing into adoptive culture. Denigrate and reject old culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>In limbo between the two cultures. Identity crisis. Painful awareness of not really belonging in either</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Genuine integration of both systems with complimentary value systems bringing meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 Bochner’s Acculturation Model Applied to Christians entering the Counselling/Psychotherapy World.

Information from Bochner 1987 p 27
Other models would have similar relevance to the Christian/psychological world transition, although all have different stages and emphases. For example, Alder (1975) suggests that there might be a returning home when the two world views are both evident (Stage 3 Bochner) as a way of dealing with (or not dealing with) the dilemma of integration.

Overall then it seems that it is more likely that difficulties and misunderstandings will occur in the therapeutic relationship across a cultural boundary (Laungani 1997). As religion, faith, and spirituality are all linked to culture, the ‘culture literature’ helps broaden our understanding of what happens to these issues when they present in the counselling process.

SECTION 2.9: ETHICAL ISSUES

A number of ethical issues arise for counsellors who include the spiritual dimension in their work with clients. This has been noted by BACP, who have issued guidelines for working in this area (Harbourne 2008). These guidelines suggest that it is essential that the counsellor accepts the spiritual interests of the client just as he/she would accept any other presentation of diversity, with an open acceptance. Not to do so could mean that we fail to take the wholeness of the client seriously. We, as practitioners, may even do damage if we negate the spiritual experience (Jenkins 2011). In fact there is evidence that if we work within the client’s belief system, we are more likely to get a better outcome (Propst 1980). However, openness on the part of the counsellor operating outside the cultural norms of the profession is difficult to achieve (Gubi 2002). Yet Thorne proposes that a part of the expertise required of a counsellor is the capacity ‘to nurture spiritual growth both in the self and in the other’ (Thorne 1998 p 53). There are a number of factors to be examined if this is to take place efficaciously and safely.

In all areas counsellors are required to not work beyond the limits of their competency (Harbourne 2008, Richards and Bergin 2005) because there is an assumption that the client’s welfare is directly affected by the therapist’s awareness of
his/her own limitations and weaknesses (Frame 2000, Eliason, et al 2001). This applies to working with spiritual matters just as much as any other. So although there are reasons for counsellors to engage with spiritual issues brought by the client, there are also reasons to be cautious (Watt 2001).

All practice is value based (Lynch 2002, Jenkins and West 2006, Richards and Bergin 2005) and therefore the therapist’s beliefs and value system influences practice, whatever the setting (Gerson, Allen, Gold and Kose 2000, Shafranske and Malone 1990). This is particularly pertinent when spiritual issues are involved (Shafranske and Gorsuch 1984). What the practitioners sees as the ‘good life’, i.e. a healthy way to be in the world, will affect how they work with clients and what outcomes they would tend to work towards (Lynch 2002). These values may be imposed on the client both overtly and covertly (Harbourne 2008). So it is important that the therapist takes time to reflect on her/his own vision of the ‘good life’ and perhaps work out at a theoretical level, how their spirituality and psychological understanding of the individual fit together (Pargament 2007). The values that we hold can be invisible to us, particularly if the values are shared within community. Therefore a counsellor working in a pastoral situation, perhaps even within their own worshipping community, might be totally unaware of the vision of the ‘good life’ that they hold (Lynch 2002). In this kind of setting, the management of dual roles needs to be carefully addressed (Harbourne 2008).

What seems important is that the counsellor is reflective enough to know what they do and do not believe and what their own value system is. It is then that the client is more likely to be heard (Wyatt 2002). There is one other factor about counsellor beliefs that is pertinent here. If the counsellor believes that spirituality is a useful resource for clients, that it enhances the therapeutic process, then it could be considered unethical for the counsellor to withhold or limit the use of that resource (West 2004, Gubi 2011, and West 2011c). On the other hand, praying for the client with or without permission, to effect change could be seen as usurping client autonomy, and therefore an ethical problem (BACP 2010, UKCP 2009). Mainstream counsellors who do use spiritual interventions such as prayer do tend to reflect on the ethics involved and use the intervention appropriately (Gubi 2011). There seems to be no data on this point for practitioners working totally within the Christian arena.
There are particular issues that need to be addressed when the counsellor’s value system is markedly different from that of the clients. For example, when dealing with gay or lesbian clients, counsellors with a literalist approach to their understanding of the Bible were found more likely to be judgmental, incongruent and unaware that they were not offering their client respect. Those with a more liberal approach to biblical understanding were more likely to be open and accepting to this client group (Evans 2003). Such issues of course need not only to be in the awareness of the counsellor, but also to be taken to supervision.

There is evidence of a convergence over time between the values of clients and those of their therapists, towards therapists’ values (Lines 2002, Rennie 1994b). This could be because clients’ values are by their nature unstable and therapy tends to stabilize them (Walsh 1995). Whatever the reason, the therapist needs to be aware of the strength of this tendency and note that the power dynamics can be very strong in pastoral relationships and more complex than in secular therapy, so cannot be ignored (Lynch 2002). In particular, transferential issues need to be addressed (Gubi 2002, Lannert 1991, Wyatt 2002, West 2011b).

Care needs to be taken with specific spiritual interventions such as praying with clients. The power of such interventions means that to use them could contribute to an abuse of power dependent on motives and purpose. It could also guide the client away from dealing with the issues at hand (Gubi 2008), with possible collusion on the part of the therapist. God becomes central, rather than the client. On the other hand, as previously noted, it may be very helpful in the therapeutic process (Gubi 2004, Richards and Bergin 2005). There is something of a fait accompli here as many therapists with a Christian faith do think that is ethically appropriate to pray for clients and do so, certainly outside the session (Gubi 2011). This is similar to the practices found amongst Christian social workers (Bullis 2001) and it is difficult to imagine how this could be halted.

Boundary issues can be more difficult to manage if the spiritual dimension is acknowledged in the counselling room. For example, dependent on context and client expectation there can be confusion between therapy, pastoral care and spiritual direction (West 2000, Richard and Bergin 2005).

There are contextual issues that need to be addressed. If the counsellor is working with in an institution that forbids exploration of spiritual matters, the counsellor
has to decide if he/she is able to hold on to his/her integrity (or that of the institution) if prayer or other spiritual interventions are used (Gubi 2002, Richards and Bergin 2005). Similarly, within a faith context, there is a danger that by working in a spiritual dimension, the authority of the faith leadership will be undermined (Harborne 2008, Richards and Bergin 2005).

Inevitably, there are risks in using spiritual interventions in the counselling process, but all interventions are risky to some degree and it is a matter of using them sensitively, appropriately and with due care (Gubi 2002).

Spiritually sensitive therapy at least allows the acknowledgement of the ‘elephant in the room’, i.e. issues around spirituality can be openly acknowledged and their effect on clients can be worked with (Pargament 2007). So overall, as with all aspects of counselling, we should be working in a way that is of benefit to the client (West 2011b, BACP 2010). If that includes spirituality, then surely the ethical position is to include it in the therapy process. We need to be fully aware of the problems such work poses, evaluating what is happening in the sessions and being particularly aware of transferential issues (Foskett and Lynch 2001). In order to be sure of this we need to have appropriate supervision arrangements (Gubi 2008, Jenkins 2011, West 2004).

SECTION 2.10: SUPPORT FOR THE THERAPIST WORKING IN THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Support for the therapist can come from a number of sources, both formal and informal. Formal sources would include such activities as supervision, initial training and continual professional development. Informal sources might include colleagues with a shared faith/spiritual interest, church or community groups, friendships and family influences.

For all counsellors and psychotherapists in the UK, supervision is a requirement for accreditation with professional bodies. In the US, pastoral counselling tends to have this support, unlike other therapeutic systems in the US. So how supportive is supervision for a practitioner who wishes to include the spiritual dimension in their work?
From the academic side, it is seen as important particularly for the integration of the theological and psychological aspects of the work (Woodruff 2002). Yet the supervisory relationship can be problematic for both trainees and experienced counsellors (Feltham 2000). The likelihood of difficulty increases when supervision is engaged in by counsellors and psychotherapists who work in the spiritual dimension. As with all orientations of counselling, if the supervisor and supervisee share a spiritual perspective (e.g. Christian supervisor and Christian supervisee), then blind spots can occur. If they do not, then difficulties can arise from misunderstandings, different use of language etc (ibid). From US research, there is evidence that many supervisees do not receive either the training or supervision necessary to address spiritual and religious issues competently in therapy (Aten and Hernandez 2004). Many supervisors just cannot deal with material from the spiritual dimension (West 2000).

If counsellors wish to discuss specific spiritual interventions (such as prayer) they may be using with clients, then real difficulties can occur. Very often, they are frightened to present this aspect of their work because they may be judged harshly or thought incompetent (Gubi 2007) and are silenced by shame (Yourman 2010). In the counselling world at least to some degree it is culturally unacceptable (Gubi 2004) and talking about spirituality in supervision has many aspects of a taboo (West 2003). So there are issues about what is not brought to supervision (West, 1997, West 1998, Jenkins and West 2007). Counsellors are less likely to disclose contentious issues of any kind if the supervision alliance is not paid attention to, if the supervision is part of the work setting or if the counsellor has no choice of supervisor (Webb 2000). Trainees, because of the evaluation role that supervisors have, are less likely to disclose material about client work that has not followed the cultural norm. They may even lie about their client interactions (Hantoot 2000).

For all these reasons, spiritual interventions are likely not to be declared by the supervisee. So the whole of that aspect of the work in effect is left unsupervised. The choice for the counsellor seems an unpalatable one: declare the spiritual content of the work in supervision and risk a highly negative response or don’t declare and cope with the ethical dangers of a partially unsupervised workload.

Supervisees are also more likely to disclose contentious information in individual rather than group supervision (Webb and Wheeler 1998, Anastasopoulos 1997). One factor in this is that trainees come from an educational system that is
shame based and has been a motivator for learning (Gilbert and Evans 2000). Talking about non-conventional therapeutic interventions in the presence of peers might be very difficult. Experienced counsellors are not immune from these difficulties either (Feltham 2000).

Overall, the supervisor’s role is crucial in providing a safe enough environment for the supervisee to address the reality of their practice, including the spiritual dimension (Smythe, MacCulloch and Charmley 2009). In fact, supervision can be an environment where learning about dealing with such issues can take place (Polanski 2003). There is evidence to suggest that the dynamics of the supervisory relationships are often not discussed, despite the fact that the supervisor has an ethical duty to do this (Lawton 2000). Therefore many of the above difficulties remain unaddressed and the opportunity for holistic client care is missed (Polanski 2003). Many supervisees deal with such issues by splitting their work between different supervisors, i.e. those who can and cannot cope with spiritual issues (West 2004, Christodoulidi 2011). However, sometimes part of their work remains outside any supervisory relationship (Gubi 2007, Gubi 2001, West 2003). Some self disclosure from the supervisor around such contentious issues may be helpful in allowing supervisees to speak about the whole of their practice (Ladany 2004).

There is growing evidence that until recently, although value systems and their effects on the supervisory relationship have been addressed in supervisor training, their relevance to working with supervisees who wish to include the spiritual dimension in their work has not been attended to (Polanski 2003), but literature on the inclusion of spirituality in supervision remains sparse (Bishop, Efrain, Juarbe, Thumme 2003).

It is clear from a variety of sources that at present the inclusion of the possibility of working in the spiritual dimension is not systematically addressed in many training courses (Jenkins 2005, Thorne 2011, West 2011a, Foskett 2001, Swinton 2001) and it is often sidelined (West 2011a). Many clinicians remain not competent to handle religious issues (Bkork 1999, Gerson et al 2000, Aten and Hernandez 2004) and clients note that they would like the professionals to be better trained in this area (Foskett et al 2004, Pargament 2007). It is necessary to note here that there is some movement on this topic, especially in the United States (Hage 2006). However, if these things are not attended to in training then counsellors’ unresolved ambiguities and transferences
around religious and spiritual issues may remain unaddressed (West 2011a) and later cause problems in client work (Wyatt 2002).

It seems then that the spiritually aware counsellor is sent out into the client world often poorly equipped to deal with an area of life that is important to a large number of clients. Many of these will not find support for working in the spiritual dimension from their supervisor. This may be because the supervisor is unable to provide this or it could be that the counsellor, because of past experience, finds it too risky to present such material (West 2004). It is perhaps unfair to expect supervisors to ‘fill the spiritual gap’ that many training courses leave, but by not providing acceptance for the whole of the supervisee they could be modelling a negation of what is needed in the counselling room.

Support from colleagues may or may not be forthcoming. Suspicion of the spiritual dimension within mainstream counselling is rife. The attitude of the faith community is not always helpful either as some will be suspicious of knowledge from a psychological base. As Thorne says:

*For some of my colleagues, this dual allegiance is difficult to understand or accept while there are many of my co-religionist who consider me to be dangerously heretical and an enemy of the true Faith.* (Thorne 2002, p ix)

Therefore the counsellor who wants to be honest about his/her Christian faith and take understanding from secular counselling theories runs the risk of finding him/herself marginalised by both church and profession (Thorne 2002).

So the position of a counsellor who holds a Christian faith is a difficult one. Not only do they have to work hard at making sure their understandings of the individual are well integrated, they often have to sustain a lonely walk, coping with the misunderstandings and sometimes the outright rejection from both professional and faith camps. For example, Rebecca Propst, an American academic psychologist who has a Christian faith, found it difficult, “to fit into the local church where they don’t know what to do with intellectual women” She finds academic reaction to her work on the integration of Christianity and psychology ranging from “curiosity to outright distain” The pressure from both sides results in her feeling “...on the borders between the evangelical subculture and the psychological and psychoanalytical communities of which I have been a part.” (Propst 2010 p 52).
This review has covered a wide field. It has focused on aspects that are relevant to the research topic. It has used sources from both secular and Christian perspectives and from US and European literature. Its findings can be summarised as follows:

1. There is a body of literature showing a growing acceptance in the psychotherapeutic world that the spiritual dimension is very important to many clients. This has historic and contemporary support.
2. Although most contemporary writers and researchers support the integration of spirituality with the psychological understanding of the individual there are still some that think it is either irrelevant or detrimental to mental health.
3. Interest in this area is growing in the academic field, particularly when looking at spirituality in general, rather than Christianity or any other organised religion. Research into specifically Christian counselling remains mostly US based, with a few UK exceptions.
4. There are a number of models available that can help the practitioner integrate their spiritual awareness into their practice. These models are drawn from both Christian and secular sources. However, in general their language and complexity do not make them easy for the practitioner to access.
5. There remains a gap between client demand for spiritually sensitive therapy and the ability of the profession to provide it. Pastoral counsellors (Christian or of other faiths) may be in a position to fill some of this gap appropriately.
6. Counsellors and therapists who wish to work in the spiritual dimension with clients must tend to their own spiritual development.
7. Specific spiritual interventions are available for the therapists to use, but they must be used with consideration for the appropriateness to the client and the setting. There are positive and negative aspects to be considered.
8. Cultural issues and context of the work can affect clients, counsellors and the therapy dynamic.
9. Ethical issues need to be carefully addressed.
10. Supervision for counsellors/psychotherapists working in the spiritual dimension needs to be appropriate and inclusive.
11. The support system for therapists working in this area can be sometimes unpredictable and often insufficient, from both the professional and faith arenas. Some counsellors are insufficiently trained to work with the spirituality of their clients.

The question that then arises is what is not present in the available literature as there seems to be a fairly comprehensive covering of why and how spirituality can be integrated into psychotherapy and counselling practice. Much of this is top-down information, i.e. academics researching and informing practitioners what they should be doing, having gleaned their data either from clinical or from theoretical sources.

However, what is not clear is how much of this information has filtered down to practitioners in the field. How much is their spirituality an integral part of themselves? What do they actually do to integrate faith and practice? Where do they really get support for this work? How do they experience the attitude of their faith community to their work? How much/little has their supervision, initial training, and even perhaps CPD (continuing professional development) helped them to integrate? What does it feel like to be in their position and what do they need in practical terms to help them work ethically and well? Are they or are they not doing what the literature recommends? What is the richness of their experience?

The examples we do have that illustrate the actual experience of practitioners are either American (e.g. Propst 2010) or focus more generally on spirituality (e.g. West 2000) and/or have a long academic and professional pedigree (e.g. Thorne 2002). There seems little written about the experience of the (non-researcher) practitioner in the field and this is the area where my initial question arose. In wishing to be relevant to both academic and clinical fields, the research question emerges as:

*What is the Counsellor’s experience of integrating Christian faith and clinical practice?*
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In writing this methodology chapter I wished to avoid a boring repetition of known pathways, essential, correct and containing no surprises. I wanted to reflect as honestly as I could both my thinking about, and my execution of, the project. As I worked out what methodology to use and then attempted to implement my plan, I found that I was constantly surprised by the path my work took, the difficulties encountered and the delights that I had not envisaged. Therefore I intend to write this methodology as a journey, showing firstly the rationale of my chosen method, the route I envisaged following and finally, what actually ensued. My path was punctuated by some of my personal discoveries and new ways of expressing my experience. I will use both poetry and prose to do this as there is some support in the literature for creative writing as a way of expressing part of the research experience (Lahman et al 2009, Maréchal and Linstead 2010).

The methodology is arranged as follows:-

SECTION 3.1: Rationale for the methodology
SECTION 3.2: Details of the heuristic methodology
SECTION 3.3: The intended procedural route
SECTION 3.4: The actual research process
SECTION 3.5: Details of the interviewees
SECTION 3.6: Practicalities of dealing with the data
SECTION 3.7: Ethical Considerations
SECTION 3.8: Summary of the methodology
SECTION 3.1 RATIONALE FOR THE METHODOLOGY.

I wanted to find a methodology that was appropriate to the subject matter (McLeod 2001). I also wanted to find something that I could work with, that was congruent with whom I am as a person, a psychotherapist and a researcher.

I had conducted both qualitative and quantitative projects in the past and was open to any method that might suit the purpose (qualitative: Scott 2005; Scott 2007a quantitative: a number of undergraduate projects for both BSc Chemistry and BA Psychology). In Denzin and Lincoln’s terms I wished to make a pragmatic choice and answer the question, “What would work in this situation?” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

Firstly I looked at the qualitative/quantitative debate. It would certainly be possible to construct a questionnaire to send out to counselling centres, training establishments, individual practitioners, contacts via appropriate websites etc to gather large amount of data on the thoughts and behaviours of counsellors/psychotherapists around the research topic and then analyse them statistically.

Quantitative research has its strengths in facilitating generalisation of findings over large populations. However, it is basically an outsider view-point (Creswell 2003), proceeding by posing questions over a narrow, well defined field, and by the testing of hypotheses. It also makes the assumption that the researcher has minimal effect on the outcome of the research (ibid). However, this study is meant to be exploratory. In quantifying and categorising data, much of the richness would be lost. As I am attempting to investigate a complex relationship between psychological and faith based understandings of the human state, I wish to keep the findings as rich as possible.

Many of the qualitative methodologies allow the researcher to ‘get inside’ relationship and attempt to investigate the actual experience of another person. They allow for the exploration of meaning of events and allow, in varying degrees, for the researcher to be more ‘present’ in the research (Creswell, 1998). It therefore seemed in this instance to be more appropriate to conduct a qualitative rather than quantitative study where my interaction with both the research and my effect on any outcomes could be transparent (Mruck and Breuer 2003).
It is important to note that to get to this stage marked a considerable change for me as a researcher. My first degree was in chemistry (University of Aston in Birmingham, 1973), which I then taught for many years, and was steeped in scientific methodology. As my counselling interest grew I did a second degree in psychology (OU 2001), where I still favoured the quantitative aspects and ended up teaching psychology for the OU, including statistics for quantitative research. It was only as I pursued the MA in integrative psychotherapy at the Sherwood Psychotherapy Training Institute that I began to value more qualitative methods and made the move to a more contextualised form of research. (See CW 3.1 for my reflection on moving from one paradigm to another.)

Although I made my methodology choice deliberately as one that was most likely to produce a useful outcome in this particular instance, there was and still remains a part of me that struggles with the more flexible nature of qualitative research. In times of stress I want to go back to my old comfort zone, to what I call ‘counting’. This really means a return to scientific methodology, to what feels like certainty and an assurance that I can get the methodological steps ‘right’. It has again been the support given to me by my peer group and supervisor that has enabled me to voice these doubts, explore them and stay on the qualitative track.

Having decided that qualitative was more congruent with the research topic, the next step was to look at the wide variety of possible methodologies and find a way forward that was a good enough fit. Perhaps even a ‘bricolage’ of methods, knitted together to form a coherent whole’ might be appropriate (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

Historically it is recognised that the relationship between therapist and client is the vehicle through which healing factors can take place (Frank and Frank 2004) and in general, psychotherapy can be seen as facilitating the integration of different elements.
of the self into a coherent whole (Erskine & Trautmann 1996). It therefore seemed congruent to choose a methodology that allowed me to work relationally both with those participating in the research, and with the topic itself. As integration was an important issue then I needed a methodology that would allow me to explore many aspects of the topic and experience how these fitted together. Again, during the process of psychotherapy, the client can be seen as reconstructing him/herself and his/her reality (Gergen and Kaye 1992), so I also wished to find a methodology that allowed for co-constructed findings, rather than one which was looking for ‘an absolute truth’.

I decided to look at the historical roots of qualitative research methodologies and then deduce from that what might be appropriate as there is still much debate about the choice of qualitative methods (Lincoln 2010). I was aware that I was not looking for the perfect methodology, just one that would serve the purpose of the research. I recognise that other researchers situated in other contexts would have chosen differently. In summary, my aim was to find a methodology that:

1. Had an historical and academic pedigree.
2. Allowed the richness of the data to be collected and preserved (i.e. was expansive and inclusive).
3. Was congruent with the topic of the research.
4. Was congruent with myself as researcher and as a psychotherapist and allowed me to be honest and transparent in the research.
5. Allowed the research to be conducted in relationship.
6. Had the view that findings of the research were a construction created by all those involved in the research.
7. Could allow exploration of meaning and specifically spiritual issues.
8. Was something that was practical and ‘do-able’ in the context.

I constructed a diagram so that I could clearly see where the links between different streams of philosophical thought were and where the major differences lay (see Figure 3.1).
Phenomenology
Describes human experience

*Husserl*: Looking at the everyday subjective experience and describing "what is."

*This methodology*: Sets assumptions aside
Requires the researcher to 'bracket off' previous understandings
Builds up a through description of the object from many different perspectives Involves indwelling the data until the essential features are revealed
It is not bothered about historical or cultural context
It can objectify the human being

Both
Assume active intentional construction of a social world by reflexive human beings
Deals mainly with linguistic material
Are concerned with the development of understanding
Help people to anticipate events that may include appreciation and choice

Hermeneutics
Interprets human experience

*Heidegger*: seeking to arrive at an absolute truth, the essence of the object beyond everyday experience

*This methodology*: Describes what is beyond language Goes to the transcendent domain, the essence of the problem
It interprets from a particular perspective (no 'bracketing off')
Cannot be free from pre-understanding that arises from culture and history
Attempts to allow a text to speak to the present world
It tries to understand a phenomenon that already exists rather than create new perspectives

Grounded Theory
Finding new ways to understand the social world

David Rennie: Methodological hermeneutics, a process of interpretation GT is primarily a way of analysing data, not data collection
Can be used with any kind of data
Lone research immersed in the data,
Looking for multiple meanings
Fragments data into categories
Does not address the relational aspect of data collection
Does not look at literature before data collection to avoid pre-understandings of the topic
Has features of earlier theories e.g. bracketing (Phenomenology) and interpretation (Hermeneutics)
Relies on both abstract categorisation and narrative
It is phenomenological in that it delays judgment in relation to a piece of data
Emergent hypothesis is tested against all possible data

Heuristics
Seeking the introverted perspective

Moustakas: Internal dialogue
Polyani: Tacit knowledge

Understanding the wholeness of something from all its parts, both subsidiary and focal factors.

It needs:-
Intuition: making immediate knowledge possible without intervening logical steps
Indwelling: seeking deeper understanding of human experience, following clues until insight is achieved
Focusing: seeing something as it is by creating inward space. (Looks at a phenomenon)
Internal frame of reference: personal to researcher, informed by the experience of others, context, happenings etc (no bracketing)

Fig. 3.1: Philosophical Principles of Methodology

This diagram was constructed using as the main resource, McLeod 2001 p35ff, 54ff and 70ff. Additional information came from Rennie 1998, 2000, Moustakas 1990, and West 2001.

The arrows on the diagram indicate, “Have roots in.”
I am aware that this diagram does not cover all kinds of methodology such as auto-ethnography, narrative and the like. This was not about doing an exhaustive search. It was about finding something that suited the content and the way I knew I could work. Once I had found something suitable, I could curtail the search and leave other methodologies to other projects.

**Using the diagram to look at the basis of phenomenology and hermeneutics.**

Both phenomenology and hermeneutics have much to offer the qualitative researcher. They look at the world as being a co-created construction between reflexive human beings (Owen 1999). However, the hermeneutic approach seeks to find an absolute essence of the experience, in the transcendent domain, beyond the everyday, insistent that we cannot be free from pre-knowledge and understanding; it therefore situates the researcher in the research (McLeod 2001a). In other words, research cannot be value free (Owen 1999) and findings will always be interpreted from a particular perspective. On the other hand, phenomenology seeks to describe that everyday experience and requires that the researcher “brackets off” or somehow sets aside, his/her own biases and previous understandings of the topic and investigates from a more “neutral” stance, bringing forth new descriptions of the experience under investigation. This was the position taken by the philosopher Husserl (Moran 2000).

In contrast, Heidegger brought the two schools of thought together, finding positive attributes in each (McLeod 2001a). Both positions have advantages and disadvantages. If the researcher brackets off or in Husserl’s terms, creates ‘epoché’, and stays a little distant from the research data (Owen 1999), then the clarity with which the data is viewed may be enhanced. On the other hand, if the researcher is positioned within the research then there is a possibility of enmeshment and even a loss of the sense of self (Etherington 2001b). However, the likelihood of a real understanding of the experience under investigation is enhanced. One other difference is in the way that data is traditionally collected in these two perspectives. In phenomenology the principle is to ‘go to the things themselves’ (Husserl as cited in Moran 2000) i.e. to talk to people who have experienced the phenomena under investigation or to look at the researcher’s own experience. Hermeneutic research is generally performed on written texts (McLeod 2001a). As there are both positives and negatives in these approaches
to research, I looked for derivative methodologies that took some of the principles from both to form a new paradigm.

Grounded theory seemed a possibility, partly because there was expertise in this area in colleagues and tutors around me. It also initially looked a safe option. There was a clear strategy of action, tasks to perform and a route to follow. It had some of the features of phenomenology in that it requires bracketing of pre-understandings. The researcher is discouraged in looking at the literature before analysing the data so that new theory can emerge, grounded in the data (McLeod 2001a). Grounded theory has some hermeneutic roots as it relies on interpretation rather than description of the experience under review, by the researcher. However, it has some rather negative factors. It requires one to fragment the data into small ‘meaning units’ in order to perform the analysis. This was not in line with my requirements for a methodology that allowed for integration of meaning. Also it seemed not to address the relational aspect of the data (West 2001). There was no space for what effect the researcher might have on the data and vice versa.

At this point I went to a conference and heard a number of presentations using different methodologies. After having heard the coding procedure of one of the presenters, I knew without doubt that grounded theory did not sit comfortably with the way I worked. It seemed to fragment rather than integrate the meaning in the data and I felt that it would not honour the basic concepts of what I was trying to do. My immediate response can be seen in the poem (CW3.2). I therefore needed to look further.

I next considered Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009). This seemed somewhat familiar as I had conducted a traditional phenomenological analysis in the pilot study based on my MA (Scott 2007a). It was during this analysis that I had

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**CW 3.2**

*On being in a presentation of grounded theory research*

I feel left brain: you think right brain.
I sit in this room with the promise of good ideas
I listen. I listen hard, to measurement, data and analysis.
Is “vent” a red or a blue word?
What does it matter?
I listen more: talk of attachment theory
Totally detached from the clients
Never mind attachment, there is utter disconnection
From the reality of pain and the passion of therapy.
Maybe I am just on another planet
And maybe I like it there.

*July 2007*
struggled with the requirement to bracket off my own material (Moustakas 1990) and it was obvious in the end that it was an impossibility when I was so passionately engaged with the topic. IPA solved that problem, providing a kind of analysis that allowed the researcher to take up an insider viewpoint (Maggs-Rapport 2001), the description of a particular experience firstly being gathered phenomenologically from interviewees and then that data being systematically analysed and interpreted by the researcher (Smith 1996).

However, there remained a problem. IPA requires a very detailed analysis of the data so it is much better suited to a small sample size and a narrow field of experience. I wished to look at a fairly broad field, with counsellors/psychotherapists from a variety of backgrounds, context of work and training modalities and levels. They would also have a variety of different Christian churchmanship. This would probably mean a larger sample than I could practically manage as it would produce a huge amount of IPA data.

I finally investigated heuristic methodology. This is rather like phenomenology as again it is about immersing oneself in the data (Moustakas 1990), proceeding by interviews, dialogues and the like. Unlike phenomenology it does not require bracketing and in this it is like hermeneutics. The researcher is positioned in the research. It has a reflexive stance in that it requires the researcher to investigate how he/she are affecting the research and how the research affects him/her. In fact it could be described at arriving at new understandings by filtering the data collected through the consciousness of the researcher, to the extent that the researcher becomes the main focus of the research (Hiles 2001). It is an active construction as the researcher enters a relationship with the research, creating some new illumination of the subject area (Mruck and Breuer 2003).

Heuristic inquiry has similarities with the practice of psychotherapy and counselling in relation to the use of ‘the self’ as a tool in the process (Hiles 2001). Also there is a parallel with the ‘not knowing’ position of the counsellor with regard to the client’s experience in person-centred terms with the ‘not knowing’ of the heuristic research process (Martin 2001). It would therefore be a congruent methodology for this topic and myself as a practising psychotherapist. Looking back at my list of requirements for methodology for this project, it seems as if this would be a ‘good enough fit’.
I spent some time absorbing the framework for heuristic research, based on the methodology of Moustakas. He identifies core processes that the researcher needs to be familiar with in order to be successful in this mode of research (Moustakas 1990). I examined myself to see if I was capable in all areas (see Table 3.1)

Table 3.1 Core Processes Necessary for Heuristic Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core process</th>
<th>Self-assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying with the focus of inquiry</td>
<td>I had been ‘living’ the research question for some time before the project officially began</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-dialogue</td>
<td>I was used to reflective practice that made me question my thoughts, emotions and behaviours in relation to clients. I also practice Christian meditation, where one waits to see what emerges from the silence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacit knowing</td>
<td>I am often aware of the spiritual dimension when working with a client. Often this is difficult to articulate, but there is a solidity and a knowing of ‘that which is beyond words.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>I had experience in using skills such as intuition in my client work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indwelling</td>
<td>I was willing to commit to a path of deeper inward looking to find new understandings of human experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal frames of reference</td>
<td>I was willing to be honest and transparent in my writing about my experiences in this research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I felt that I could say with some confidence that I had enough skill to at least begin the process and could make the assumption that my capabilities would increase with practice. Many of the skills required have their parallels in psychotherapeutic work.

Moustakas then outlines his methodology (Moustakas 1990). This I think is to be used as a loose framework rather than a prescriptive list of tasks. He gives six phases through which the research process must evolve. These are:

**Initial engagement:** A development of a passionate interest in the researcher for the topic of the research that holds important social and personal meanings. From this initial involvement the research question will emerge.

**Immersion:** The researcher totally immerses him/herself in the topic, self-searching and using every opportunity to explore the topic further.
**Incubation:** The researcher retreats from intense engagement with the topic and allows unconscious processes to continue to develop the topic further. This enables the tacit dimension to bring clarification.

**Illumination:** A breakthrough will occur when the researcher is open to receiving the tacit knowledge at a conscious level. It requires a shift in awareness to see things in a new light, modifying existing understandings, to provide new knowledge or discovery.

**Explication:** The researcher examines the new knowledge and understandings at length, organising them into a coherent picture.

**Creative synthesis:** The researcher meditates on the core themes and allows a creative synthesis to take place, expressing the meaning of the experience explored in a new way, such as in a narrative, a poem, a drawing etc.

So it is an exploration of a topic that allows the researcher to indwell the whole process, to take in material from many different sources including intentional interviews, reading, living life, dialoguing with peers and colleagues. It is about finding a new understanding and new meaning of an experience, finding out what at some level is already there and bringing that tacit dimension into consciousness (Polyani 1965). It is about the researcher bringing a very personal and insider perspective to the research and then finding a way of expressing that new understanding to others.

**Trialling the methodology.**

It concerned me that although I understood this methodology in theory I had never actually conducted research using it. I had run a pilot project using phenomenology and had found it very difficult to create and maintain the ‘epoché’ (Scott 2005). In order to sustain the interest in the research I needed to be passionate about the topic, yet being passionate meant that keeping the required distance from the data was almost impossible. I also realised that this research topic meant an enormous amount to me personally. Much rested on the outcome. My whole social structure was built around my faith and there was a fear lurking that my research might move me away from my faith roots. I needed space and time to work out what this might actually mean for me.
I therefore decided to do another pilot, this time concentrating on the heuristic process and the effect that might have on the researcher (Scott 2007b). My suspicions that actually doing heuristic research would be very different from the theoretical base were well founded. My findings from the pilot were perhaps best described by the allegorical story that emerged out of the heuristic process. (CW3.3).
The Journey

Setting out together, three friends had no idea of what lay ahead. They knew that their journey would take them into deep waters. What they did not know was what that would mean for each individual. They came to a fast flowing river and knew that they must somehow crossover.

The first traveller waded into the shallows with confidence. He looked carefully at the water, judged the current and understood the course he must take. As he started swimming, he stayed near the surface, riding the waves. Although his head was submerged much of the time, he could occasionally look up, get a glimpse of the far bank and hear onlookers shouting encouragement. He was quite sure that life existed outside his present watery home. As he felt invigorated by the challenge, he kicked strongly for the shore. On reaching his goal, he looked back, tired but pleased that he had managed the crossing.

The second traveller watched the first and was encouraged that ‘This thing is possible!’ As he took the plunge, he completely lost sight of the surface. Panic rose as he felt the yawning blackness beneath him. Somehow he found within himself the strength to reach towards the surface. To his delight he found a hand reaching down to him. He grasped it and heaved himself up. He took a gulp of air before sinking back into the fast flowing current. Time and again he felt the blackness beginning to engulf him and managed to reach up for that helping hand. Sometimes he found it, sometimes he did not. Slowly he made progress across the river and at last he realised that he was in shallow waters. He gratefully found his feet and heaved himself up onto the bank. It would take him a while before he attempted a similar feat, but he was very proud of his accomplishment.

The third traveller watched all this in silent horror. He knew the only way forward was through the water, yet it seemed an impossible task. With great courage he took one small step. As he did so, his foot slipped and he quickly disappeared from sight. His unpreparedness for this sudden baptism meant that he was immediately caught up in the watery maelstrom. Down he went, losing all sense of direction. His only thought was of survival. Even if hands were reaching down to him, he didn’t even know that they were there. He bumped along the bottom in the pitch black, swept along by the current at an alarming speed. He lost hope of coming out of his experience alive. Then, he realised he could just about crawl along the bottom, holding onto the rocks in the river bed. Painfully, he made his way to the far shore. Lungs bursting he found himself moving towards the light. Exhausted he lay face down in the water and would have drowned if his faithful companions had not waited for him and come to his aid. Sometime later when he could bear to look back, he still had no idea how he had negotiated the deep. He was glad to have survived, glad to learn of his own inner strength and the trustworthiness of his friends. But it would be a long time before he went near water again!

(Scott 2005)
What this said to me was that the heuristic process was difficult, exciting, deep and unpredictable. It was very possible to get lost in that process and I needed to have a clear and available support network to help me when I felt I was drowning. I also needed to be willing to access this support and not be determined to ‘go it alone’. Although this was my personal project and in some ways I was a ‘lone researcher’ I had good support from my supervisor, peers in the PhD group, other friends who had survived the process and most importantly from my relationship with God. I needed to be content with the demands of the process and not be too concerned about time frames nor details of direction that might emerge throughout the exploration of the topic (Hiles 2001). This was facilitated by doing the research part time. I was not working to a tight external time scale. I could take up to six years to allow the process to conclude if necessary.

Moustakas had given me the bare bones of the project and now it was necessary to put some flesh on them.

SECTION 3.3: INTENDED PROCEDURAL ROUTE.

Feeling confident that I understood and could manage a heuristic investigation, the practicalities needed to be decided on. A number of points had emerged through the pilot studies that needed to be addressed.

In my MA investigation into this topic I had found that many of my interviewees were well able to articulate their view of a person from a psychological perspective. They were well educated and well read in this area. However, when a similar question was posed regarding their theological understanding of the person and how that fitted with the psychological, the answers were often not clear at all. (Scott 2005). They in general had done little reading on the subject. They also reported rarely discussing this topic with anyone and felt that they had little support or training to work in this area. I therefore decided on a threefold plan for information gathering:-

1. I would interview individual counsellors/psychotherapists who had a Christian faith and ask them how they integrated their faith into their practice.
2. As well as looking at the available literature, I would interview some academics currently writing on the subject to see if there was a gap between what they thought counsellors should be doing to aid integration and what was actually happening in the field.

3. As background information I would ask training establishments what they included in their courses to equip their trainees to integrate any kind of spirituality in their practice. The structure of the research would then look like the diagram in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Structure of the research
Rationale for data collection

Interviews

The interviews would be divided into two sections:-

Interviews with practitioners

Approximately 20 participants, all practicing psychotherapists or counsellors, who have a Christian faith would be interviewed individually. Advertisements for volunteers were placed in the Thresholds Journal (APSCC), at both BACP and ACC conferences, at a number of Universities and Counselling /psychotherapy training establishments (see Appendix 1). Use was also made of personal contacts, email lists etc. The intention was to interview all those who responded within a practical time limit, who fitted the criteria set out in the initial questionnaire (Appendix 2). The aim was to ensure that they were well established both in their counselling/psychotherapy work and in their Christian faith.

Interviews with three named well known academics in the field.

These were selected because, firstly they responded to my request; secondly they had recently published work in this area; thirdly they represented a wide spread of both churchmanship and psychological schools. I chose to do this because my experience of the MA study was that none of those interviewed referred to any of the literature on integration at all and I suspected that there might be a gap between what academics were recommending and what was actually happening in the field. As I generally work best in relationship, I thought that having conversations with those who had already spent time in the field, might move my internal process on further than if I just read the literature. It also meant that I received an up to date UK perspective on the whole area of interest.

Questionnaire to training institutes.

Talking to practitioners anecdotally, it seemed that their experience of the inclusion of spirituality during training and their ability to find support for this in supervision was varied. The questionnaire would be sent to approximately 1 in 10 of training institutions (approx 100 questionnaires in total) across the various sections of the profession to gather data regarding the spiritual dimension on:-
a) What is included in counsellor /psychotherapist training?
b) What is included in the training of supervisors?

SECTION 3.4: THE ACTUAL RESEARCH PROCESS

In any research process, matters evolve. In particular when working heuristically it is often a matter of ‘following one’s nose’ whilst sticking to the basic principles of the methodology. Changes inevitably took place.

The practitioner interviews.

I struggled to find an appropriate title for those who took part in my research. “Participants” seemed too distant and had overtones of power imbalance. “Co-researchers” had some merit, as some of them gave considerable help to the project at a variety of different stages. The name suggests more equality with everyone involved. However, being as honest as I can be, they inevitably did not have as much control of the project as I did. I therefore chose to call all those who gave of their time “interviewees” as this is the major part of the contribution that they made. I also make it clear any further contribution they make, such as feedback relating to different parts of the project. At appropriate points I also refer to them as practitioners, usually where this nomenclature aids the flow of the text.

I interviewed in all 25 practitioners, seven male and eighteen female. They were self-selected and self-defined as Christians. I interviewed all those that volunteered that fitted within the parameters of my research and that I could practically arrange an interview time with within a given time period (18 months). I did not select them in any way as I wished to be open to all those interested enough to reply. This seemed in the spirit of heuristic enquiry where the research process evolves, rather than being pre-ordained. Before interview, the volunteers were screened via a short questionnaire. This was to ensure that they had a (self-defined) Christian faith of more than two years standing, that was an important part of their life and that there was current expression of that faith (see Appendix 2). I have no illusions that this provided an exhaustive sample, such as grounded theory might require. It is pragmatically what was there. As
heuristic inquiry is intended to be the experience of those in the field filtered through my experience and as Hiles says, the researcher is in many ways the focus of the inquiry (Hiles 2001), then an exhaustive sample becomes unnecessary. It simply needs to produce sufficient data to move the heuristic process along.

Of all those interviewed, one withdrew when the transcript was sent back to her. A second I decided to exclude because he has not been practising as a counsellor for a number of years. A third was excluded because all of his work was conducted under the National Health System and during the course of the project the NHS tightened up their permission procedures for their employees’ involvement in research. Although these rules were not in place when his interview was conducted, as the content of his material was covered by others in the project I decided not to use any of it. That left twenty-two, five male and seventeen female.

The interviews were conducted in a conversational style (Moustakas 1990) and the ensuing material was viewed as a co-construction between interviewer and interviewee (Kvale 1996). Although I did have in mind some areas of exploration (Malinowski as cited in Fontana and Frey 2005), this was not strictly a semi-structured format as described by Kvale (1983). I was most interested in what the interviewee thought important about the research topic and allowing a real dialogue to develop where we were opening up new areas of exploration for each other (Moustakas 1990). The result of this was that not all interviews covered the same ground. However preplanning at the level of having areas of interest in mind seemed to keep the interviews on track and produce some rich data. There was evidence that not only did the interviews move my own process on, many of the interviewees reported finding new meaning or understanding or were prompted into action (Fontana and Frey 2005). These happenings are documented in the findings and discussion (Chapter 8).

The academic interviews

When I initially decided to talk to academics in the field, the conversations were primarily to advance my thinking processes. I was unsure whether or not any of their material would appear in the thesis. This was partly because it would not be feasible to hide their identities and the normal rule of confidentiality for interviewees could not logically apply. As they were well known, their thoughts would be recognizable to many in the field. I addressed this with them at the time of interview and all agreed to the
publishing of their material, provided that they had sight of it before hand. This was achieved and a paper was written (Scott 2008). All material included was sanctioned by them. The further use of that material for the thesis was agreed, where it appears in a summarised form.

The three academics interviewed were Alistair Ross, John Swinton and Brian Thorne. Alistair Ross is psychodynamically trained as a therapist and is a Baptist minister. John Swinton comes from a mental health/psychiatric background and is a minister in the Church of Scotland. Brian Thorne, a Lay Canon of Norwich Cathedral is well known for his person centred approach to therapy and is an active member of the Church of England. Both Alistair Ross and John Swinton would describe themselves as evangelical whilst Brian Thorne would say that he is a liberal Anglo-catholic (Scott 2008).

My experience of interviewing these men was one of great encouragement for me. All had spent a great deal of time thinking through the research question. Our dialogues made me realise that even at the early stages of the research I was already beginning to work out some of the answers of how to integrate my own faith with my therapy work. The three academics agreed on a number of principles to guide the counsellor with a faith (ibid) and this gave me topics to take to my practitioner interviewees (to be discussed later).

The questionnaire to training Institutes.

It seemed a useful idea to gather some background information on how counsellors/psychotherapists are equipped to work in the spiritual dimension from their training. Training Institutions seemed the obvious place to gather this information. However, two things happened to discourage me from this course of action.

Firstly I emailed a great number of training establishments about my research hoping that they would broadcast the request for volunteers. I received very few replies. It was only when people personally known to me put up posters etc in their various institutions that volunteers began to emerge. It did not seem likely that I would get a much different response if I sent a questionnaire asking for information about their course content with respect to spirituality.
Secondly I ran a pilot version of the questionnaire with trainers that I personally knew, sending it out by email to approximately twenty in all. Again the response was low. The few trainers that responded (four) agreed that space in a diploma or Masters curriculum was very limited and justifying the inclusion of such topics as spirituality integration was difficult. I understood from both the non-responses and the responses that although spirituality is of high importance to me and also to those I was interviewing, it was of questionable interest to many in the counselling training world.

I still needed to get some background information on the level of training in integrating spirituality in counselling courses. So rather than go to the institutes, I went back to those I had interviewed and asked them about their personal experience. This meant that the information gathered was of a different type, local rather than global, but it still gives a snap-shot of the kind of support that counsellors have at the beginning of their career if they wish to integrate their faith with their clinical practice (Appendix 5). This data is presented in the section on detail of the interviewees (see below). It concerns their modality of training, the secular-Christian balance with respect to their principal training and the level of acceptability of any kind of spirituality in that training.

SECTION 3.5: DETAILS OF INTERVIEWEES

The data gathered for this section came from a questionnaire given to all interviewees (Appendix 5). Only 17 out of the 22 included interviewees responded and the figures cannot therefore be considered 100% accurate for this sample, but I think can be considered as reasonably representative. Data is given on:-

1. Training modalities
2. Level of qualification
3. Training influences (Christian/Secular)
4. Attitudes towards Spirituality in principal training
5. Churchmanship

Training Modalities

The sample overall covered a wide variety of counselling training modalities.
As can be seen from Figure 3.3, the most prevalent therapeutic approach of the interviewees was person-centred, but there was some representation from a wider spectrum of theoretical backgrounds. A number of counsellors were trained in more than one perspective in which case they would be counted in two or more sectors of the diagram. This therefore gives an overall idea of the training modalities present in the sample, rather than a one-to-one match with any particular interviewee.

![Figure 3.3: Training Modalities of the Interviewees](image-url)
**Level of interviewee qualification and training**

Overall the level of qualification for this sample of counsellors is high, with 8 qualified beyond diploma level. (Advanced diploma constitutes a post graduate qualification.) All but three of the trainees were educated to diploma level or above (see Figure 3.4). This means that they are at a level to be acceptable for accreditation with BACP. The three counsellors not qualified to diploma level were included because they had been working in the field for a considerable time. They all worked in counselling centres that were habitually used for referrals by statutory services such as GP’s, social services etc. So at least at a local level they were deemed competent. This seems fitting at a time when debate about the titles of counsellor and psychotherapist in both legal and professional fields still rages.
Training Influences

The interviewees had an interesting mixture of training influences, some from a Christian and other from a secular perspective. I therefore asked them to indicate how much of their principal training was in the two sectors (see Figure 3.5). As can be seen the secular influence in training was much stronger than the Christian influence, with only 3 interviewees having all their training in the Christian sector. This means that for the most part these practitioners were very little different in this factor from the general population of counsellors, i.e. they were well trained in secular models of counselling/therapy.

![Figure 3.5: Secular - Christian Balance in Principal Training of the Interviewees](image-url)
Attitude towards spirituality in training

It was interesting to note the differing attitude interviewees had come across to their faith within their principle training. I therefore asked them about this, giving them possible levels of acceptance to agree with. The results of this are in Figure 3.6, with explanation of the available comments following. Some of the interviewees agreed with more than one comment and that is reflected in the figures. Their understanding of spirituality in this context would be Christian Spirituality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptability of Spirituality in Training</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comment 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comment 6</td>
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<td>Comment 5</td>
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<td>Comment 4</td>
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<td>Comment 3</td>
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<td>Comment 2</td>
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<td>Comment 1</td>
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The comments referred to are as follows:-

**Comment 1**  
Spirituality was irrelevant to my principal counselling/psychotherapy training course

**Comment 2**  
Spirituality was neither encouraged nor discouraged on my principal counselling training courses

**Comment 3**  
Spirituality was recognised but not overtly encouraged on my principal counselling training course

**Comment 4**  
Spirituality was recognised and encouraged on my principal counselling training course

**Comment 5**  
Spirituality was included within teaching on diversity

**Comment 6**  
Optional modules/workshops on the interplay between psychotherapy/counselling and spirituality were offered by my training establishment
**Comment 7** Spirituality was included as part of the compulsory teaching syllabus

So the most common reaction to spirituality inclusion on training courses was that it was recognised but not overtly encouraged. This would have included all forms of spirituality, not just Christianity. Only a minority of interviewees found their training to be supportive in this respect.

**Churchmanship of Interviewees**

Finally it became obvious as the interviews progressed that there was again a wide variety of churchmanship amongst the interviewees. This is represented in Figure 3.7.

The ‘labels’ used by the interviewees are counted individually (e.g. Anglican/evangelical is counted as two separate items) to give an overall idea of the level of the various churchmanship influences at play in the data. Again it is not a one-to-one representation of each individual. It is clear that there is a variety of church tradition represented, but I do not wish to claim that this is any kind of proportional representation of the population of counsellors with a Christian faith in general. It is
interesting to note that the label ‘Evangelical’ has the highest numerical content. This group includes not only those practitioners who attend a church with ‘Evangelical’ in its title, but also those who attend a differently named church but describe their churchmanship in this way.

SECTION 3.6: THE PRACTICALITIES OF DEALING WITH THE DATA

I have attempted in presenting the data to give a clear representation of not only the field, but of the individual experience within it.

I looked initially at the interviews with Brian Thorne, Alistair Ross and John Swinton. I found that four major areas of interest and agreement emerged from their interviews. These areas of interest seemed important, but at this point I was not quite sure why.

From the transcripts I wrote a report which was then sent back to all three academics and they agreed that I had constructed a clear and true account of their views. This was then presented at two conferences (BACP research conference May 2009, Manchester University Student Research Conference July 2009) and published (Thresholds Autumn 2008) to invite further discussion. The choice of ‘Thresholds’ was pragmatic. It is a BACP publication that many practitioners would read if they are interested in the spiritual dimension of counselling, being the in-house publication of the Association for Pastoral, Spiritual Care and Counselling. The feedback received was positive and I felt as if I was on the right track. There was certainly some interest in this area of research in the counselling fraternity.

I then worked on the material from the 22 interviewees as follows:

1. I read each practitioner transcript and re-listened to the tape of the corresponding interview in turn.
2. I made notes on my overall response to the material.
3. I wrote a summary of this and sent it to the interviewee for their comments. This was mostly in the form of a prose report but on a few occasions I sent a poem or drawing that expressed my response to their material.
4. I received responses from the practitioners, letting me know where I had caught the essence of their experience (mostly) and where I had missed something important to them.

5. I incorporated their responses into my understanding of their experience.

6. I waited, noting where the experiences of the interviewees had resonances and dissonances with my experience. Again this was mostly in prose, but sometimes in drawing, poetry or allegorical story form. At this point, much of this writing was incomplete - jottings, unfinished poems or pictures etc.

7. I grouped the scripts and chose an exemplar for each group.

8. I wrote a description of the experience of each exemplar and sent it back to them for their response and comments which were included in later work.

9. I decided to use the scripts from the academic interviewees as a framework for bringing order to the large amount of data I now possessed.

10. I went through the practitioner material in detail looking for any reference to the topics that had been expressed as matters of importance by the three academics, one script at a time.

11. I noted how well the practitioners’ stories fitted, both with the literature and the recommendations from the three academics.

12. At each stage I noted my own reactions and reflected on my own experience of the issues discussed.

13. The trustworthiness of the findings from this process are ensured in a number of ways

   a. I have presented the work as transparently and honestly as I can, including creative writings that illustrate my state of mind at various points. These and the ‘Personal Reflections’ are rooted in my research diary.

   b. The member-checking of transcripts, summaries, exemplar descriptions etc. ensured that the material produced was faithful to the experience of the interviewees (Etherington 2001a.) Any discrepancies or omissions indicated were attended to. There were very few.

   c. The topics that emerged from the academic interviews were also seen as important by the other practitioner interviewees. They talked a lot about them. This pointed to a generalization of areas for concern/interest. They were not just areas of interest for me
Having collected and worked with the data, I allowed time for the heuristic process to take its course. The literature (Moustakas 1990) suggests a linear process of (1) engagement, (2) immersion, (3) incubation, (4) illumination, (5) explication and finally (6) creative synthesis. What emerged was a much more cyclical process than expressed my with stages 1 to 4 of the process repeating over and over, each illumination from one section of data being a factor in how I engaged and became immersed with the next.

My understanding and resonance with the material increased on each re-reading and reappraisal. At the same time I was noting down other forms of input that helped my thinking. Here was incubation followed by illumination, repeatedly. This could be from any source, a personal experience, a conversation with peers, reading a stimulating article etc. Eventually this culminated into organising everything into some kind of coherent overall understanding (explication) of the experience. Finally, producing a model which might be of use to counsellors who wish to think through their own integration of theory and faith, came slowly and built up over time. This would be the stage of Creative synthesis, but in my case I have called it “Emergent Thoughts”. This is in an attempt to try and convey the cyclical experience that continued right to the end of the process as the first attempts at developing the model were fed back to the interviewees for their comments. This led to further refinements.

**Personal reflection**

Looking at Moustakas' outline for processing the data (Moustakas 1990 p 51) it feels a little prescriptive and perhaps at odds with the creative flow of his general heuristic principles. This is highlighted by Sela-Smith (2002) who proposes that as the research process unfolds, Mosutakas has shifted from the heuristic self-experience to the experience per se. In other words he has move to a more phenomenological stance in the application of his theory. She sees this as resulting from unacknowledged resistance due to the unbearable pain of the heuristic experience.

I have attempted to stay within the heuristic process, jumping into the river and letting the process take its own course. I have therefore not followed Moustakas’ outline to the letter. However, I have read, listened to and dwelt in the data from each interview, written a summary of its essence and had this checked by the interviewee. I have written in the ‘Findings’ chapter quite a composite picture of the whole experience.
using not only data from all of the interviewees but clearly interweaving it with my internal process. I have also presented exemplars, but again my response to their data is recorded. Eventually some thoughts have emerged as a creative synthesis.

I have therefore done what Moustakas says, that is not followed his recommendations mechanically, but I have allowed the sweep of the research current to take me forward. I have taken occasional breaks, with head held high above the water allowing myself to refocus my direction on the finishing line of the research. It is another example of me being in the experience, yet helicopter-ing over it, absolutely congruent with my work as a psychotherapist.

As Hiles says, in heuristic research the focus is on the researcher (Hiles 2001). The interviewees, as well as being honoured for themselves and their material have great value in moving on my inner process. Therefore the presentation of exemplars as whole people and the general discussion based around topics that are very important to me and everyone else involved is justified.

As to the resistance that Sela-Smith (2002) proposes, yes of course it was there and raised its head at times. This would be when I felt scared by the enormity of the task and wanted to go back to more predictable methodology or ‘counting’ as I called it. The pilot project, where I experienced the heuristic process was an invaluable aid to understanding here. I knew that I needed to a) breath occasionally and b) take what support was on offer. The ‘breathing’ was facilitated I think by working part time. I had clients and supervisees to distract myself from the intensity of the heuristic experience. I could then come back to it with renewed vigour, though of course it was going on all the time in the background. The available help was in the form of understanding on-lookers and some fellow travellers, mostly in the PhD group who offered support and prevented me from drowning completely in the heuristic process.

SECTION 3.7: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The general ethical principles considered throughout the investigation were identical with those that any therapist would hold with respect to his/her clients (Bond
2000), again demonstrating congruency between therapy and research. In light of the following considerations, ethical permission was granted for the research by the University of Manchester. (See Appendix 12 for ethical permission form.)

The four areas considered were benefice, non-malfeasance, autonomy and fidelity.

**Benefice**

There were a number of benefits that arose from the research:

1. Interviewees were given an opportunity to think through an important issue.
2. The researcher gained knowledge and understanding beneficial both to academic and professional development.
3. The academic knowledge base has been increased in an area where there is little empirical research, particularly from an insider viewpoint.
4. The results of this research will hopefully be of use to clinicians in the development of their practice. Therefore clients should benefit in the long term.

**Non-maleficence**

Care was taken to protect the interviewees from harm.

1. The researcher was under the scrutiny of an academic supervisor throughout the study and abided by the UKCP code of ethics and practice (UKCP 2009).
2. Anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees was adequately taken care of. This included the secure storage of audio and written material. In the case of the academics writers, the unlikelihood of retaining anonymity for them was clearly stated in the initial request and their agreement to take part has been with their full knowledge of this.
3. All interviewees were screened to ensure that they had adequate access to psychotherapeutic and/or spiritual support if it became necessary (Appendix 3).
4. Interviewees were well established in their practice. They also were required to have a Christian faith of at least two years standing. This would guard against fragility of the ‘new convert’.
5. An initial screening questionnaire was completed by all interviewees to ensure their suitability to be included in the research (Appendix 2).

**Autonomy**
The interviewee’s right to choose was safeguarded and the inevitable power differential between researcher and interviewee was diminished as much as possible (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, Pessach, 2009).

1. Informed consent: Interviewees were given sufficient information on the research to decide whether or not to take part.
2. All interviewees signed a consent form with the researcher, clearly stating commitments on either side (Appendix 3, Appendix 4).
3. Individual interviewees had the right to withdraw completely from the study, without giving reason, up to an agreed date (Feb 2010), after which it would be impractical.
4. Interviewees were able to withdraw any part of the transcript they did not wish included. This was important because the interviews had an intimate empathic atmosphere and they might have revealed more than they intended (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009).
5. Analysed data was sent back to the interviewees for their comments. Feedback was included in further analysis.
6. At each stage of the work continuing consent was established.

**Fidelity**

All interviewees were treated fairly.

1. All had the same conditions of inclusion and withdrawal.
2. All those that responded to the advertising within the interview time frame were interviewed, providing that they fitted within the parameters of the study (Appendix 2).

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**SECTION 3.8: SUMMARY OF THE METHODOLOGY**

1. Heuristic Methodology was chosen as an appropriate way to investigate the subject matter and to be congruent with the researcher’s way of being as a psychotherapist interested in spiritual matters.
2. The methodology was based on that of Moustakas (1990) and was trialled in a pilot project to familiarize the researcher with the heuristic journey.
3. The research involved a number of ways of collecting data under a “heuristic umbrella”.
4. Both academics and practitioners were interviewed in a semi-structured fashion with respect to their experience of integrating Christian faith and clinical practice.
5. Information on churchmanship, school of counselling training, level of qualification and level of spiritual input in training was gathered from the interviewees.
6. Ethical issues were addresses and ethical permission for the research was granted by Manchester University.
PART TWO

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCTION TO THE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.

This research is heuristic in nature, and at least to some degree the path of the project and the design of the thesis has evolved over time. With so much interview material it was important to structure the Findings and the Discussion in such a way that the reader does not get lost. It was also important that the voice of interviewees remained clear.

The aims of this part of the thesis are two-fold:

— to present the data from the practitioners and the academic interviewees.
— to gather the literature, the academic interviews and the practitioner interviews together to bring forth an overall understanding of the topic that both resonates with my experience and that of the practitioners interviewed.

Before beginning to write this chapter I spent a considerable amount of time listening to the interview tapes and reading the transcripts in order to be thoroughly immersed in the data. I found it a rich, but sometimes confusing experience. There seemed to be so many voices saying so many different things. Because I had used open questions in the interviews, not all the interviewees covered the same ground. I deliberately followed what they felt was important. My ‘old scientific self’ was dismayed that I could not easily categorise or compare scripts. However as time (and listening) went on, themes began to emerge. Important threads began to join experiences together. I began to get a picture of what this experience of integration might be. I found places within myself that had such resonance with the interviewees that I felt it could be me saying all these things. Other parts of the data described experiences that seemed far distant from me, but with an echo of where I once had visited.

I really struggled as to how best to present my findings. Normally in a heuristic project one, or more exemplars of interviewees, would be presented in their entirety, with additional material from other interviewees as appropriate, to build a fuller description of the topic under investigation (Moustakas 1990). I also had material from the academic interviews. What level of detail needed to be included from them?

It became clear from the tapes and transcripts that there were various groupings within the interviewees that matched what the academics were saying to differing
degrees on different topic areas. Four major areas of agreement had emerged from the academic interviews. I had the choice then, to either take each topic in turn and integrate across the whole group of counsellors, or take an exemplar from each smaller grouping and look at the whole of the material for that group. The second would be a much more usual way to proceed in a heuristic enquiry.

I returned to the data and began by writing an exemplar for each group, making additions from others in the same group where appropriate, together with my responses to the material. This meant a separate chapter for the Findings followed by one of the Discussion. I found that in order to keep the sense of the discussion clear, I was forced to repeat very similar material a number of times in the two chapters. Not only did this seem rather boring, it took up an immense amount of space in the thesis.

I then attempted to write a combined Findings and Discussion chapter and found that comparing material on particular topics across the groups and discussing it with the relevant literature, avoided repetition and brought more cohesion and clarity. What this decision lost in looking at the entirety of ‘the whole person’ I gained in looking at the entirety of particular aspects of the experience.

However, I felt that the lack of the ‘whole person of the counsellor’ was a serious loss. It also took me away from the basis of my heuristic approach as set out by Moustakas (ibid). So I went back to my original plan and to the transcripts again. I reconstructed a presentation of three exemplars from groups which had different levels of Christian influence in their work. I hopefully wrote a coherent story for each and returned this text to the relevant interviewees. All three agreed that I had captured the essence of their experience. I still felt that there was so much more unsaid, or at least not presented from the interview material.

I therefore decided that I would present firstly the exemplars (chapter 6) and then the academic interviewees (chapter 7) in a manner that I hope honours them as whole people and is in keeping with my exploration of integration. I then wrote a separate section (chapter 8), entering into discussion with respect to the literature, the material from both exemplars and academics and material from other interviewees as appropriate. Pragmatically to bring order to the discussion, I used the academic’s four areas of agreement to structure the material, but I note points of dissonance as well as resonance in the practitioners’ material.
Finally I felt that I had included all that was necessary from the data, hopefully providing a description that not only resonated strongly in me but also would be accessible and recognisable for a large number of Christian practitioners.

I noticed that as I dwelt in the data I found myself pondering on my experience of meeting and spending time with fellow practitioners. Most of the time, I felt a compassion and a huge loyalty for them. It was as if we were in the same boat, struggling against a prevailing wind and although I did not feel in synch with some of the oarsmen I felt we were at least attempting to move in the same direction and we were making a little headway. It did seem though, when I had finished looking at the data that we still had a considerable way to go on our journey.

I tried to keep the dialogue open with all of the interviewees, mainly by email, but occasionally by phone. The whole process felt developmental and I have tried to be as transparent about it as possible. Therefore as the work progresses my responses to the material are included at relevant points, as are practitioner responses when my material was returned to them. As I interweave my own understandings of the experience of integrating faith and counselling practice, comments on the material, poems, images and allegorical stories are all used to express my inner process. These modes of expression are either in response to data from an individual, or at other times, they illustrate stages in the research process in general.

**Personal Reflection**

I noted as I did this that there is a parallel in the way I tackle writing up this research with the way I conduct my psychotherapy practice. When I am with a client I work relationally, that is with as much presence as I can manage, being with the client rather than doing something with or for the clients. However, there are times when I retreat a little from that close relationship to ‘helicopter above’ and obtain a different perspective on what is happening. I suppose this is one form of my ‘internal supervisor’ at work (Casement 1985). It is a check to be sure that what is happening is beneficial to the client. I found myself doing similar things with the research material. For long periods I would be ‘in it’, reacting instinctively to it, writing creatively, or just sitting in it. Then I would retreat a little and reflect on what was happening. I think this was necessary to enable me to write the story of the research in a reasonably coherent form and to capture its felt essence. So this swinging to and fro, of ‘being in it’ and ‘helicopter over it’ has continued throughout. Much of the time I seem to occupy both
spaces concurrently. I think it shows in the writing. There are descriptions and some analysis of the themes coming from the data interspersed with my own personal responses.

I have used a high number of direct quotes from those interviewed throughout as I wish to allow their voices to speak. The quotes of course can never be exhaustive, but they are representative of the data collected. Words in brackets() are added by me to make grammatical sense.

The Findings and Discussion section of this thesis is very long. It is therefore subdivided into four further chapters, which are then subdivided as the material requires. Each chapter ends with a summary A diagram of the structure is provided to aid clarity (see Figure 4.1).

The five major sections of Part 2 of the thesis (Findings and Discussions) are:-

**Chapter 5:** Introduction to the practitioners

**Chapter 6:** The exemplars: Three word-pictures of individual practitioners
Chapter 7: The interviews with the three academics, divided into four sections, each concentrating on one area of agreement between them and ending with their recommendations for good practice

Chapter 8: Discussion: material from all the interviewees, addressing the four major areas of agreements emergent from the academic interviews.

Chapter 9: Drawing the Threads Together.

An overview of Part 2 of the thesis

I will use the outline diagram with the relevant box highlighted at the beginning of each chapter of Part 2 as a reminder of its place in the structure.
CHAPTER 5: INTRODUCTION TO THE PRACTITIONERS.

This section gives some basic information about the practitioners in order to set the context for the rest of the findings. Their level of training, modality of counselling and their theological perspectives are presented. This hopefully gives a reasonable representation of them as whole people. The information in table 5.1 is as gathered from the practitioners, including their own definitions of their Christian faith and psychological modalities. My comparable data is included at the end of the table for completeness.

The pseudonyms used to ensure anonymity for the interviewees were mostly chosen by them. In a few cases the choice was left up to me and then checked with the interviewee for approval.

Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Psychological Perspective</th>
<th>Level of training</th>
<th>Theological Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaygee</td>
<td>Christian Counselling Centre</td>
<td>CBT</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted</td>
<td>Diocese wide</td>
<td>Person Centred</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Roman Catholic (priest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>2 secular agencies 1 Christian Agency Private practice</td>
<td>Person centred</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Relate Christian Counselling Centre</td>
<td>Person centred</td>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma</td>
<td>Liberal but attends an evangelical church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sian</td>
<td>Christian Counselling Centre</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Evangelical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan</td>
<td>Private practice</td>
<td>Transpersonal</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Christian Counselling Centre</td>
<td>Christian Counselling training/ Rogerian</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>Christian counselling Centre</td>
<td>Person centred</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As there are quite a large number of interviewees in this study, I needed to find a way to cope with the large amount of data they produced. In practice this meant grouping them in one way or another. This could have been done using any of the parameters set out in Table 6.1 that is work setting, psychological or theological
perspective, or level of training. However I wanted something that would be more inclusive of them as whole people than any of these provided.

I therefore looked at the level of Christian influence overall in their training, work context, supervision and informal support. This was something that I had sensed whilst doing the interviews, but I wanted to find something a little more objective in order to group people in a logical way.

I worked out a system to give them a score for either Christian or secular influence in each of the areas of work context, supervision, clientele and external support and consequently reached a total score for Christian influence for each individual. (Details of this can be found in Appendix 6.)

The interviewees were then divided into three groups according to these scores. These were:

Group 1 Practitioners who have a Christian faith but who have largely secular input in their training, work context and support systems

Elizabeth, Verity, Joy, Maria, Diana, Jo, Dawn, Ivan, Beth

Group 2 Practitioners who have at least one major area of influence within the Christian boundary, i.e. training, work context or supervision

Margaret, Sian, Rebecca, Val, Carys, Ted, Gaynor

Group 3 Practitioners who have remained almost completely within the Christian boundary for training, work context and support systems

Reg, Greg, Jaygee, Grace, Yi, Dave, Joan

Of course, the boundaries between these groups were fixed by me for convenience and in reality there is a spectrum of levels of Christian influence across the groups. However, working in this way has enabled me to keep track of the data and by labelling each quote as it is used by group number (G1, G2, G3) means an indication is given throughout of the background for each ‘speaker’.
The exemplars were chosen as representatives of particular groups of counsellors. Choosing such a representative is a difficult decision. However, I had already grouped these counsellors according to the level of Christian influence in their work (see above). I therefore looked at the groups and took one practitioner from the middle of that group (with the statistical median score). See Table 7.1.

Table 6.1 Overall Level of Christian influence on Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Christian influences</th>
<th>Number of non Christian influences</th>
<th>Group for analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaygee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reg</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaynor</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carys</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verity</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All three exemplars, Joy, Rebecca and Joan were white and female. This was because firstly, no counsellors or therapists from ethnic minority groups had
volunteered for the study, partly perhaps a reflection of the low numbers of ethnic minority individuals in the professional as a whole. White was therefore inevitable. As this was an ‘open invitation’ type of sample it was impossible to engineer the ethnic mix of volunteers.

Secondly, although there were some males in the sample I chose not to use them as exemplars. It is clear from the table that in both groups 2 and 3 there were males with the same ‘score’ as the female exemplars, i.e. Ted in group 2 and Greg in group 3. However, both of these men were Roman Catholic Priests and the way they had trained, their clientele and their lifestyles were very different from other group members and I did not feel they really represented their groups.

Of course there are possible alternatives with the same scores as the exemplars still remaining in all groups. I chose those who gave sufficient data to produce the most coherent story. To alleviate the inevitable arbitrary element of this choice, a considerable amount of data from the other practitioners is included in the general discussion in chapter 8.

**Personal Reflection**

There was an interesting occurrence linked with this. I chose the exemplars having spent a great deal of time reading all of the transcripts through a number of times. I then wrote the description of their experience and put them aside whilst I got on with other work. When I came back to them and reexamined their ‘fitness’ to be exemplars, I found that I was happy with my choice of the groups 1 & 2 exemplars, but there was a problem with exemplar 3. I had chosen Grace, who was very evangelical in her churchmanship, trained only to certificate level and poorly supervised. In fact she was on the extreme of the group rather than in the centre. I could hear clearly my critical voice coming through my description of her experience. So why had this happened? I think my previous experience of not being heard and understood in evangelical circles had biased me to look for something reflecting that within the group 3 counsellors. What I had written of Grace certainly showed a not very positive picture of her work. I had to own it and rethink. One of the important factors in this rethink was reading Joy’s (exemplar 1) transcript again and her acknowledgement that although her evangelical church did not really understand her, she valued their fellowship and would be very isolated without it. It pointed me in the direction of my unconscious negative attitude to what support was available to me from church contacts and how that was
spilling into the research. It showed me too that the input from the interviewees was actually affecting the way I proceeded through the research.

I went back to the transcripts and decided to use Joan as exemplar in Grace’s place. Having written about Joan and again left some time before reviewing it I now feel happier that she is more representative of the group 3 members. This is not to say that the information from Grace will be omitted. It is important data and will be included in the discussion alongside data from all of the other practitioners.

SECTION 6.2: EXEMPLAR OF PRACTITIONERS IN GROUP 1.

Counsellors in this group have a Christian faith but also a large degree of secular input in their work.

Joy is a person-centred practitioner with experience in both Christian and secular settings. She has had opportunity to think about the integration of faith and counselling practice. Her position on the Christian spectrum is that of a Liberal (her definition), with an inclusive view of her faith. However, her husband has a strong evangelical faith and the local church they attend is also evangelical. Her belief system has therefore been challenged over a long period of time and she has made great efforts to clarify and understand her position. She has a theologian friend with whom she debates these issues regularly. She is clear that it is her faith that gives her a solid framework for the way she conducts herself in her world.

There is no one factor that allows me to survive (and thrive) as a Christian in the counselling world. Firstly I suppose there is my relationship with Jesus. With that as my backstop I can be assured that I will not go far wrong.

However, her own efforts in reading and gaining knowledge are also important.

My penchant for reading some quite philosophical books, some from an early age has been quite an influence, opening my mind to new possibilities. I continue to read a fair amount and this keeps me awake to the possibility of further growth.

Joy has over time gathered a variety of support around her, but she sees that it was her person-centred training that helped her to integrate her faith into her counselling work right from the beginning, in fact her training helped her make sense of her faith that differed from those around her.
Really it was my counselling training that helped me put things together. It was grounded in the philosophical understandings of the person centred approach and it gave me a framework to hang my Christian beliefs on. Before that I think I was wondering if I was so far out on a limb that I would be stretching things to call myself a Christian.

She works in both secular and Christian settings. She has varied supervision from both Christian and non-Christian supervisors and she tempers what she says according to who she is with.

I get varied support from my array of supervisors and I suppose I choose my language to fit the context. So, for example, with my Christian supervisor the talk is often in religious terms, but with my non-Christian but spiritually aware supervisor, the discussion of my work would definitely not include the word ‘Jesus’ but it might contain such things as ‘energies, spiritual awareness, auras and the like.’

She has some informal support.

I have friends and colleagues with whom I can discuss spiritual issues, some more than others. I also have some local Christian fellowship, but often these folk are in a different place to me and don’t really understand what I am talking about. But is OK for me to sit on the edge with them. I can live with that and without their fellowship I would be more isolated.

She values the variety of support she has and sees that working in both Christian and secular settings, enhances her ability to be non-judgmental and more accepting of diversity.

If I think of all this support as my roots, then one of the fruits of the combination of that support is the ability to tolerate difference in whatever way it manifests itself. That could be a Christian colleague who refers to God in every sentence, a client of the Hindu faith or a supervisor who is so intent on me getting clients through a 6-session programme that they have no space at all for discussion of existential issues.

Her ability to tolerate difference is of course an asset when working with clients of different faiths or none.

This ability to tolerate difference allows me to work in very different settings. It also helps me to hold a position where I am not so sure that my perspective is the only one and allows me to give respect and acceptance to an alternative belief structure.

She is clear too that the language used in different setting and with different clients has to be appropriate. This is particularly true with experiences that are difficult to describe, yet are important to the counselling process.

One thing I noticed is the similarity of what could be called ‘deep moments’ in both the counselling and Christian worlds - those moments with others when you experience something beyond the self, where perhaps we really meet God.
These might happen with a client, in supervision, in training personal development group or with Christian friends. The language I might use to describe what happened in each context might be different and in fact it is really hard to catch the experience in words. Yet I and others are clear that it has happened.

She sees the integration of faith and practice as a continuing journey, one that she has made progress in over time.

On the whole I do feel that I have and continue to integrate my faith and my practice. However there is constant need to pay attention to these issues. That might mean a host of things, from reading, to talking to people, or to going on relevant CPD days. It is all about taking time to allow the opportunities for further growth, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. I think it is a never ending task!

The following sketch (Figure 6.1) was my response having listened to the tape of Joy’s interview and read the transcript a number of times. I sent this to her together with the summary of her material and she agreed that it was a fair representation of her position. It seemed to me that she was well grounded both in her work and her faith. She was rooted in a widely based support system which was nourishing her personal and professional growth and allowing her to bear good fruit.
**My response to Joy**

Having interviewed Joy I felt that I had spent time with a fellow traveller. Her journey in so many aspects resonated with mine. Firstly she put a great deal of effort into working out how she integrated her faith and her practice, through whatever means were available. So had I. She had over time built up a good support network for herself both in the Christian and counselling worlds. I felt a little envious of this as at that time it felt as if my support network was full of holes! Joy seemed comfortable and assured in the position she had reached, not that the matter was settled once and for all, but that she had the tools and the places to deal with any difficulties emerging. Her picture of sitting on the edge of an Evangelical Christian fellowship was at that point echoed in my own life. Her statement that ‘without their fellowship I would be more isolated’ made me reappraise the support I had from Christian sources and to begin to value it more highly. I think there was a move towards my acceptance that although often I felt
misunderstood by fellow believers on the matter of my work, there was a caring support of me personally and a sharing of the core values of the faith that could come from nowhere else.

SECTION 6.3: EXEMPLAR OF PRACTITIONERS IN GROUP 2

The counsellors in this group have either trained in Christian counselling courses, or work solely in a Christian context or have supervision with a Christian, i.e. the level of Christian influence over all is greater than those in group 1. One of the noticeable differences between counsellors in group 2 compared to those in group one is the language in which they describe their experience

Rebecca has a Roman Catholic background with some strong evangelical inputs. She has studied theology in the past and her counselling work has grown out of her pastoral ministry.

Rebecca’s faith is central to her life.

My faith is based on the reality of a personal relationship with Jesus and I would say that my faith is pivotal to everything else in my life, and has been for many years.

For me, the theological side came first and the pastoral side of my ministry led me to pursue greater psychological understanding.

And her aim is to work towards wholeness both for herself and her clients.

I think for me it is about pursuing wholeness for myself and facilitating that for others.

Sometimes she has difficulties working out the integration of her psychological and theological perspectives…

I do struggle sometimes with the integration of my psychological and theological understanding of the individual, for example in the area of autonomy / dependence.

…and that much of this is based in her own faith history.

Some elements of my catholic upbringing and inherited culture gave me the view of life with little autonomy and a distrust of my desires. I was often left with the feeling that if I took any initiative I might step over some unspoken boundary. Also the evangelical influence gave me lots of ‘Thou shalt nots.’
She recognises that there is an element of journeying in the integration of the different influences on her...

*Personal integration takes time. We have to experience things, reflect on them at deeper levels. There is little time in a diploma course to do that. The need for personal integration and reflection is ongoing. I suppose here will always be conflicts, but it is about working towards a more comfortable place – being able to sit with the 'not knowing' and treasure the questions.*

…and that part of that journey has already taken place.

*It has taken time to overcome the lack of nurture of a healthy ego that these influences inhibited. Learning to trust my own sense of God’s will and His delight in me and begin to respond to my own desires in a less conflicted way was a huge step. In tension with all of this I grapple with a lot of scriptures that talk about dependence on God.*

Again, her sense of security is focused on Jesus and in working to become more like him she becomes more of what she is intended to be.

*However, I see that Jesus was sure of his identity and that His sense of self grew through His intimate relationship with God. So the idea that somehow that in the presence of God I become more myself as well as being more like Him is helpful to me.*

And the security she finds in her faith is part of her support system for her counselling work.

*I resource myself through prayer and meditation*

*I think I would always pray before a session and have an entrusting moment after the session. I need to feel …I am being held through my relationship with God and I am conscious of the work and presence of the Holy Spirit*

Although she has spent much time and effort on working out her integration of understanding faith and her counselling work, being part of the research project has helped her to acknowledge and crystallize the steps she has taken.

*The research interview was helpful for me to review and define how I integrate and verbalise that integration.*

Over time she has built a good support network for herself. This would include supervision.

*In general I feel free to take spiritual issues to my supervisor. This is very different from my training, particularly the one based on Freudian psychodynamics, which was very challenging. I experienced more difficulties than anticipated as my tutor/supervisor was very opaque about his own faith stance.*

She has also had supervision from a spiritually aware supervisor.
Her interest background was more Buddhist and mindfulness. I don’t think she had a strong Christian faith. I don’t remember strongly editing it out, but I didn’t expect things like prayer or... you know. I expected the possibility of a dialogue but not other things.

Although she did not censor her presentation of material is supervision heavily, she did hesitate to take some things.

I think there are things that I hesitated to take, but I would have to actively work about taking. Some of that was about some of my own thoughts and feelings about clients and was as much to do with a fear of being judged.

She values Christian friends and colleagues in the counselling world.

I need to feel I am being held in an inter-personal sense by the support (of friends).

I have got a number of Christian friends who are also counsellors and we tend to chum each other a long and dialogue about these issues very comfortably.

However, she would like a group specifically targeted on talking about the integration of perspectives.

I think there is scope for a spirituality and therapy support group somewhere.

Rebecca works at making sure that she has enough support e.g. from useful literature or focused conversations.

I suppose I have a number of books on the go all the time so reading... Thresholds magazine I find very useful. People who are working on themes of spirituality in other disciplines like a friend who is doing some research in social work on spirituality and social work. So I find that helpful.

Rebecca has worked in a variety of settings. So although her faith has been a constant presence throughout, its expression changes in different contexts.

Initially, working in a Christian Counselling Centre my faith could be overt if I was working with Christian clients. Later, with secular training and non-Christian clients it was less so, but I would still pray for them.

This being the case she still works to create room for the client to own their own spiritual perspective.

I do respect the right of the client to have their own spirituality, or none and I need to attune to that in some way. I pray before, after and often silently within sessions as it deepens my awareness of being held and my openness to the presence and inspiration of the Spirit.

Rebecca is aware that the context of counselling affects the issues clients bring. For example, when working in the Christian counselling centre:

Clients may think that abortion is a taboo subject.
Personally she would be able to listen and hold onto the client’s right to choose, but there would be consequences to this.

*Due to my faith stance, I would also hold within me a sadness if someone chose to have an abortion.*

The fact that she has a Christian faith and works in a Christian counselling centre can be an issue that needs working through with the clients.

*I know that some of my clients want to check out my Christian credentials because of my ethnic background and accent. There are so many assumptions about what ‘Christian’ means. So all the time I am checking out our shared meanings.*

So, working within the parameters of the client she provides a safe space for the client to explore.

*I try to work with the language of the clients, the words they use and the meanings they attribute to them, as this gives them confidence that I will understand them. I believe that it increase their feelings of security when the range of meanings are clear.*

She sees that working with people from a wider spectrum, i.e. beyond the Christian boundary, has had an effect on the way she sees the world…

*I think that working in counselling has changed my views somewhat, e.g. on gender issues. I know I have moved from a naturally conservative approach. However, the gender issue is often only part of what needs to be dealt with.*

…and that she identifies somewhat, with those clients who don’t fit into the accepted norms of the society they live in.

*I am interested in intercultural issues, working with people on the edge. I suppose my own life I live on the edge.*

Overall, she would say:

*I have a particular interest in reconciliation, a desire to promote spiritual and psychological integration.*

The following diagram (Figure 6.2) is drawn in response to Rebecca’s material. It is intended to show a pool of resources from which she is able to provide a secure base for clients to find growth and healing.
My response to Rebecca

I was heartened by my conversation with Rebecca. Her language was full of Christian reference, yet she also seemed well grounded in her professional life. I wondered whether the context of her work and her Christian based supervision were the factors that allowed her Christianity to be more overt. If she were working in a secular organisation would her language be more psychologically flavoured? Certainly when I worked in a Christian context, phrases like, ‘Being aware of the Holy Spirit in the counselling room’ were fairly commonly heard amongst colleagues.
I noted too that she talked about ‘being on the edge’ even though she had a much higher Christian influence in her work. Although she has a good support network, she would value the space to talk regularly on faith/counselling integration.

I suppose my overall impression was that her faith was just more overt than for Joy, or any of the counsellors in group 1. As I recognised this I found myself admiring it, yet not wanting it for myself because it might deter connection with those of a different persuasion.

SECTION 6.4: EXEMPLARY OF PRACTITIONERS IN GROUP 3:

These are practitioners who have remained completely within the Christian boundary for training, practice and supervision.

This group of counsellors all work in Christian based counselling centres. They have Christian supervisors and have done mostly Christian based training courses. Three of them have only trained to certificate level, whilst two others have a Masters in Counselling from US Christian Universities. They remained included in the research sample because they are experienced counsellors, working not only with church referrals, but with the general public, for many years. Also their counselling centres are sent referrals from statutory agencies such as GPs and social services. They are also used for placements of counsellors training on ACC accredited courses.

Exemplar: Joan

Joan has a Christian Charismatic background and describes herself ‘as a very active member of a church’. Her training is integrative, with both psychodynamic and Transactional analysis understandings. Much of it has been specifically geared to pregnancy crisis counselling and most of it has been in the Christian Counselling sector. She came into the work because many years ago she was faced with a surprise pregnancy and realised there was no support for dealing with that specific issue. She felt very much lead by God to set up the Pregnancy Crisis agency.

_I had a clear feeling of God leading me into this_

She is clear that God supports her personally...

_Where do I get support? Well God...That is the key thing!_
... and in fact her faith undergirds her understanding of many aspects of the work.

One of the things I pray is that God will send people to us.

She uses a great deal of faith based language to describe her experience, for example in her approach to clients.

When people come in I pray that they will feel welcomed, recognising that they will feel very vulnerable. They are facing a crisis (and I pray) that they will experience the Love of God.

She uses a variety of faith based interventions in counselling sessions, for example:

Prayer

I would use silent prayer in sessions, for example for guidance for me. I would pray also for their safety in difficult circumstances. I might, if the girl had shown an interest in faith either offer to pray with her in the session or to pray for her and her circumstances outside the session.

Forgiveness

The journey programme (A post abortion counselling programme) is a 10 step recovery programme based on Christian principles but very acceptable to the girl in the street. I just find the step of forgiveness is often the key that, if the girl has expressed an interest in God, then I would bring in God and His forgiveness. That is just so powerful because whatever level of understanding the girl has in her belief in God, if she can access the fact that God has forgiven her and that then enables her to forgive herself. That can be a big step for her moving on. I just see that as being really powerful.

...and in dealing with grief.

The other is suppose step that springs to mind that I feel I can bring my Christian faith into particularly is the step of grief, when they are perhaps imagining their baby and saying goodbye to their baby that I can be silently praying for them as they do that and hope even those who have not professed any faith in God usually come up with some kind of picture and seem amazed that they can have that picture. And for them that can be really meaningful to them.

She recognizes very clearly that although her preference might be that the girl does not have an abortion, her job is very much to help them come to their own decision...

Well naturally part of me would feel sad, but then we don’t always know the outcome because sometimes I see it as I am planting seeds. I can continue to pray for her. It might have been that when she has gone away she has had time to think through. Whatever they decide we say we offer ongoing support so that we are not there to judge but to offer ongoing support so that she knows that we really care for her.

...and that her motivation comes from compassion for those in difficulty.
I just see that I am there to help the girl to see that she has got choices. I am not there to manipulate. I am not there to save the baby. I am there to be a vessel of God’s Grace and Mercy to her. So the outcome is her responsibility. So I guess it is compassion really that motivates me.

Working in this area as a Christian is not easy as there can be misunderstandings from both faith and secular arenas.

I suppose the most difficult challenges I face are in dealing with outside agencies, whether church or secular. Because we are a faith based organisation many assumptions are made about our practice, particularly those who do not understand the principles of counselling and that it is not the same as advice giving. I am careful to whom I talk about my work and think about what I say. For example some pastors do not understand the confidentiality boundaries we work with and may ask for information that is not appropriate to give. For many Christians, abortion hits a raw nerve. So the way we work in providing a non-judgmental space can be emotive. Likewise, secular agencies sometimes assume that we apply pressure to the girls not to abort and judge us accordingly.

She does have a support from her organisational backers...

The management team and the church leadership clearly would not know the details of the girls because of issues of confidentiality but their support in terms of the day to day running is really important.

... and most importantly from a Christian supervisor...

I feel that she would be understanding to whatever I took and have taken! I have faced enormous challenges, because I think even within the Christian Church abortion is a very emotive issue and there is a spectrum of views about it. So over the years I have come across various situations that I have been able to take to supervision and I appreciate her wisdom. I would feel that if that person (the supervisor) was not a Christian that some of what I would be talking about might be like a foreign language to her.

...and a shared biblical perspective on life has been important at times.

Because of her knowledge of the bible I get occasional times where she can bring in a word which would support from where she is coming from, when we are looking for clarification.

Joan also has the knowledge that others pray for her work.

I do have a prayer partner. Obviously with the issues of confidentiality I don’t go into details but I have people praying when I come down here so that when I am talking to the girls that the Holy Spirit would just bring the real issues to the surface.
**My response to Joan**

When I talked to Joan I had the feeling that I was talking to a woman of integrity who knew her narrow field of counselling well. She used very few psychological based terms as she described her experience and she had trained only to certificate level on Christian counselling courses. She did participate in both Christian and secular CPD training, but it was as if she had spent all her energies setting up the centre and in supporting her counsellors. As a result her own professional development had got rather sidelined. Certainly she verbalised more clearly and more emphatically her reliance on her faith for her counselling work than any of those in groups 1 and 2. In professional terms she was one of the lowest in qualification levels, yet my impression of her was of someone well grounded and working safely in a very specific field.

When I interviewed Joan I was initially rather surprised by her heavy reliance on faith concepts and what seemed like lack of psychological knowledge. I considered withdrawing her data and that of other counsellors in this group from the project. I was not sure they fitted the research parameters. However, going back to the original questionnaire inviting participation in the research, I found that they did fit. I realised that this research was not about what definitions I put on practitioners. Joan, like the other counsellors in group 3, had been working under the title of ‘counsellor’ for many years. Her work was valued in her community. Although her faith was very important to her she did not introduce the subject, but waited for the client’s lead. She did what she could to provide herself with adequate support, including professional supervision. Considering all these factors I decided to let her data remains as part of the study. I was looking for what was actually taking place ‘on the ground’, trying not look for data that fitted my preconceived ideas of faith/counselling work integration. It was interesting to note that no picture emerged for Joan as it had for the two other exemplars. Why this happened I do not know. One factor may have been that she is the furthest of the exemplars from me in her way of practice and maybe my ability to empathise with her was less profound than the other two.
SECTION 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Having being immersed in the academic literature at the beginning of this research process, I was aware of the considerable volume of material giving advice on the necessity of integrating spirituality into counselling practice. I was aware too that most practitioners read little of this literature. I wondered what might be considered as the essential factors to be considered, what practitioners in the field really need to think about. I therefore interviewed three academics working in the UK who had direct influence on counselling, training and/or pastoral care. All three had published in the area of spiritual/ psychological understandings of the individual, and were well established in both the academic and professional worlds. These interviews supplied some interesting areas for discussion with the practitioners.

As I talked to them I was aware of their depth of personal engagement with the topic, the wisdom they had gained over their years of practice and their willingness to pass on some of that insight to me. I felt very encouraged by all of them. At the time of the interviews I was at a point in my process of considerable angst, over an issue that by and large they had found peace with.

Table 7.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>School of Therapy</th>
<th>Churchmanship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alistair Ross (AR) (Oxford, previously Birmingham)</td>
<td>Psychodynamic</td>
<td>Baptist minister (evangelical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Swinton (JS) (Aberdeen)</td>
<td>mental health/psychiatric background</td>
<td>Minister in the Church of Scotland. (evangelical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Thorne (BT) (Norwich)</td>
<td>Person centred approach</td>
<td>Active member of the Church of England. (Liberal Anglo-catholic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 7.1 between these academics there is a wide spectrum of both psychological and Christian faith experience. They are also spread out geographically. Neither I nor they would say that they represent the whole of the psychological and/or Christian world in the UK, but their breadth of experience does
give a richness to what they have to say. The fact that despite their different backgrounds they have come to the same position on a number of issues where Christian faith relates to practice is powerful. It is these concurrencies that may be of use to the practitioner in the field (Scott 2008).

**Academic Interview Findings**

Much of the data from these interviews has been written up previously (see Appendix 11), but this work is from a different perspective (Scott 2008). It was important to look again at the material for two reasons. Firstly these conversations alerted me to the main areas that might prove fruitful in my discussions with practitioners and secondly, talking to these academics had an enormous effect on me. The conversations really kick-started my heuristic process.

All three academics have waived any rights to anonymity concerning their interview material.

The main areas that the academics discussed were:-

1. Attention to internal process of the therapist, spiritual and psychological
2. External support for therapist, spiritual and psychological
3. Awareness of the client’s spirituality and /or religious tradition

What was being said was that each of the above areas was important to provide a safe, ethical and fruitful place for spiritually aware counselling to take place. In this instance all the remarks were made in reference to Christianity, but I suspect that the same principles would apply whatever the nature of the spirituality involved. If each of these supports was in place then the therapist could provide such an environment for the client. And if that environment was available, then a sacred space could be created between client and therapist in which healing could take place and a healthier and more peaceful way of being found. I constructed a diagram to explore these ideas (Figure 7.1). I then applied the four major themes that emerged to structure the presentation of material from the interviews.
The diagram represents the therapist integration which is built on a number of factors and is represented by the shaded circle. Each of the supporting ‘legs’ needs to be attended to in order for that circle to be stable. My supposition is that when the circle is stable from the therapist’s ability to hold these factors in tension, that the space inside becomes sacred. This provides a place of profound meeting and a place where the client can find healing and peace. The nature of each supporting leg will differ from therapist to therapist, but overall a balance must be reached. To examine whether this is an appropriate picture, each of the ‘legs’ of this diagram will now be addressed in turn. In each section my personal response to the material is recorded, reflecting on my position at this point in the research process.

SECTION 7.2: ATTENTION TO INTERNAL PROCESS OF THE THERAPIST, SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

(The academics are denoted by their initials for ease of identification)

Generally speaking, the three academics agreed that in order to provide a secure environment that included openness to the spiritual dimension then the

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**Figure 7.1**

![Diagram showing the therapist's integration available to clients](image)
A counsellor/therapist must pay attention to this in their own lives. They state that both the spiritual and the psychological influences had been present for many years.

AR  I had a personal faith first and had done a theological training before I did counselling training. So my interest has always been on the overlap between the two.  

BT  I would count myself fortunate in having both these influences (therapeutic and theological) going on to a very large extent simultaneously, right across the decades.  

For them the topic of integrating the two was very familiar and well thought out…

JS  I have quite a Hebraic understanding of the human person. These things are intertwined. What we are talking about is person's psyche which is affected by their biology, their psychology and their spirituality, so the three or however many dimensions a person has cannot be understood without direct conversation with the other.  

AR  So my view of the person is essentially shaped by our human experience and our spiritual experience.  

BT  (The) central doctrine…which has preoccupied me a lot is the doctrine of the incarnation. What does it mean for me that Jesus Christ is true God and true man? What is the implication of true man? What does that really mean for human beings in terms of their own evolution and development?”

  I see Christ as the exemplar. This is what human beings have it within them to be and that…relates to notions of human potential, notions of, in person centred terminology an actualising tendency, which will enable human beings, conditions being appropriate and favourable, to develop to the fulfilment of their own potential.  

…and to a great degree, the depth of theological understanding enlightens their view of the development of the individual. For example, Brian Thorne talks from within his person-centred framework:

BT  The doctrine of the Trinity proclaims the essential relationality of the human being. That too of course makes perfect sense in terms of the therapeutic encounter. It makes perfect sense in terms particular of the person centred emphasis upon the creation of the conditions of relationship in which human beings can best evolve.”

He would go as far to say that some kind of spiritual discipline is essential for the person-centred therapist.

  The whole business really of what I would call a spiritual discipline is fundamental really for most therapists…however they conceptualise it. I certainly feel it is important for person-centred practitioners.”

From a psychodynamic perspective, Alistair Ross also finds that the theological paradigm supports psychological understanding.
That spiritual dimension (in counselling relationships) makes itself felt present all the time, without necessarily being consciously spoken. That matches my belief about unconscious processes being at work all the time."

All three academics agree that to leave spirituality outside the counselling room is a nonsense if it is part of the experience of those involved in the counselling dyad.

There is a very deep sense...of what we might call the Divine Inheritance within the human being."

I think the idea that you exclude spirituality from the counselling arena is actually impossible. It is culturally inappropriate ... in reality you can’t do that... unless you don’t accept the possibility of the spirit.”

So my view of the person is essentially shaped by our human experience and our spiritual experience, which is that people have a spiritual dimension. It is often unacknowledged.

There is spiritual life within you. It is in you. It is incarnate. It is not a separate thing that you put on.”

If this spiritual dimension is present then profound moments of contact sometimes take place.

...this sense that somehow where two or three are gathered together then something else, if you like happens... something else is present, whether we call that the presence of God or the presence of the Holy Spirit or whatever it is, or whether we call it transformational power.

These profound moments may be described differently, for example, Brian Thorne calls them ‘moments of tenderness’ (Thorne 2004), or in later writings in conjunction with Dave Mearns he coins the phrase “Relational Depth” (Mearns and Thorne 2000) John Swinton talks of ‘interpathy’…

Interpathy actually means that you leave your culture behind and sit down in that strange land and look around. And you look at your own culture from the other side. I guess the essence is opening yourself to the possibilities of being wrong on some things and there maybe insights here that you can gather and they will be beneficial to both of you.”

..and Alistair Ross calls it ‘Holy Ground”.

If you are meeting somebody at depth in their psyche and your psyche, anything can happen and that can be a vital aspect of the spirit’s work, just as the spirit is working to generate dreams or images or metaphors that are redolent of that. Certainly there have been with all clients at some stage, a profound moment or what in another context you would call standing on Holy Ground.”

But whatever the language used it seems clear that they are describing similar experiences.
One aspect that they all agree on is that the particular beliefs of the therapist will affect how they engage with counselling work.

**JS**  *There is nothing intrinsic to religion that says it is good or bad. When it is used in a therapeutic context it really depends on the context and the way the practitioner uses it.*

Those with a more rigid framework will inevitably find difficulty in working with clients from a different background.

**BT**  *A therapist who is in some way caught up in the notion of the essential rightness and incontrovertibility of some of his own beliefs and practices is clearly going to land in a very considerable mess.*

*I think religious belief which is founded really upon moral codes as being the most difficult fit, rather than on the experience of relationship with God.*

This is more obvious from an evangelical Christian standpoint, but could come from any rigidly held set of beliefs, theological or psychological.

**AR**  *It would be unfair to simply say all the issues are in relationship to evangelicalism. In that I do find some, several of my liberal colleagues, on different areas just as dogmatic and wanting to be absolutely... It would also be true that the psychoanalytic community is sometimes not known for its tolerance of alternative viewpoints.*

**Personal reflection**

Looking at the first supporting leg of the ‘integration circle’, I dwelt on how my internal processes might at that moment in time be affecting my work with clients. Certainly I had a discipline of reflection as a practitioner, often using my personal counter-transferential responses in a session to glean information about my client (Racker 1968, Casement 1985). I, like many therapists, had over the years developed the ability to be fully in the relationship with the client, but yet also be able to stand back and think about what might be happening. I also made sure that I had sufficient external prompts such as in supervision and CPD trainings to support and develop this. What I was less sure about at this time was how much time I spent reflecting on spiritual matters. I found it quite frightening to examine long held beliefs. I was embedded not only spiritually but also socially in an evangelical church. The fear was, “If I really look at the doctrines and practices I have lived by for over thirty years and find that I cannot believe in them, then what?” It felt that to re-examine these things was to risk the whole fabric of my life crumbling. Yet it was necessary to do so if I was to be authentic and available to my clients in this area. As I began to explore these issues I went through what might be described as a crisis of faith. Did I really believe any of it? I found a
mentor, Dr Ken Evans, who enabled me to take all the various parts of my life (spiritual, professional, psychological, academic, social) and enabled me to address those necessary things that could not be addressed in any other place. This gave me the additional support I needed, together with the PhD group at Manchester. I note in my journal at this time I wrote, “Having a place to explore the un-sayable is like being given a very precious gift.”

What was interesting was that after a while I noticed that none of my private clients were bringing any spiritual issues to therapy in the way that they had before. Yet they could not have known in any conscious way that this was an unsettled area for me. Later, when I found something that felt more like solid ground for me as far as faith was concerned, the issue reappeared from my clients. For me, this was clear experiential evidence that my spiritual state certainly affected my clinical work.

The encouragement from the three academics was that I was on the right track. Even though there was personal risk involved in examining my faith and that there was a cost, their encouragement allowed me to move forwards. It was what I needed to do if I was going to work safely and efficaciously in this area. Without these three conversations I do not know if I would have had the courage to dig so deeply or even to continue with the research project.

Eventually I recovered from the crisis and found that most areas of my life were still intact. Most of my Christian belief and principles remained. The biggest difference was that I was much more prepared to hold them with a more open hand. There were places where I had to admit that sometimes my faith might say something different to my theoretical psychological understandings, for example how much of the individual’s healing is self-generated and how much is from the Holy Spirit. The difference now was that rather than seeing a direct conflict, I saw a paradox. It was and remains OK not to have all the answers and to hold the tension. I am sure that this shift has made me more available to more of my clients more of the time. Painful as this process was, I agree with Brian Thorne when he says, “For somebody holding... different frameworks of understanding of reality it is even more important that those are put fairly regularly under the microscope.” For all of us who straddle the faith-therapy boundary it is clearly essential that we take time to reflect on exactly what we believe if we are to be able to be authentic with our clients and thus fulfill one of the main pillars of person-centred counselling.
Because if you really do believe that your own honesty and authenticity is central to your ability to relate effectively to your clientele, then you can’t let things like this go by default, because they are the underpinning reality of your whole existence.

How can counsellors work ethically and efficaciously in this arena? Where can they find the kind of support that allows them to do it? Brian Thorne is clear that as with all counseling work the first port of call has to be the supervisor, but for him it has been important to find one who at least was sympathetic to his spiritual dimension.

It has been very important for me throughout my whole career to have a supervisor who is as fully at home with a spiritual understanding of reality

Alistair Ross would not necessarily agree with this. Sometimes he has had supervisors that would profess no faith, but for him the important factor was an acceptance of him as a whole person, and from a psychodynamic perspective, not causing a split within the psyche.

(Talking of a non-believing supervisor) It was something about her wanting to have the whole of me in relation to supervision.

I think the key thing is to find a supervisor that wants to supervise you. If spirituality is you then that has to be included.

Even from a psychiatric nursing background where supervision is not such a feature of professional life, John Swinton remarks on the importance of finding support from colleagues.

People receive supervision, but in a kind of informal basis from your peers. You would seek out those who tended towards that perspective themselves. In the NHS like in any other organisation you get people very supportive and people that are very anti.

However, supervision is not enough on its own. Other perhaps less formal kinds of support are just as important for the spiritually aware counsellor.

For Brian Thorne that comes through friends:

When I think of my friends and acquaintances I am astonished how many of them are in fact, clergy. Not only Anglican clergy. That just seems to have happened.
…through being an active member of his Christian Church:

*BT* I have been a member of a worshiping community all my life.

…and through the context in which he has chosen to work.

*BT* It (the counselling centre) is also devoted to a spiritual understanding of reality and that has been here since its foundation.

Similarly with Alistair Ross, his active faith and his understanding of theology support him as a therapist…

*AR* My faith does support my work in that I believe that one of the things that I work with, with clients is the capacity for transcendence, but if you are meeting somebody at depth in their psyche and your psyche anything can happen

…as do his friends and colleagues:

> The standard is I suppose, what actually supports me? And that would be through colleagues that I can talk about both, faith colleagues and professional colleagues.

**Personal Reflection**

For me this second leg of the integration circle was and in some senses remains problematic. I have found it difficult over the years to find appropriate supervision for my work. I was often faced with the choice of skilled secular supervision that either negated or ignored the spiritual dimension, or supervision with a Christian supervisor that sometimes felt collusive and not very effective. Mostly I chose the former and looked for spiritual support elsewhere. However, this was never wholly satisfactory. As a therapist I have always held that healing comes to the individual when disparate parts of the self become integrated. From a psychodynamic perspective this might be viewed as healing splits in the personality (Pine 1985), whilst person-centred therapists might see it as knowing and accepting more of the self (Maslow 1968). To take secular matters to one supervisor and spiritual matters to someone else seems to negate this. It was heartening to hear that the academics agreed that the best solution was to find someone that was prepared to supervise both aspects. The difficulty in finding someone who could do this remained. I eventually found another therapist with the same problem and we agreed to do peer supervision. However, because of the dangers of collusion, I still felt the need of another supervisor who although spiritually aware, is not a Christian and I think does not understand the whole of my context. So the danger of splitting remains.
This difficulty of finding support for integrating the two aspects of myself, professional and spiritual, has been there from the beginning of my training. There was little course content that referred to spirituality of any kind and when it did come up there was puzzlement on the part of my peers as to why I found this difficult. I also found it problematic in my church context. Generally it seemed that those that knew me well were genuinely concerned for my welfare. However, few understood what I was doing and many were I think, a little fearful that I was following a secular psychotherapy training that could be a little dangerous. I might become unsound and doubt some of the doctrines of the church. Maybe too there was a part of me that agreed with them. So I expected disapproval and it was therefore difficult to share much on a deep level in this context.

SECTION 7.4: AWARENESS OF THE CLIENT’S SPIRITUALITY AND/OR RELIGIOUS TRADITION

There are both possibilities and problems associated with the presence of the spiritual dimension in the counselling room. Some of this is associated with the therapist, but much also is introduced by the client, whether is it spoken about or not.

On the positive side it can be a great resource for clients…

AR I view it (client spirituality) as a resource and if they have got people that they belong to, I would encourage them to use those friends as a resource. That is part of the ego continuum, because one of the things that therapy does do is that it can be very challenging in the sense of ego. Sometimes they might find that in their own personal relationship with God. I would not discourage that.”

BT ... there is a sense that comes of a kind of interconnectedness of all things and this seems to be in the end enormously significant, because so often clients have a sense of great isolation, of great loneliness.

…and particularly when the individual is seen in an eternal rather than a temporal perspective.

BT I do now find that perceiving somebody as to use the theological jargon, an eternal soul does have very considerable meaning and impact. Especially, for example, if you are working with somebody who may be terminally ill or with somebody who for one reason or another is thinking about self destruction. To be able to perceive, to conceptualise this person as having an existence which goes beyond death I find is actually very powerful, whether articulated or not.”

On the negative side church experience can be very difficult for either client or counsellor and this will have its impact in the counselling room.
I have begun to realise that God will accept me (client), but in the church it is a somewhat condemnatory experience, ‘the very antithesis of what it should be.”

A number of people I have seen have a faith background and their view is that we find something enormously releasing in a therapeutic context where they sense that somebody does have a faith perspective and is not judging them. They can say anything they like. Inevitably they say things in therapy that they could not say to anyone else in relationship too.”

Sometimes the faith of the counsellor influences the choice made by the client…

What was important for some (clients) was to know that I was a Christian, because either they themselves were Christians or had a profound respect for Christianity, or because they had fallen foul of a particular kind of Christianity and knew that I embodied a rather different kind of Christianity. There were others who came to me because they felt I was essentially a person concerned with the spiritual dimension and it did not really worry me too much about what the nature of that spirituality might be.”

…and even things that on the surface look very unhelpful from a therapeutic perspective can be useful.

If it is something like the doctrine of original sin, somehow we are all condemned. It can be a negative thing, but it can also be a positive thing in a sense that that really means that we are all in the same boat. There is no way that you as a therapist or a pastor can point to me and say that I am more sinful that you are. But that is not the way it is framed. So really within the therapeutic context I think that there is a potential for theological reframing.

However, there can be difficulties both for counsellor and client if the faith of either is framed by a rigid set of ‘rules’.

Because they (the therapist) may come a point where he or she feels that there is no option but to really direct the client and express ‘The truth.’

John Swinton points to difficulties in the linkage of illness and sin:

There are problems within the evangelical tradition and therefore...the juxtaposition between illness and sin. You experience what you experience because of something that you have done.

And from a psychodynamic viewpoint, Alistair Ross agrees:

I think within the development of evangelicalism there can be quite a strong both perfectionist and splitting view. And there are some clients for whom it is always a defense.”

**Personal Reflection**

The area of the awareness of the client’s spirituality is the one I have thought least about, yet for many clients I know it is very important. Over the years clients have
presented with many different problems, but for those who stay to work in depth, major existential questions often arise. Why am I here? What meaning can I make out of my circumstances? What life purpose can I find? etc. Very often these lead to spiritual explorations and for those who are Christians the answers often come from their doctrinal beliefs and/or their relationship with God. Alistair Ross in his interview talked about doing a spiritual assessment of the client at the beginning of therapy. Even when working in a Christian Counselling Centre I did not do this, yet the Christian ethos was clear in the literature given to clients. I think it was because of a fear of being misunderstood, that if we asked direct questions on this matter it would be seen as trying to evangelise. I think too, in my private practice, because of the lack of understanding I had received from non-Christian professionals, I wanted to be seen as a professional and effective therapist. If I asked questions about spirituality I might be seen as unsafe or even weird.

Certainly from a personal perspective I have experienced both positive and negative influences when the spiritual dimension is openly acknowledged in the counselling room. On the positive side, when I share a similar life framework with a client it is easier for that client to feel acceptance and understanding. For example, I had a client, a minister’s wife. Their church was small and struggled to keep going. In nature it was fairly rigid in its doctrines. She presented with high anxiety and depression and felt trapped in a situation not of her choosing. Yet she valued her faith and wanted to support her husband. Our work was about finding a more peaceful place to be and still stay within the structure that has supported her all her life. What she valued in our work was the opportunity to protest at the unfairness of her situation and not be judged. She also needed to know that her decision to stay within it would be understood and accepted. It would have been impossible for her to go to someone with no understanding of her doctrinal framework. She would rather have suffered in silence.

On the other hand, a client came who blamed every misfortune on her life on God’s judgment of her being ‘bad.’ She entertained no personal responsibility for the lonely situation she found herself in. She had lost many friends and had poor relationships with her grown up children because of her incessant interfering in their lives. In psychological terms she had poor boundaries and little sense of herself as an individual. Working with her was very difficult because there was not much point if God
would overrule and set others against her. Her belief in an all-powerful and somewhat judgmental God really hampered progress.

SECTION 7.5: CONTEXT AND LANGUAGE OF THERAPY

Although all three academics would agree that in a counselling situation you are dealing with one individual, the context in which that individual lives and in which the counselling takes place has a bearing on the whole process.

JS  *It looks as if you are just counselling the person in front of you, but in fact you are counselling the whole community, or you are working within the whole community, some of which you understand and some of which you don’t*

The use of appropriate language is essential if the client is to be met by the therapist. That may include some religious or spiritual language if that is what is normal for a particular client.

JS  *You have to decide which language has priority within the therapeutic encounter and your own personal journey*

In fact, perhaps the therapist needs to think about therapeutic experiences using more than one set of vocabulary.

BT  *I certainly feel myself that a lot of the experiences in either the spiritual or psychological realm are the same and we are actually applying different vocabulary as we try and grapple with them.*

So the therapist needs to be at home sometimes in more than one language in order to be really present for the client. In other words she/he needs to have an understanding of both the psychological and the spiritual ways of expression. This understanding of the two worlds can be thought of as bilingualism, where the words are understood at a deep level and in context, in contrast with translation, where the words may be understood, but not the exact sense meant by the speaker. As John Swinton says, “You can actually lose things by trying to translate.”

Personal Reflection

I had started this journey in a state of considerable angst as to how my faith affected my practice, whether or not I working ethically and in the best way to benefit my clients. As I talked with the academics I began to feel encouraged that I had come much further along the path than I had previously realised.
I had spent many years working in an international community in Brussels, in regards to context and language usage, and I was very aware of the need to constantly check out that I ‘shared meaning’ with my clients. Many of them were not mother tongue English, although I generally worked in English. I knew by experience that sometimes a word in one language just did not have the exact equivalent in another. This was clearest when the mother tongue of the client was French. I understand French well and clients would often revert to French when under stress or when regressing. It was of huge benefit that I could understand them accurately in that place, being bilingual enough not to need to translate, but to understand within the lived context of that client. The journey to the place of meeting at depth was much smoother than it would otherwise have been.

Also I worked in a Counselling Centre with a Christian base concurrently with my private practice where there was no overt Christian presentation. Some clients came to the Centre because they felt that their faith might be better respected there rather than in a completely secular setting. Understanding their frame of reference was really important if they were to feel secure enough to address difficult issues. So, when working in a Christian context, my thought processes might be around issues such as ‘discernment’, rather than ‘intuition’ from person centred background, or even ‘transference and counter transference’ from psychodynamic theory. What I would really be trying to hold and understand was ‘Information I know from my relationship with the client that has as yet not been verbalised’.

What was interesting was that although I did not advertise my faith in my private practice, a considerable number of clients brought up spiritual issues and I wondered if in any sense there was an unconscious ‘permission giving’ on my part that this was an allowed topic.

So context, language use and understanding, checking our meanings with clients of different background, whether cultural, national or religious were a regular part of my practice. Whatever the context, the client and their meaning has to remain central, and I find myself agreeing with John Swinton when he said, “The centre of the process is the individual that you’re talking to, to enable them to find healing, to enable them to grow.”

Having spent a great deal of time with the data referring to the three academics I found myself wondering what of my understanding had changed? I suppose the
biggest thing was that listening to them had encouraged me to keep going along this track of self examination. Also I began being involved more in activities that fed my spiritual nature such as prayer and meditation. I had already learnt to be honest and open in the therapeutic world. Now I began to apply that to my faith community. This was not an easy road, but it has borne fruit in producing more genuine contact with my fellow believers. I think that honesty has also meant that I am less misunderstood and more accepted and that my work, even if seen as being a little out of the ordinary for an evangelical Christian, is valued. Maybe some of this feeling of being more acceptable is a reflection of my own self-acceptance. Some of the understanding engendered by this part of the research project is illuminated by the allegorical story in CW 7.1.
SECTION 7.6: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE THREE ACADEMICS

Having now looked at the four legs of the diagram in turn it seems this is a reasonable way to organize the material. It brings some coherence but of course it does not include every possible nuance from the interviews. It is sufficient to give a
reasonable view of areas that the academics not only think important, but generally agree on.

At this point I had a clear picture of what these academics were saying was important for the therapist to consider. It was heartening for me that although they came from different churchmanship and psychotherapy schools, there was in large area of agreement between them. Their recommendations were:-

1. It is vital that counsellors/psychotherapists who wish to work in the spiritual dimension with their clients pay attention to their own development, both psychological and spiritual.
2. Counsellors/psychotherapists must find sufficient support for this work. This can come through both formal (e.g. appropriate supervision) and informal (e.g. peers, worship/faith communities, friends etc).
3. The most appropriate supervision is that which can include the whole person of the therapist.
4. Clients’ spirituality is part of what they bring to the counselling room and it will affect the relationship forms and the work done.
5. Care need to be taken to consider the effects of both the context in which the counselling takes place and the language that either client or counsellor might use.
CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION: MATERIAL FROM ALL OF THE INTERVIEWEES

We now move from exemplars and academic interviewees to looking at the broader sweep of practitioner material and discuss it in relation to the literature. Again my responses are included as appropriate.

This material is divided into the four areas of interest that emerged from the academic interviews in order to give it a coherent structure. Some quotes that appeared in chapter 6 (exemplars) and chapter 7 (academics) are repeated here to show how all the information fits together.

SECTION 8.1 ATTENTION TO THE INTERNAL PROCESSES OF THE THERAPISTS, BOTH SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

It is very clear from the literature that, although there are dissenting voices (e.g. Van Deusen-Hunsinger 1995 Rowe 2001, Smail 2001), there is a consistent and growing academic interest in the integration of spiritual resources into clinical practice (e.g. Swinton 2001, Foskett et al 2004, West 2000, Lines 2006, Clarkson 2001). This on its own is an encouragement to practitioners who like myself, have felt and lived this in their lives, but have not had much in the way of back-up for their desired way of being in the professional sphere. It means that despite what colleagues, trainers, supervisors or faith contacts say we have firmer ground to stand on than we previously thought.

As I started to write this discussion, I had the feeling of ‘standing in the gap’ between the academic and the professional world. This is not an unfamiliar place as it echoes the dynamics engendered by the spirituality/psychotherapy dialogue. It is another example of the parallels in the heuristic process. I end up living those things I am researching.
We begin with evidence from across the whole group of practitioners, interspersed with my response to their material, followed by discussion in light of the literature.

Evidence from the practitioners

From all of the groups practitioners agree that spirituality is very important in their lives, always present for them and it cannot be left outside when they enter the counselling room.

From group 1:

Verity I feel that my faith isn’t separate from my life.

Diana You can’t leave it (faith) at the door.

From group 2:

Rebecca I really saw my relationship with God as pivotal to everything else...essential to everything that I did.

Sian When I come into the counselling room and I am with a client I am me as a whole person. I don’t leave bits of myself out because I don’t think that is being honest with the client about who I am as a person.

Ted (My kind of Christianity) is Roman Catholic, yes. It is in my bones. I always assume it is in the room. I can’t divide. There is not a place where Ted stops and priesthood starts. There is no such place.

From group 3:

Yi Whatever you are talking about, there is a spiritual element. I don’t think I really divide it off very...sort of with high walls, you know?

Joan My faith is very important to me.

Some of these statements are very strong and many were spoken with vehemence in the interviews. Nearly every interviewee included a similar statement. It seems that however they express it, whatever effect they feel their faith has on their clinical practice, the fact that it is there is an inescapable part of their reality. They cannot exclude it, even if there is external pressure to do so (see below for details on this). Not only is their spirituality omnipresent, but it forms a valued resource for their lives and their work. For example:

Joy (G1) Firstly, I suppose there is my relationship with Jesus. With that as my backstop I can be assured that I will not go far wrong.
Diana (G1) (My faith says) Love for others, love for God and love for me. As I have done the work more and more I realise that if I don’t accept myself I can’t give that to someone else.

I suppose the bit that tied in with much of the Christian faith which is also important is hope.

Greg (G3) (After seeing clients) It is fascinating for me processing afterwards, my responses, how fundamentally I hold on to my bedrock which is my own sense of spirituality, sense of relationship with God inalienable right of the individual, regardless of the monstrous things that may have come up.

Joan (G3) Where do I get support? Well God...that is the key thing and in fact (He) guides many aspects of the work.

And we come to the lovely description of ‘granny’s corset’!

Val (G2) My faith is like the stays in my Granny’s corset. Every few inches there is something to hold you in. It gives me strength and structure, and a way to be in the world. I can loosen it and tighten it as needed, making it more or less overt, as the situation demands. But always, always it is there!

So there is a clear expression that faith is the sustaining force in their lives. Faith had come first and counselling has been a later addition to their understanding of the individual.

Personal reflection

I find in myself a great resonance with all that these practitioners say. My Christian faith preceded my immersion in the counselling world. In fact my counselling training was born of a need I saw within the church for a safe place to explore unresolved issues. So my therapeutic work became an outward expression of my faith, a wanting to share some of the love and acceptance I felt from God. For me also it is something that affects the way I see clients. I find that the perspective that all are equal before God (NIV: Galatians 3:28) helps me to give full value to the client, in whatever context and with whatever issues they bring. Sometimes when a client is carrying a lot of damage and hurt, progress can be painfully slow. Yet if I can see this in an eternal rather than a temporal framework it allows me to continue to offer hope.

Back to the Practitioners

The idea of a ‘calling’ is expressed far more clearly in groups 2 and 3, i.e. those that have a larger Christian influence in their counselling role.
Margaret (G2) I see my counselling work as a calling, just as I see the Christian life as a 'call to freedom.'

Joan (G3) I had a clear feeling of God leading me into this and His continuing leading and support as we continue. Although there are challenges, my faith is a real support for this work.

Grace (G3) I feel called to this work by God.

For some, counselling has not just grown out of their faith, but it has also had an effect on how that faith has developed.

Joy (G1) Really it was my counselling training that helped me put things together. It was grounded in the philosophical understandings of the person centred approach and it gave me a framework to hang my Christian beliefs on. Before that I think I was wondering if I was so far out on a limb that I would be stretching things to call myself a Christian.

Ted (G2) My understanding of the individual has affected my preaching. I now tend to preach on core human issues rather than 'religious theory.' Also, the power dynamic between me and those I preach to is changing. It is far less hierarchical and a much happier place to be.

It works the other way round to. My faith affects my practice. Just as I want to help people as a priest, I also want to get results in therapy. It is about being real and having integrity in both arenas.

Margaret (G2) From the person-centred perspective I see that it (counselling) requires Christ-like qualities of dedication, discipline, honesty, alertness, compassion and vulnerability. I have found that my counselling helps me to live a more Christ-like life.

For others, particularly those in groups 2 and 3, faith seems to act as a filter to anything they take in and it becomes a limiting factor in how they might understand the individual in psychological terms.

Carys (G2) I take from the theory what fits with my faith and I could not be involved in counselling if I felt it was contrary that faith.

Dave (G3) I would not use anything that was in direct conflict with my faith.

The idea of counselling growing out from a faith base is in contrast with some secular therapists who seem to develop an interest in the spiritual as they pursue their practice e.g. Rowan. In his 2002 paper, ‘A transpersonal way of relating to clients’ details the way that he firstly became aware of the spiritual dimension through facilitating a number of ‘growth groups’. These sound like therapy groups, but are not named as such. He realised that he is not on his own in this and comes across similar
experiences described by others. He links it across the therapy schools such as
person-centred, gestalt, psychodrama, bodywork, focusing, experiential, existential and
some psychoanalytic. He then takes specific steps to enhance his experience of the
transpersonal realm and to allow himself to enter spiritual states at will, rather than by
waiting for them to happen (Ibid). He comes to the conclusion that;

\[ \text{In order to work this (i.e. the transpersonal or spiritual) way the therapist has to develop his or her own consciousness. It is a specific form of consciousness which has to be reached and held.} \text{ (Rowan 2002)} \]

So for him, being a therapist opening up the spiritual realm is now an intrinsic part of his
therapy work.

For those in groups 1 and 2 the developmental aspect of integration is acknowledged…

*Diana (G1):* It is still very much a journey

*Rebecca (G)* The need for personal integration and reflection is ongoing. We have to
experience things, reflect on them at deeper levels. There is little time in
a diploma course to do that.

… and tensions between the faith and counselling worlds have been a feature of that
journey.

*Rebecca (G2)* I do struggle sometimes with the integration of my psychological and
theological understanding of the individual, for example in the area of
autonomy / dependence.

*Dawn (G2)* I acknowledge that I have had problems sometimes in working out my
faith and my job.

*Elizabeth (G1) (talking of theological and psychological understandings)*

\[ \text{It is kind of a bit like a marriage really. You have got two individuals and they can come together as one without losing their identity. But there are times when you can see that they come together so wonderfully well but there are times when they are a bit different.} \]

However, this tension is not really present for some in group 2 and all in group
3, perhaps because they see great parallels between their Christian and psychological
understanding of the individual.

*Carys (G2)* I have never seen a dissonance between my faith and counselling
because I see the setting of the Person-centred core conditions as being
a very Christ-like attitude towards people.

On the other hand it could be because they compartmentalise the two domains. When
Grace was asked about how her faith affected her practice she said:
Grace (G3)  That is a difficult question! I don’t think it particularly does. It is something I can push to one side, if I want to push it to one side so that it does not get in the way.

Counsellors in group 3 verbalise their aims much more in faith-based terms but in general are clear that what they are about is counselling, not evangelism.

Joan (G3)  So I guess I see this as an opportunity to use counselling skills to help her to sort out her worries, fears, what her head says and what her heart is saying. Just as God offers us free choice, we can choose to follow Him or not, so I see (that), in helping the girl to explore all the options.

However there is perhaps an underlying agenda:

Joan (G3)  I find it very exciting and it is not our mission to see people get saved, but I saw one person who had had three abortions and she came back to God through coming for counselling. She got a new partner and then got saved and then they got married. Plus other people who have become Christians through this, through the journey and they express an interest of perhaps going to church. They just found it has made a difference

…and at the extreme end of the sample there is leakage between the role as a counsellor and the desire to evangelise.

Grace (G3)  I would love to see that everyone leaving the counselling room had come to know Jesus, but I know that it is not in my power to make this happen. We are called to offer an open listening and supportive service for clients to use as is best for them. If faith issues come up... and I might ask the odd question to nudge in that direction... I will pick up the clues and push on the door opened by the client. But if it is shut, it stays that way and a listening ear is offered.

For those that do straddle the psychological/theological boundary tensions are inevitable and this can mean that being in the centre of either community can be uncomfortable...

Verity (G1)  My life is a wonderful combination of things. It is a whole, but I feel I am skirting... it is almost like different words or different realities sometimes.

Elizabeth(G1)  I have a couple of times been in the hub of the wheel and then found myself spinning to the edge. Now I ...I walk very differently. I keep feeling drawn into it in the centre. Can I do something, can I make a difference? But such is the structure that actually I can’t bear to be part of it.

…and that finding a peaceful place to be with it all can be difficult.

Dawn:  (Talking of her work with couples in a secular agency) I think that I went through a really hard time because most of the clients that came
there had already decided to part company. I felt that every time I went there I had to face this. It was an awful feeling. I was helping people to separate. But then finding the more comfortable part of that was to enable them to make a good separation as far as that goes. And acknowledging that they don’t have the same beliefs as I do and they are not bound by those same constraints that I would and have bound myself willingly to. That is the right thing for them at that time. So I did a lot of quite uncomfortable working it through.

Rebecca too notes that as she ‘pursues wholeness for myself and facilitating that for others’, sometimes she has difficulties working out the integration of her psychological and theological perspectives due to her own faith history.

Rebecca (G2) Some elements of my catholic upbringing and inherited culture gave me the view of life with little autonomy and a distrust of my desires. I was often left with the feeling that if I took any initiative I might step over some unspoken boundary. Also the evangelical influence gave me lots of ‘Thou shalt nots.’ But it is about working towards a more comfortable place – being able to sit with the ‘not knowing’ and treasure the questions.

Overall, a picture emerged of those counsellors in group 1 and 2 as people who sometimes inhabited the edge of their professional and faith communities and at other times they were fully immersed in both worlds simultaneously.

Rebecca (G2) I am interested in intercultural issues, working with people on the edge. I suppose my own life I live on the edge.

Elizabeth (G1) It is very difficult really, finding your place when by your nature you are an edge dweller.

But she finds meaning in it by relating to her faith understanding.

If it is good enough for the Boss (i.e. Jesus) it is good enough for me! That is what I feel. Because I look at Him and I look at his life. He was an edge-dweller. He did not fit the system and he got crucified for his pains. So when these things come and they are hard, I think well, that is how it is going to be and in fairness He has provided, but it is still difficult.

Verity values this edge dwelling position…

Verity (G1) I actually quite like it because I feel I can catch people coming in and catch people going out,

…but she recognises the difficulties and wishes her two worlds could come together a little…

Sometimes it is a lonely place. I ache for the relational within the church and I think that the counselling and church worlds have a lot to say to each other.
...and realises that she is not alone in this.

As I talk to my peers I find similar experiences.

Diana echoes her feelings and knows that at her stage in the journey, she can accept this position, providing she has at least some people to share it with.

Diana (G1) I think I am OK now being on the edge as long as I have got enough people on the edge. I have enough people with me because it is quite lonely otherwise.

Personal Reflection

As I sat and listened to these practitioners talking, and again as I write about their experience, I found myself identifying strongly with their feeling of living between two worlds, sometimes comfortably and sometimes with immense strain. This was the crux of the angst that motivated the PhD in the first place, the dilemma that I had been tussling with for many years. I like them, could tell stories of how wonderfully the two perspectives linked together and just as many when they seemed to be in opposition. So for example, how could I see people as inherently good and capable of growth as the person-centred core conditions demand (Rogers 1961) when alongside that I am surrounded by the evangelical doctrine of original sin (Thorne 1998)? How can I empathise with those who live a lifestyle than that my church’s teaching would say was not acceptable? Yet I find no difficulty in doing so. I also saw that when I read about the way Jesus related to people he epitomised the core conditions, with total acceptance, love and honesty. I wrote a poem trying to express my feelings on this matter (CW 8.1).
I wanted to know whether or not in the writing of this poem I had captured more than just my experience so I sent it off to all those practitioners that I had interviewed. The responses I received from those in groups 1 & 2 were very encouraging.

For example:

Verity (G1)  
I REALLY love the poem, perhaps the title most of all. When I read the line about feeling "whole" and "complete" and it being the "best place in the world to be" when things are working in harmony I wanted to shout "Yes!" and hoped I would never forget just how wonderful it is in that place-it feels how we were designed to fit into the world. Yet at other times I do indeed chide myself for sitting on the edge and risking falling off into that space-you have captured so well that sense and uncomfortable feeling for me.

I think the only thing that I would add that I perhaps don't see here (though even as I say that I can see it is implicit in the pull towards one centre or another) is the nagging sense that I may betray my faith by holding back who I really am at times-yet I feel redeemed at the end of the poem when I realise that by sitting in that uncomfortable place on the edge I may be of some use to the in-
dwellers. And the surge of joy when we meet another edge-dweller is certainly felt by me—as it was when I met you, Ann.

Elizabeth (G1) Thanks for the poem. (It) seems to say all I have and would want to say about my position as an edge dweller. Thank you.

Val (G2) I connected with it immediately and understood that, for me, it is a spot on description of what happens when I, as a counsellor who is a Christian, connects with a client or supervisee. Your poem has actually been a great comfort to me because it so accurately describes the "how" I am in my work. Sometimes it’s hard to describe the "how"—so thank you for this little gem!

Carys (G2) If I hadn’t known better I would have said that your research was only relating to me!! I’m amazed

Sian (G2) I have to keep in mind the whole of my practice, my faith, my personal life. Sometimes the balance is very difficult. I do like the poem but feel for me that everything is spinning far too fast at the moment, but yes when everything is in sync, for me it is the best place in the world to be.

It was predictable from the interviews that those in group 3 were unlikely to find a resonance with my poem. This was in general true.

Jaygee (G3) We have always worked for Christian Counselling services, albeit ones which see many clients that are not Christian. Therefore we don’t feel the same tension that you do working as a Christian in a secular organisation.

There was one notable exception. The exemplar (Joan) differed from all the others in this group in her response in this instance.

Joan (G3) I loved the poem, it seemed to sum up well how I feel at times.

Discussion

(Relating the practitioner evidence to the literature and the three academics)

The three academics, Thorne, Swinton and Ross agree with the literature that leaving spirituality outside of the counselling room makes no sense if it is part of the experience of those involved in the counselling dyad (West 2009, 2011a, Jenkins 2011, Hay 2002, Thorne 1998, Lines 2002). It is evident that despite some dissenting voices (Rowe 2001, Smail 2001), the weight of the evidence lies in the direction of spirituality being an important resource for enhancing the mental health of clients (for example: Swinton 2001, Foskett et al 2004, Pargament 2007, Francis, Robbins, Lewis, Quigley and Wheeler 2004). The practitioners in this study certainly agree with all of this and
live it out in their counselling work. They are adamant that spirituality is an integral part of their identity and is present within them as they counsel.

The three academics have a clear two-element base to their understanding of the psyche of the individual which has been very important to their work, i.e. training in both psychological and theological perspectives. This too is in agreement with the literature (Rowan 2002, 2005, Wilber 1997, 2010, Heron 1998, Clarkson 1992, Fowler 1981). They conclude that the counsellor/therapist must pay attention to integration in their own lives in order to be open to the spiritual dimension in their therapy work (Rowan 2002, Thorne 2002).

For all of the interviewees, their faith is primary and they all make efforts to develop that faith, by going to church, spending time with like minded people, praying etc. The strength of the psychological and faith influences seems to change across the groups, with the faith element being strongest in group 3. I don’t think this means that it is not strong in groups 1 & 2, but simply that they have taken on more psychological material in their understanding of the individual. The biggest differences between groups 1& 2 seems to be the language in which they discuss their work, with Christian terms being far more evident in group 2.

Those in group 1 have spent more dedicated time looking at aspects of their own integration, either by choice or by necessity of context. Elizabeth had initially trained as a Minister for the Nazarene Church and her counselling activities had evolved from her pastoral interests. Diana had spent a lot of time working out how to integrate her faith and practice by joining groups of spiritually minded people, not necessarily Christian. Dawn worked in a church setting where there was considerable challenge to her counselling work and she had been obliged to present her rationale of working to the leadership

Counsellors in group 2 talked less of such challenges, although they must have been there if they had completed secular training courses. Group 3 counsellors had little challenge to their perspective on the psyche of the individual because they stayed within the Christian arena. Of course in reality there is a spectrum of experience rather than defined groups. The groups are there for convenience of discussion.

For the three academics, both the spiritual and the psychological influences had been present for a long time and integration was a matter of growth over the years. It is
clear from the literature that integration is generally seen as a developmental task (West 2000, Kalmthout 2006, Rowan 2005, Fowler 1976).

For many of the interviewees this ‘working out over time’ has been an important part of their integration experience. Many talk of continuing input from CPD, their personal reading and the people they choose to associate with. There more of a sense of journeying in groups 1 & 2. The knowledge base of those in group 3 seems more static, with new information being absorbed primarily from their faith perspective.

If spirituality is part of the counsellor, and they are to then work with their spirituality in the counselling room, what would that actually look like? Is there evidence to show that the practitioners in this study are engaged with it?

Rowan states that to be able to work in the transpersonal or spiritual dimension, it is necessary to be able to sustain the level of consciousness named ‘Subtle’ in his terminology. This means the state where there is a letting go of knowledge, a psychospiritual awareness and a oneness with the source of the sensory world (Rowan 2009). Boundaries seem permeable between therapist and client. In other words it is a place of ‘being’, rather than doing. Again, looking at Fowler’s stages of faith there seems to be a parallel experience. In his Stage 5, there is an opening to the ‘deeper self’ with boundaries between self, God and other now become more permeable (Fowler 1981).

The academics talk about this kind of connection:

BT 
...this sense that somehow where two or three are gathered together then something else, if you like happens... something else is present, whether we call that the presence of God or the presence of the Holy Spirit or whatever it is, or whether we call it transformational power.”

(Brian Thorne is here referring to the biblical quotation, “For where two or three come together in my name, there I (Jesus) am with them (NIV: Matt 28:20)).

JS Interpathy” actually means that you leave your culture behind and sit down in that strange land and look around. And you look at your own culture from the other side. I guess the essence is opening yourself to the possibilities of being wrong on some things and there maybe insights here that you can gather and they will be beneficial to both of you.”

AR If you are meeting somebody at depth in their psyche and your psyche, anything can happen and that can be a vital aspect of the Spirit’s work, just as the Spirit is working to generate dreams or images or metaphors that are redolent of that. Certainly there have been with all
clients at some stage, a profound moment or what in another context you would call standing on Holy Ground.”

(When Alistair Ross refers to Spirit in this context he means ‘Holy Spirit’.)

It seems that they are describing similar experiences, and that these experiences have a sense of connectedness, certainly between client and therapist and in the cases of Thorne and Ross explicit connection with the Holy Spirit. This too has strong echoes of what is described as a refinement of empathy, (Hart 1999), transformational empathy (Ryback 2010), transcendental empathy, (Hart 1997) or relational depth (Mearns and Cooper 2005, Cooper, 2005). These secular descriptions also refer to a softening of the boundary between client and therapist (Hart 1997, Hart 1999, McMillan and McLeod 2005), allowing a sharing of ‘existential togetherness’ (Ryback 2001); both parties report experiencing this as a ‘timeless encounter’ (Hart 1999, Cooper 2005). This kind of experience seems to promote healing (Knox 2008) and be a predictor of better therapeutic outcomes (Cooper 2005).

A few of the interviewees talked about this type of encounter.

Verity (G1) There are times with clients when I lose all sense of time... I don’t mean as far as the clock goes. I am aware that we will finish at a certain time, but I am not thinking any more. I am just in a place where we are together and something is happening and I can’t remember the words I am using...

This timeless encounter is a common factor in the deep empathy and relational depth descriptions in secular counselling (Hart 1999, Cooper 2005).

Verity continues:

I was with a client whose partner had fallen off their balcony and died. She was just grief stricken. Her anguish did something in the room. I remember setting aside any awareness of skills and just meeting with her in that place of anguish, just sitting in the same space and experiencing it with her, though the pain was not mine. It felt as if we were both caught up in something, but a something which resulted in her not being trapped inside her pain and finally able to cry and talk about it.

Also, when she was ending her counselling session with a Buddhist client with whom she felt she had worked at a deep level, Verity reported:

What he said at the end was, “I feel we’ve met ‘inside!”

What seems important here is the setting-aside of the counsellor role and just being with the client. This is perhaps evidence of Rowan’s subtle level (Rowan 2002); Mearns
and Cooper describe it as ‘concentrating on presence’ (Means and Cooper 2005). In other words, there was a mutuality to these experiences, in agreement with Cooper (2005) and Knox (2007) but in contrast to McMillan and McLeod (2005).

Another interviewee, Elizabeth, talks about the basis of her work and how that changes her view of the client.

*Elizabeth (G1)* I think because I have come from a faith background first, that has been my primary way in how I see the individual. It is a process brought about by God. And that is something personal to me and how I am with them and how I respond to them, rather than thinking I want to do stuff to make them better.

I think it is it is the outworking of what I feel about God and relationship and human relationship yes. To say anything else would not capture it. I am not so grand as to say that it is a ministry but that is what it feels like.

So it is the relationship, being there for the client and allowing God to work, that is important for her. Being present to the client is more important than anything she does.

Joy (G1) talks about similar experiences and draws the parallel between such times in the therapy room and similar occurrences with Christian friends or with counselling colleagues.

*One thing I noticed is the similarity of what could be called ‘deep moments’ in both the counselling and Christian worlds - those moments with others when you experience something beyond the self, where perhaps we really meet God. These might happen with a client, in supervision, in training personal development group or with Christian friends. The language I might use to describe what happened in each context might be different and in fact it is really hard to catch the experience I words. Yet I and others are clear that it has happened*

**Personal Reflection**

I have very definite resonances with Joy’s experience, noting the similarity between experiences in my faith and counselling worlds. West makes a similar comparison in his work with Quaker therapists (West 2000). I describe an important personal experience where the parallels seemed clear to me in CW 8.2.
After my church experience (described in CW 8.2) as on previous occasions I found a real settled-ness inside me. I was able to deal with life better, tackle things that had been daunting before. I suppose I felt ‘held’. With clients, sometimes, after such a meeting at depth with what I would call the Divine, I see a shift in their way of being, perhaps movement out of some stuck-ness or a new insight on something they have been struggling with. Sometimes I don’t see any difference other than that the shared experience builds trust in the therapeutic relationship. I think I understand these things now as different expressions of the transcendent in my life, different places that God meets me. I can’t engineer their occurrence, but there are common factors running through.

Before they happen I am in a state of openness and acceptance to whatever is there. During them there is something shared. It is not an ‘alone’ experience. I am quite clear that this is a transpersonal experience, something beyond me and something
beyond others sharing the experience. Afterwards life seems a little different in some way or other. There is some movement within the psyche which might be termed personal change, growth or even healing. It is what I think Brian Thorne terms, ‘transformational power’ (see above).

**Back to the Discussion**

‘Transformational power’ experienced by the three academics, some of the interviewees and myself seems to be the same as the relational depth described by Mearns and Schmid (2005) which they say results in “the creation of the possibility of further healing for the client” in agreement with Knox (2008). If episodes such as these are as Cooper (2005) says, a predictor of better therapeutic outcomes, then surely we should be doing all we can to promote them.

So do we have any indicators as to what exactly is going on? Mearns and Schmid (2005) suggest that this relationship is of a kind of where the therapist takes a risk in accessing parts of themselves normally out of contact. Rowan and Wilber’s terms for this would be different levels of consciousness (Rowan 2005, Wilber 2000). This further level of consciousness somehow is active in facilitating the client also to access hidden parts of him/herself. Again in the terms of Mearns and Schmid (2005) it provides a bridge into the experience of the client. Rogers also noted that these deep moments that occur in therapy session seem to be dependent on the therapist having a depth of self knowledge.

*I find that when I am closer to my inner intuitive sense, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me.... whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then, simply my presence is releasing and helpful to the other. There is nothing I can do to force the experience, but when I can relax and be close to the transcendental core of me... it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself and becomes part of something larger. Profound growth and healing and energy are present.*

(Rogers 1980 p 129)

Relating this to the interviewees, it was interesting to note, that although I offered the opportunity to talk about what was important for them when thinking about their integration of faith and practice, very few of them related stories such as these of Relational Depth or perhaps, in another terminology, Spiritual Encounters. All of these reported incidences came from interviewees in group 1, that is, those with faith but working in a secular paradigm, with secular training and supervision. This is the group where most members had for one reason or another taken more time out to reflect on
both their spiritual and psychological understanding of the individual. So why were such incidents so sparsely reported, and then only from group 1?

This could have been for a number of reasons. For example:

— They had not had such experiences
— They had the experiences but did not want to talk about them
— They had the experiences but were not confident in expressing themselves, or they did not have the language to do so
— I needed to ask the question differently or perhaps use different vocabulary.

This is an area for further investigation.

It was strange that the use of spiritual language in general increased in groups 2 & 3 yet their reporting of ‘spiritual encounters’ lessened. I wondered if it was because they did not want to appear strange or weird in the interview, whereas those who had spent more time on active integration were more confident in their position overall.

**Further evidence from the practitioners**

Many from all groups talked about being aware of the spiritual dimension being present in other ways. Specifically they talked about prayer and the effect it had on themselves and their work. All of the interviewees saw praying for the client outside the session as an essential part of their counselling work. For example:

*Jo (G1)*  
*I do pray for them, but I don’t tell them that I pray for them.*

*Carys (G2)*  
*And they are very much on my mind. So of course I try and pray for them*

*Greg (G3)*  
*Categorically I pray for clients. I think for the Christian Counsellor not to bring clients, to not bring our world to the fount of all life, love and mercy healing grace and everything is somehow schizophrenic.*

Most of this prayer is covert, but some in group 2 and all in group 3 would sometimes pray overtly with clients. However, there is a general awareness that care needs to be taken in this area.

*Reg (G3)*  
*I ask them to go and see their pastor for prayer because I feel that these are spiritual strongholds. It is not that I would not pray with them. There is a sense in which I want them to bring other resources on board here for this difficulty.*

*Carys (G2)*  
*I don’t normally offer prayer with people unless it is requested.*
Gaynor (G2)  I think when I am in the room and I am praying silently and in the silent bit I sit comfortably with God and sense what is in the silence and how do I meet the person the way you want me to? Occasionally a client, when I set the contract I will say, ‘You asked particularly to work with a Christian counsellor. If you want me to pray with you I will pray with you. If I say something to you and there is something going on and you would like to pray I will ask you if you want to pray.’ So I set kind of boundaries. It is about language

It is noticeable that none of the counsellors from group 1 use prayer overtly in a session. Jo suggests it is because of the meaning that may be made from it…

Jo (G1)  I won’t pray in the session… because I felt whatever words that were used could be misconstrued.

…but she would be praying silently for guidance.

Sometimes if I am sitting here absolutely desperate and I think, ‘I don’t know what to do!’ I am praying inwardly.

However, prayer is seen as very important as a personal support.

Jo (G1)  (Describing her own spiritual discipline, being a lay member of a convent)

It is not quite so strong as a sister because you make a rule of life and you are attached to the convent and you go and visit the sisters from time to time and you stick to your basic rule, whatever you have decided, which is partly saying the daily office and a commitment to prayer and bible study and so on.

Others agree that it is a direct support for the counselling work.

Ted (G2)  Certainly working as a therapist that unless you spend time in prayer, in the presence of Christ… the Eucharist we have this exposition… you are not bringing anything. Eventually what you bring, it will run out. But if you spend that time and people you will bring that presence into the prison and to the people you see. Yes, prayer, that is what you bring.

Greg (G3)  If I did not pray about my clients or I did not pray about my workload or the other stuff; I don’t know what I would do in some senses. I believe it is Christ that is the healer, the physician and it is Christ who is there through the blessed trinity to bring life to fullness in humanity. I am just a conduit of that

So these counsellors are demonstrating that they are using prayer in many of the ways described by Gubi (2008), in particular, the way that it is a direct support to themselves; it underpins their practice; places their work in the care of God and gives them guidance in times of helplessness. They may also use other kinds of spiritual
interventions. These are particularly mentioned by counsellors from Group 3. For example in encouraging self forgiveness...

Joan (G3)  The journey programme (A post abortion counseling programme) is a 10 step recovery programme based on Christian principles but very acceptable to the girl in the street. I just find the step of forgiveness is often the key that, if the girl has expressed an interest in God, then I would bring in God and His forgiveness. That is just so powerful because whatever level of understanding the girl has in her belief in God, if she can access the fact that God has forgiven her and that then enables her to forgive herself. That can be a big step for her moving on. I just see that as being really powerful.

…and in dealing with grief…

Joan (3)  I feel I can bring my Christian faith into the step of grief, when they are perhaps imagining their baby and saying goodbye to their baby that I can be silently praying for them as they do that and hope even those who have not professed any faith in God usually come up with some kind of picture and seem amazed that they can have that picture. And for them that can be really meaningful to them.

…or encouraging reading appropriate portions of Scripture.

Grace (G3)  Our rooms are equipped with various tracts and Christian stuff as well as non-Christian stuff, bibles to be given away, bible notes to be given away. I might even head down that direction if I thought it was right. But an opening would have to be given to me from them.

**Summarising the practice of the interviewees in reference to one notable source.**

Brian Thorne, in his 2002 book, The Mystical power of Person-centred Therapy, gives recommendations for counsellors working with the spiritual dimension which are summarised in Table 8.1. This perhaps gives a way of assessing if the counsellors/psychotherapists in this study are in a position to offer such a service safely and well.
### Table 8.1

**Spiritual Discipline for the person-centred therapist**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitative activity</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compassion for self</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Compassion for the inner life | If I know that God loves me then it is more difficult for me to withhold love from myself  
| Separation from those that abuse, and foster relationships with those that offer compassion, validation and total absence of judgment, cherishing the knowledge that one is loved by God (or the cosmos). Acceptance and empathic listening to the inner-world of conflicting voices, acknowledging all parts of the self, even the more difficult ones. Compassion for the body | Models self acceptance to the client of the acceptance of conflicting parts of themselves  
| Attention to diet and exercise, bodily appearance and clothes | As therapists, if we model body-compassion we model self acceptance.  
| Willingness to listen to the messages the body has for us. A daily period of meditation, or deep breathing or some similar space, allows the body to speak | The loving acceptance of self is a prerequisite for the therapist’ connection with another |
| **Compassion for others** |  
| Discipline to focus on the nature of the other in total acceptance, in a caring, protective way Hold the client(s) in mind deliberately for a short time every day, both on their current state of being and their essential natures, dwelling on inner beauty and essential worth, a silent and passionate accompaniment, without expectation. This may have the form of meditative prayer | Changes the perception of others generally in life and becomes an attitude change for the therapist, seeing value in each person that comes across their path. This is the basis of a facilitative relationship that upholds the actualising tendency of every person. The connectedness on offer provides hope for others and facilitates the client’s development of their actualizing tendency. It is the acceptance of this powerlessness combined with a deep relationship and waiting without expectation that opens up new channels so that new possibilities can emerge  
| Being content with the client to dwell in powerlessness | |
| **Compassion for the cosmos** |  
| Compassionate engagement with the suffering earth, taking time to honour the fruits of creation and creativity, by visiting natural beauty in all its forms and spending time with art, poetry, music and the like. | Allows therapist to feel awe and wonder, and facilitates the openness required to be surprised by the creativity of human beings  
| | Helps to nourish the yearning and the possibility to enter the transcendent realm |

*Information taken from Thorne (2002 pp 38-44)*

All of the practitioners in this study do some of this, but none of them does all of it. So for example all tend to their relationship with God and many of them talk of that being the key resource for themselves and their work. Most would see the absolute value in the other person and be able to accept them as they are. Most pray for their clients or as Thorne says, “Hold the client in mind” on a regular basis and most would have some kind of daily spiritual discipline such as prayer or scripture reading. Whether or not they take time out to be compassionate with the Cosmos or to their own body remains unknown as it was not covered by this study. The idea of taking time out to
practise “Acceptance and empathic listening to the inner-world of conflicting voices, acknowledging all parts of the self, even the more difficult ones” sounds rather like having space to work on integration. This brings us back to the gap between what the academics say the practitioners should be doing and what is actually happening. In the present climate and culture of counselling there seems precious little opportunity to do this and perhaps the result is that sometimes clients do not receive an optimum level of service. However the above table might be of use to practitioners to think through what areas of their experience they need to attend to more thoroughly.

Summary of Section 8.1: Internal processes of the therapists, both spiritual and psychological

1. All practitioners interviewed agree with the literature that faith and spirituality is integral to their identity and cannot be excluded from the counselling room.
2. Faith is a real resource, both for the counsellors personally and for their counselling work.
3. The spiritual content of the language used by the counsellors to express their faith/work integration increases in the direction Group 1 to Group 3, as does the tendency for faith to become the filter for all new knowledge input.
4. The interplay of spiritual and psychological influences is acknowledged mostly in Groups 1 & 2 and is seen as being a developmental journey.
5. In group 3 there is some leakage between counselling and the desire to evangelise.
6. The image of being an edge-dweller of the counselling and faith worlds is clear for Groups 1 & 2, Group 3 do not express any faith-work tension as nearly all of their input is Christian based.
7. The possibility of personal growth/change in the client as a result of deep moments/spiritual experiences was reported by counsellors in group 1. This is the group that makes the most effort to work on their own spiritual/psychological integration.
8. Prayer was used by all counsellors as a resource for themselves and their work. This was often covert. Other spiritual interventions such as introducing the idea of forgiveness, using spiritual approaches to grief and encouraging scriptural reading was reported in group 3.
The practitioners in this study had a considerable amount to say on the level of support they received to integrate their faith and their practice, both from informal and formal sources. I will look at what the practitioners say about support in two sections, the first on supervision and the second on less formal support systems.

**Evidence from practitioners**

**Supervision support**

Generally speaking, practitioners in group 3, i.e. those that work completely within the Christian world, feel well supported by their supervisor. As the supervisor is of the same faith there is no part of their practice that they feel unable to take.

Joan (G3)  
*I feel that she would be understanding to whatever I took and have taken! I have faced enormous challenges, because I think even within the Christian Church abortion is a very emotive issue and there is a spectrum of views about it. I appreciate her wisdom. I would feel that if that person was not a Christian that some of what I would be talking about might be like a foreign language to her.*

But this state of affairs can have difficulties. It can mean that the counsellors stays a long time with one supervisor, with the possibilities of over familiarity and even collusion eventually creeping in.

Greg (G3)  
*I have been with my individual supervisor for four years. When you have been with somebody as long as I have been with him for supervision, calling it a professional relationship really is not where it is at.*

Also in the worst case, there can be all sorts of dual relationship and unethical practices allowed to evolve, perhaps for fear of going out of the Christian fold.

Grace (G3)  
The supervisor, as well as being supervisor for the team, would do individual supervision with me, though we don’t do it on a regular basis. He would be the elder of my church as well.

For some there is a pragmatic acceptance that you take to your supervisor what you think would be acceptable to them. For example, Reg has support from varied supervision, but he is careful in where he takes issues that touch on his own evangelical beliefs.
I have two supervisors for various aspects of my work. With one, although she has some spiritual understanding does not see things from an evangelical standpoint. So some issues I would avoid taking to her as she would not help me to move forward with them. I am able to be more open with my other supervisor, so I would tend to take spiritual issues of the clients to him.

For practitioners in group 2, the spiritual dimension remains an integral part of their counselling and the desire to have that spiritual element in supervision remains strong. However, when the supervisor is not a Christian the lack of a shared faith framework make a difference to expectations.

Her interest background was more Buddhist and mindfulness. I don’t think she had a strong Christian faith. I don’t remember strongly editing it out, but I didn’t expect things like prayer or... you know. I expected the possibility of a dialogue but not other things.

And although she did not censor her presentation of material is supervision heavily, Rebecca did hesitate to take some things.

I think there are things that I hesitated to take, but I would have to actively work about taking. Some of that was about some of my own thoughts and feelings about clients and was as much to do with a fear of being judged.

Again this is sometimes this is managed by having one Christian and one non-Christian supervisor.

I explore these sexual identity issues with my non-Christian supervisor mostly. She can let me have the space to process it.

For some in this group, the supervisor’s negative attitude towards spirituality meant that some aspects of their work were just omitted.

Supervision for me has been mixed over the years. In the past I had a non-Christian supervisor and that was quite difficult. I found her judgmental about working with my client’s spirituality. In fact, it was dismissed, really. I stopped taking that aspect of my work to her, which wasn’t satisfactory at all.

And there is a fear of being seen as incompetent or unprofessional.

I am selective in what I take to supervision because, she has mentioned she is concerned about if my faith as a Christian affects my practice, and I do not want ‘a telling off’ for what a supervisor will interpret as unprofessional practice

However, supervision is not seen as a negative or difficult experience by all members of this group. Perhaps it is better once the supervisory relationship is well established.
Val (G2)  I have a supervisor, who although not a Christian, is very allowing. I can explore spiritual issues with him if I need to. I think it is because he trusts me.

This may be true whether the supervisor is Christian or not.

Margaret (G2) I have a supervisor who is a Christian and I can take anything to her. We have a good working relationship. She understood my struggles as I worked through the challenges of my training. I can talk through spiritual issues with her. Previously I had a non-Christian supervisor and I found that I could take spiritual material to her also. It worked well. She was very respectful of me and my faith.

Overall the picture was one of some difficulty in accessing appropriate support for integrating faith with their practice, with counsellors often left to work it out for themselves.

Sian (G2) I have kind of muddled my way through and found what I feel and what I believe. Sometimes I don’t always give voice to what I actually believe, don’t work it through that cognitive way. It is just sort of bubbling around in the subconscious somewhere.

Supervision was also seen as sometimes problematic for group 1 practitioners.

Dawn (G1) The first supervisor I had was not a Christian and I remember at the beginning sharing with the supervisor a real I-Thou situation where I had felt something spiritual in the room with a client. And she said to me, ‘Mmmm, That is an interesting delusion!’ I just thought... well!! I just really felt like there wasn’t any kind of respect for the spiritual reality.

And again there is avoidance of contentious material.

Dawn(G1) For most of the content of the work, a non-Christian supervisor would pose no problem. I would say actually that 99% of my work I felt really comfortable it taking to somebody who had very little spiritual feeling at all because I could ... I know that I would feel wary about taking some things.

There was a clear understanding that sometimes supervisors just did not relate to spiritual material and could not help the counsellors work through any issues in this part of their work.

Ivan (G1) I avoided anything too whacky basically because I knew it would confuse the poor bloke (his supervisor). So it meant that you could not take anything spiritual there at all. He would have just been puzzled. I don’t think he would be judgmental, but he would not really be able to work with it or deal with it.
Even when the possibility for bringing spiritual issues into the supervisory space is there, practitioners remain hesitant. This is perhaps something to do with the power differential in supervision, which is at its greatest with trainee counsellors.

Elizabeth (G1) Her supervisor’s response when Elizabeth raised the possibility of bringing issues to supervision that had spiritual content: *I won’t pretend to always understand and agree but I will do my best to work with what you bring and if it is a problem we can talk about it then.*

*Her comment on this possibility: One of my placements was at a Christian retreat centre. I (was) working with Christian clients. So I am going to have to bring some of those issues that people will bring. I think the hesitancy was on my part, if anything. If I had to bring things I might be thinking, “What is she going to think of this?” I was still in the belief system that says the supervisor will say, “You can’t do this!”*

So practitioners may end up tempering what they take to particular supervisors and how they express themselves.

Joy (G1) *I get varied support from my array of supervisors and I suppose I choose my language to fit the context. So, for example, with my Christian supervisor the talk is often in religious terms, but with my non-Christian but spiritually aware supervisor, the discussion of my work would definitely not include the word, ‘Jesus’ but it might contain such things as ‘energies, spiritual awareness, auras and the like.’*

Not all want a Christian supervisor because they feel that a non-Christian helps keep balance in their work.

Elizabeth (G1) *Someone said, “Would you not prefer a supervisor who shared the same faith?” I said, “No, I don’t want that because I have got enough of that where I am to be able to access it. But I really need to be firmly anchored in the other world too, otherwise I will spin off into I don’t know where.”*

Two of this group recognised that they had not changed supervisors for a very long time because they did not know where else they would find such understanding.

Jo (G1) *I have a Christian supervisor and I can talk to her about anything, including spiritual issues. She would allow me to discuss client material in spiritual terms and would then bring me back to the psychological perspective. It is a really good human/professional balance. I have been with her for a long time and because of our good relationship I am reluctant to change. Besides which, finding another supervisor who could deal with me as a whole person would be difficult.*

Dawn (G1) *I’ve been with my current supervisor for about 6 years now and I feel reluctant to change. There seems very little choice – she’s so supportive.*
It seems then that in all groups there are problems related to supervision (Feltham 2000). All except Elizabeth expressed the desire to have a Christian supervisor or at least someone accepting of the spiritual dimension.

**Personal Reflection**

From my own experience I would agree with the desire for having supervision that does not require the counsellor to split off part of her/him. I remember one supervisor who having agreed to allow me to bring spiritual issues into the supervision space, backed off when I tried to do so. When I presented a client whose problems involved both psychological and spiritual elements, she said, “I think you need to tell him to go to the priest to deal with that.” I felt let down and consequently did not take similar material to her again. Another supervisor was insistent that our job was to… ‘get this client moving out of her rigid framework’, when the client had come to counselling for help with anxiety and actually found her Christian beliefs helpful and supportive. As my belief structure was similar in many respects to that of the client, I felt that the supervisor was dismissing both of us. This being so I understand why these practitioners feel they have to omit this very important aspect of their work from supervision.

**Evidence from practitioners**

**Informal support**

The kinds and amount of informal support varied between the practitioners. For example, Joy has some informal support.

Joy (G1)  

*I have friends and colleagues with whom I can discuss spiritual issues, some more than others. I also have some local Christian fellowship, but often these folk are in a different place to me and don’t really understand what I am talking about. But is OK for me to sit on the edge with them. I can live with that and without their fellowship I would be more isolated.*

She values the variety of support she has and sees that working in both Christian and secular settings, enhances her ability to be non-judgmental and more accepting of diversity.

*If I think of all this support as my roots, then one of the fruits of the combination of that support is the ability to tolerate difference in whatever way it manifests itself. That could be a Christian colleague who refers to God in every sentence, a client of the Hindu faith or a supervisor who is so intent on me getting clients through a 6-session...*
Programme that they have no space at all for discussion of existential issues.

Rebecca (G2) values Christian friends and colleagues in the counselling world and beyond. 

I need to feel I am being held in an inter-personal sense by the support (of friends). I have got a number of Christian friends who are also counsellors and we tend to chum each other along and dialogue about these issues very comfortably. People who are working on themes of spirituality in other disciplines like a friend who is doing some research in social work on spirituality and social work. So I find that helpful. 

She also makes considerable efforts to educate herself and find reflective space. 

Rebecca (G2) I suppose I have a number of books on the go all the time so reading...Thresholds magazine I find very useful. 

Joan (G3) has a support from her organisational backers. 

The management team and the church leadership clearly would not know the details of the girls because of issues of confidentiality but their support in terms of the day to day running is really important. 

Joan also has the knowledge that others pray for her work and having prayer support gives her confidence for her work. 

I do have a prayer partner. I have people praying when I come down here so that when I am talking to the girls they pray that the Holy Spirit would just bring the real issues to the surface. 

However, she does not always get the support she would like from her Christian contacts. 

Some of the issues, even some Christians don’t feel comfortable talking about it. There are misunderstandings from all sorts of directions. 

Yi had previously been part of a tight-knit team of Christian counsellors but had moved geographically not long before she did the interview. She missed the supportive interactions that she knew had helped her integrate her faith and practice in the past. 

I don’t have the regular support I once had in my old team. I have no real place to discuss issues that arise from my work. I know that much of the way I have integrated my faith and practice has come bit by bit from these regular interactions. Trying to fill the gap with occasional meeting with peers doesn’t quite do it! 

For those working in non-Christian context informal support can be lacking. 

Verity (G1) I have experiences the sort of ‘being dismissed’ as a Christian or people assuming... the counselling team for example that nobody, no intelligent person must be a practicing Christian. If it (discussing
spiritual matters) with colleagues has happened, it has been an extremely rare occasion.

Some find peers outside their own workplace who can give them support.

**Dawn (G1)**  I have a friend who is a Christian and a counsellor. We have a great supporting relationship, so we can talk through professional issues.

It is also often difficult to find that support from their faith setting.

**Diana (G1)**  I find it difficult to get support from Church. Sometimes it is other Christians’ perceptions of what a Christian is that is the problem. And that is why I say I am not sure that I want to call myself Christian now because I think... well I think I am Christian... These other Christians don’t think I am Christian.

Sometimes there is direct opposition to the whole idea of counselling.

**Dawn (G1)**  There is a big idea that counselling is unnecessary and that people should ‘Claim the Victory!’ Some of the ministers go for it and others not.

When counsellors have qualified via secular courses the possibility of working in a spiritual way is often not addressed.

**Rebecca (G2)**  In general I feel free to take spiritual issues to my supervisor. This is very different from my training, particularly the one based on Freudian psychodynamics, which was very challenging. I experienced more difficulties than anticipated as my tutor/ supervisor was very opaque about his own faith stance.

And there is a hang-over of negative feelings that tend to live on in the counsellor

**Elizabeth (G1)**  Sometimes I could still feel my tutor sitting on my shoulder (laughs)! I still hear those words of hers and I think, ‘What would she make of this?’ Because I remember once her saying, ‘That (meaning spirituality) belongs outside of the counselling.’

It was noticeable that many of the practitioners said that the research interview itself had given them an opportunity to think through these things....

**Grace (G3)**  In fact, the research questions gave me a rare chance to do this.

**Val (G1)**  I don’t get the opportunity to sit down like this which is half professional and half spiritual.

**Ted (G2)**  I have never had an opportunity to articulate it, because I don’t know many people that I can have this conversation with.

**Rebecca (G2)**  The research interview was helpful for me to review and define how I integrate and verbalise that integration.

…and although Rebecca had built up a good support network for herself she would like a group specifically targeted on talking about the integration of perspectives.
I think there is scope for a spirituality and therapy support group somewhere.

The least well supported counsellor (both formally or informally) in this study was Grace.

Grace (G3)  Sometimes I find the work lonely. I feel a lack of personal support and the rest of the team look to me for help.

Her supervision arrangements were sparse and there was a danger of collusion due to a dual relationship.

Supervision too is a bit hit-and-miss. It is with an elder in my church (same as the rest of the team). It is not regular for me and I tend to only go when I get stuck.

And she has little peer contact.

I do feel unsupported. Actually I don’t have a lot of contact with other counsellors outside of my own team.

Perhaps because of the lack of external input the idea of working through how her faith affected her practice was a new one.

I haven’t spent much time on thinking about how my faith and my counselling fit together. I tend to compartmentalise my understandings of the two things.

Personal Reflection

I remember coming out of the interview I had with Grace feeling stunned and sad that someone working in this field could be so isolated. Not only was this difficult for Grace but I wondered about the safety of the whole set-up. I thought about ethical requirements and whether or not I needed to take some kind of action. As a researcher I was there to find out what was happening ‘on the ground’. I also had a duty to look after the interviewees as well as I could. As a practitioner I had some duty to the profession as a whole and even possibly to the clients of the counselling centre. What was clear was that the work done by this centre was well respected in the area and clients were continuing to be referred there by statutory services.

Discussion

(Relating the practitioner evidence to the literature and the academic interviewees)

The Academic Interviewees are in agreement that although spiritually aware supervision is important, it is not enough on its own. Just as with the practitioners they
look to other sources for more rounded support. This comes through friends, colleagues, a sympathetic workplace and active faith engagement.

**BT**

*When I think of my friends and acquaintances I am astonished how many of them are in fact, clergy. Not only Anglican clergy. That just seems to have happened.*

*It (the counselling centre) is also devoted to a spiritual understanding of reality and that has been here since its foundation.*

*I have been a member of a worshipping community all my life.*

And the exact composition of that support is inevitably very individual.

**AR**

*The standard is I suppose, what actually supports me? And that would be through colleagues that I can talk about both, faith colleagues and professional colleagues.*

*My faith does support my work in that I believe that one of the things that I work with, with clients is the capacity for transcendence, but if you are meeting somebody at depth in their psyche and your psyche, anything can happen*

The three academics say what support is helpful and appropriate for them, but it is clear from the words of the practitioners that the whole area of integrating spiritual material with safe and effective clinical work can be problematic. Certainly all of them value supervision as a support but there are numerous difficulties when their supervisor is not of the Christian faith.

When comparing interviewees experience to material in the literature some disparity is noted. The literature states that the supervisor’s role is crucial in providing a safe enough environment for the supervisee to address the reality of their practice, including the spiritual dimension (Smythe, MacCulloch and Charmley 2010) and can be educative in this area (Polanski 2003), particularly in addressing the integration of theological and psychological understandings (Woodruff 2002). Clearly not all in this study experience supervision in this way.

The fear of derision or being judged as incompetent means that one strategy used by many practitioners in this study who have non-Christian supervisors is avoidance of the whole topic (West 1997, West 2003, West and Jenkins 2007 Gubi 2007). So if the supervisor feels not confident to address the issue and the supervisee fears being judged, then perhaps it is a matter that is difficult to initiate from either side. This gives the spiritually aware counsellor an ethical dilemma which causes some discomfort. If they engage in the spiritual aspect of the work, and they supervisor is
unsympathetic, either they hide it or they risk censure. Their other alternative is not to engage in it in the first place, but this would mean them not attending to their clients as whole people, asking them to leave their spirituality at the door of the counselling room, which these practitioners see as an impossible (see previous section). Although supervisors do have an ethical duty to address the dynamics of the supervisory relationship (Lawton 2000) and in fact it is often paying attention to this that enlightens the work with clients (Daniels 2000 p 80), they cannot be expected to address areas in which they are not well trained (Polanski 2003). So perhaps the practitioners are at least in some instances are desirous of something that at the moment the profession cannot supply. There is evidence in the literature that if the supervisor self-discloses around contentious issues, the supervisees are helped to give voice to their own concerns (Ladany 2004). Certainly Elizabeth was able to proceed when her supervisor was honest about her lack of knowledge in dealing with spiritual matters, but hesitancy remained.

When there is a mixture of Christian/non-Christian supervision, there is certainly evidence of ‘splitting’, with many of the practitioners being quite careful as to what issues are presented to which supervisor (for example: Reg, Joy). If this is present in the supervisory relationship, then it is quite likely that it will also be part of the counselling relationship via parallel process (Hawkins and Shohet 2000). Thus the client is not offered holistic care (Polanski 2003).

If the supervision is purely from a Christian perspective, then there are still difficulties. There is always a tendency for a supervisor to pay attention to that which in their own comfort zone, focusing on some areas whilst avoiding others (Gilbert and Evans 2000). If the counsellor shares that zone very closely, e.g. if they are of the same faith community, then it is more likely that collusion might creep in as the unconscious needs of both parties are satisfied (Hawkins and Shohet 2000). So we get comments such as “She is so supportive” etc. Good supervision for these counsellors would be where both the theological and psychological aspects are attended to (Woodruff 2002). It seems that this is not easy to find and hence the tendency for counsellors to stay with their supervisors for prolonged periods (for example Jo, Dawn).

As far as training is concerned, again, the experience across the groups varies. For those who followed ACC accredited courses, Christian spirituality was integral in everything they learned (for example: Joan, Grace, Jaygee). One counsellor, Ivan also
experienced integrated training on a transpersonal course. For the others, there was quite a lack in this area (for example: Rebecca’s comment on p175). So the majority of the practitioners in this study were beginning their counselling/psychotherapy careers with little support for working in the spiritual dimension and they had to ‘muddle along’ (Sian’s words) as best they could.

The literature agrees that training concerning the addressing of spiritual issues in counselling is still very unsystematic (Kelly 1995, Jenkins 2005) and many practitioners are not equipped to competently handle religious issues (Bjork 1997, Gerson et al 2000). This would apply to the counsellors in this study just as much to those with no faith. They may have personal experience of the spiritual dimension but if these things are not addressed in training then counsellors’ unresolved ambiguities and transferences around religious and spiritual issues may remain unaddressed (West 2011a) and later cause problems in client work (Wyatt 2002). Overall this study is supportive of the findings of Aten and Hernandez (2004) which states that many practitioners do not get the necessary training to address spiritual or religious issues competently. It is clear that clients would like the professionals to be better trained in this area (Foskett et al 2004, Pargament 2007). So as a profession we seem not to be meeting this particular client demand at present. When it comes to informal support, the profession cannot really take responsibility for this. It is outside its remit. However, it seems strange that a profession that prides itself accepting people ‘as they are’ struggles to accept the totality of colleagues who have a Christian faith, and it is obvious that many of the practitioners do feel that they would like more support from colleagues, from friends and/or from their church context.

Again, the Christian faith is supposed to be about love and acceptance, but struggles to support those who work with understandings taken from a psychological base (Thorne 1998). So the dual marginalisation felt by many of these practitioners is sad, but predictable as noted by Rebecca Propst (Propst 2010) and Brian Thorne (Thorne 2002). The emergence of the image of the edge dweller seems an apt one.

**Personal Reflection**

As I considered all the stories of these practitioners, the feeling left with me at the end of the interviews was not of a population worn down by marginalisation. It was one of a group of people who were on a journey. It was noticeable that those who had been working longer had gathered a good support network around them (for example:
Joy, Margaret, Rebecca). Some of them reported the research process itself as prompting further development. For example, Verity’s level of disclosure in supervision changed.

\textit{Verity (G1)} Interestingly, since our interview, I have become open with my supervisor about my faith base and feel released.

Also, Rebecca (G2) had been instrumental in setting up a support group for like minded counsellors. She states in an email sent late in this project:

\textit{Participating in your research project was a contributory factor in setting up the West Midlands “Counselling with Spirit Group.”}

Creating space and opportunity to develop their integration further is perhaps something which the profession as a whole could help with. Supervision, supervision training, training courses for counsellors, journal editors, CPD, and professional organisations might all have a part to play here.

\textbf{Summary section 8.2: External support for therapist, spiritual and psychological}

1. Support can sometimes be less than adequate for counsellors with a Christian faith in a number of areas.
2. If they have a Christian supervisor there are ethical issues around collusion/staying too long etc.
3. With a non-Christian supervisor, discussing Christian faith-based issues can be problematic and may lead to part of the work being left unsupervised.
4. Most practitioners do not talk very much about this topic either with peers or in their church community. So finding a safe space to talk about these issues can be difficult.
5. For some, the interview itself provided that safe space and acted as a prompt for further development of the counsellor’s integration.
SECTION 8.3 CLIENT SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

Although this project has been focused on the therapist and one aspect of their experience, it seems appropriate to look at what they experience of the clients’ spirituality and how that affects the counselling process. Without clients, counsellors and psychotherapists would have no work and so the whole research question would be redundant.

However, this section is not written from the client’s perspective. It cannot be as all the interviews were with practitioners. It merely looks at what the counsellor/therapist experiences of the spirituality of the client.

The literature is clear that it is the relationship that is the healing factor in therapy (Thorne 2004, Swinton 2001, Cooper 2005). Relationship building takes two people, both client and therapist. Therefore it is essential that the therapist pays attention to what the client might be bringing to that relationship. Thorne is emphatic that it is impossible to do effective therapy if the spirituality of both counsellor and client are not acknowledged (Thorne 2001). BACP in their guidelines state that the counsellor’s approach to client issues of spirituality should be one of acceptance and empathy, with a willingness to enter the client’s framework (Harbourne 2008). However, this raises some questions. Spirituality is inexorably connected with belief systems, often beliefs that are passionately held. So what exactly is happening in the counselling room if the client/counsellor dyad is a) well matched on spiritual frameworks and b) mismatched?

Evidence from the Practitioners

Firstly there seems to be a positive gain when the dyad shares a spiritual understanding.

Jo (G1) Some people actually ask because they are looking for a Christian counsellor. I say that I am prepared to talk about Christian things if that is what they want to do.

Elizabeth (G1) Often they will come because they know that I am Christian, so that is something that I talk about in the contract at the very beginning. I was as much up-front as I could be so that they could...they were then free to accept or reject. But in almost every case I saw (Made a relaxing
movement). They did not say that, but the whole relaxing of the body and, “Oh that is great I have had enough of that!”

So there was relief on the part of the client when they realised that there was some shared ground.

Some clients could only contemplate seeing a counsellor with a Christian faith because of the nature of the material that needed to be discussed.

Dawn (G1) I have a client who works with me because I am a Christian. She wants to hold onto her faith, because actually she grew up in church, and then went away to university and got sucked into this cult. She was completely severed from her family and horribly abused. Very difficult…. and yet she wants to hang on to her faith through all of it. So she felt that she could not take that outside of the faith as people would not understand.

It is clear though that for most of the counsellors, there is an understanding of accepting those with different world views…

Joy (G1) We are not all Christians. That is really important to me that another perspective is allowed and you have not got these Christian blinkers on.

Rebecca (G2) I do respect the right of the client to have their own spirituality, or none, and I need to attune to that in some way.

…and that good therapeutic work comes from allowing space to the client without making assumptions of shared understanding.

Ivan (G1) Every person is unique and every person has a unique spiritual personality… a unique spirituality. I think everyone’s experiences are slightly different and what they understand about spirituality is different. I think it is very important to respect that.

Greg (G3) The other thing that is very clear to me more and more in practice is that I cannot presume to understand the clients’ world. We enter into it. We understand to a degree… the sense of not to prejudge, not to come to an assumption about something without a lot of digging. And to know there is an evolving thing as well

A number of the interviewees noted that not only Christians found their approach helpful. Those of other faiths were relieved to find a counsellor who accepted their spirituality and understood the importance of their faith position.

Margaret (G2) I have a Muslim client at the moment. I have actually told her I am a Christian because her faith is very important to her and I have been able to understand something of that with her and she commented on that.

Sian (G2) We have Muslims that come here as well and again it is the same thing. It is working through marriage issues with their faith, because you are
not supposed to get divorced. And well, although I am not Muslim, I appreciate the struggle of working that through with faith.

This understanding of spirituality seems to be picked up by the client even if it is not overtly stated and remains useful.

Verity (G1)  As I am not overt about my faith, clients cannot make assumptions about me to do with their preconceived ideas about 'Christian'. However I am clear that anything can be talked about and that enables them to be open. My own faith has helped when counselling those of other faiths. I can appreciate what it means to them. And I want to be open enough for them to understand that the spiritual dimension is important to me.

Diana (G1)  I do think that it is something, whether it is like my antennae are out picking it up or whether it is something about the way I am that people feel it is OK (to talk about spiritual things).

For Joy this ability to be available for clients with different belief systems was grounded in her long-worked-out integration of a variety of life perspectives.

Joy (G1)  This ability to tolerate difference allows me to work in very different settings. It also helps me to hold a position where I am not so sure that my perspective is the only one and allows me to give respect and acceptance to an alternative belief structure.

However, when the client’s belief system is very different it can cause difficulties and needs integrity of the counsellor to take the difficulty to supervision.

Margaret (G2)  It was really about honouring that I took a client of mine (to supervision) said that she was using tarot cards and what the tarot cards had told her. My immediate reaction was, “Her life is so chaotic that she is looking out for anything really, anything to give her the answer to the situation!”

But I took it because I just wanted to say to my supervisor, ‘When I hear that I feel great sadness because there in the room I believe with me is Christ, and with her. And yet I still don’t believe it is right to say that.

Her honesty in supervision opened up options.

My supervisor is very helpful because she said, ‘You could be genuine with her. You could have a bit of self disclosure. You might want to say that you feel slightly scared about the fact that she is getting involved with that kind of thing and that would be honest and that would disseminate any kind of feeling of judgment she might be getting from you because of your concern for her, getting involved in what you know has some kind of power over people’.

Her decision to hold back and not comment on the belief system of the client, even though that was difficult for her, gave the client space to grow.
I don’t know how it (her perspective) is communicated and there is a sadness in that for me. Because I could be so easily be misunderstood if I try and communicate. And in fact, down the line what I have found is that she has begun to find the answers within herself, what she really wants.

Many of the interviewees talk of dealing with similar situations.

Yi (G3)  
*If somebody is doing something, wanting to do something that my values really react against, like sexual behaviour maybe or something like that, in my heart I will be saying, ‘No! No! No! No! No! No! But that is about me.*

But again she contains her own feelings to allow the client to have autonomy.

*I believe that that person has the right to choose and I will do everything in my power to help them to make a good choice.*

She is very honest about what she really wants and also what she knows is for the benefit of the client.

*I would want them to choose what I think is the right choice but I believe that they have a right to choose and I cannot force them to do what I think is right I believe that what my job is to help them to think clearly enough to make is a good choice for them at that point.*

Sian is clear that although sometimes her value system may be different from that of the client, it actually aids the client that she is solid in her position.

Sian (G2)  
*I don’t need people to agree with me. I don’t need to judge people but it is about, when I am deeply empathising with somebody who had a completely different value system to myself; that’s when I explore where there value system has come from I can see how they have ended up in this place. But for me it means I always have my foot on solid rock, on a firm foundations that grounds me, which makes me a safe person for the client, because they know I am not going to get lost in their stuff. Then I am not going to move this way and that, depending on which way the wind is blowing each week.*

Although the interviewees felt that they could facilitate clients with different belief systems, difficulties did occur. If the counsellor is known to have a Christian faith then often they will come with assumptions about the way counselling is conducted.

Gaynor (G2)  
*I think the expectations sometimes of clients when they have been sent by say a Pentecostal church and have an expectation that I am immediately going to launch into, ‘Well the bible says this…’. I am trying to work out where they are at and get them to experience things for themselves.*

It seems harder work than when those expectations do not exist.
Gaynor (G2)  So where the dilemma is for me is sometimes, they have expectations and they want me to meet them in a certain way and I have to bring that into the discussion about, so this is about you growing into the person that you want to get to. I find that quite difficult. It is much easier with people who have a spirituality but no particular faith.

And ‘spiritualisation’ of the issues can actually prevent therapeutic work.

Reg (G3)  Apparent or pseudo spirituality can cloud issues often... issues that we might assume are addressed because of the apparent spirituality of the client. It can provide a screen against what the issue really is

Jo agrees that some client beliefs are really hard to work with, particularly when it touches old personal wounds.

Jo (G1)  Sometimes, especially with charismatic Christians, I wish they would leave God out of the picture for a while. I find it very hard work if they blame the devil for everything and because of my history it can really wind me up. So I take care to take it to supervision regularly.

And of course there is always the possibility that clients previous knowledge will knit into erroneous assumptions about the counsellor that might hamper the therapeutic relationship.

Diana (G1)  The people I find hard... when you are working with someone and they have had a bad experience of Christians and that can cause problems. They will say, 'Well they are Christians, you know. You know what Christians are!'

Greg (G3)  All of those externals contaminate or can contaminate the process, positively and negatively. But then no-one goes to somebody in a vacuum. The specific things of the catholicity, priesthood and all the rest of it are specific to the encounter, the practice I am involved in. Most of the time people come with a perceived notion of what I will be like and what I will think. Obviously in the work, that changes. It is amazing how clients come with a preconceived sense of you are going to judge me. They almost want us to judge them in the process

Conversely, counsellors who have had some experience of difficulties within their own faith experience may have a particular empathy with those that come with similar issues.

Jo (G1)  I think too that I am sensitive to those who come hurting because of their church experience. I really don't like to see incidents of spiritual abuse, a lack of respect for the individual and then a silencing of the hurt that has been inflicted.

Similarly with those counsellors who have read more widely than most...

Elizabeth (G1)  Mostly when I am with clients who are Christian, who are in authoritarian churches or they have had that in their background, I
actually feel angry on behalf of them. Whether that is right or wrong I don’t know, but that is what I feel. I feel intense anger that someone should do that to another person, and not allow them the freedom. It seems to go against them being a unique individual, that they can have their own thoughts and ideas. It is tempered by my understanding of Church history. I find a lot of my theological studies immensely helpful in recognising the client’s point of view, where their teaching is coming from and why it is there.

...perhaps spiritually sensitive therapy gives the client a space to address issues that are difficult to address in the church setting.

Elizabeth (G1) There seems to be something about it being possible to talk with me about thing that they are not able to be said within the church. It is something about that having to conform and there is all that sort of stuff. For me that drives it into hidden-ness. 'No I cannot mention this at all!'

So though I am angry, I can look around the history of the system and what it does to human beings. It does not recognise that actually given the chance they can think through things and they don’t have to be rule-bound.

Being sensitive to the spirituality of the client can allow moments of deep spiritual connection and move the therapeutic process forward.

Elizabeth (G1) She had been seen, but also she said, ‘When you look at me and I dare to look at you, I see God’s love and I can believe that he loves me.’

However, there are counsellors whose faith position is far more overt in the counselling room and whose value systems are less accepting of difference. In this sample all of these instances of this were found in group 3. For example, Reg, when dealing with a client who was having an affair said:

We own our Christian basis at the very beginning of a counselling relationship. This is a Christian agency. We will not for example help someone to have a better affair or be part of any such process.

And talking of a particular Christian client he says...

I felt like I did talk his language but I did want to put some boundaries. And when that happens I usually say, ‘I will only see you on the basis that this (the affair) does not continue.’

Similarly, Grace would take any opportunity given by the client to work along definite Christian belief systems.

If I felt it was right, a challenge might be thrown out about where their Christianity is. I might even head down that direction. But an opening would have to be given to me from them.
It is essential to note that these were the exceptions. Most of those in Group 3 were accepting of difference e.g. Yi, Joan and Greg.

It is interesting to note that although counselling/therapy is focused on the client, a number of counsellors talk about the effect working with clients has had on their own belief systems.

_Rebecca (G2) I think that working in counselling has changed my views somewhat, e.g. on gender issues. I know I have moved from a naturally conservative approach. However, the gender issue is often only part of what needs to be dealt with._

And again, talking about a gay client and her original evangelical perspective that homosexuality is an unbiblical practice.

_Gaynor (G2) Over the years things have really evolved, kind of like, ‘If that is a person who’s going in a part of life that they believe to be who they are at the moment, then I need to accept that._

**Discussion**

*(Relating the practitioner evidence to the literature and the academic interviewees)*

Going back to the question at the beginning of this section on the effect of matched/mismatched spiritual perspectives in the counsellor/client dyad, the literature states that in general such a match is valued by clients because there is an assumption of a level of understanding of those things that are important to the client (Trautmann 2003, Swinton 2001, Pargament 2007). It seems too, from the above quotes, that this is appreciated, even when the match is not as close, e.g. when the client is of a different faith but its importance can be accepted and understood.

When this match is not present and their clients do not share the same faith, many of the counsellors report some difficulty. Most are able to deal with it because they value each client as an individual with the right to autonomous choices even when those choices cross their own Christian principles. There are a small number of counsellors in group 3 that either cannot or choose not to do this and would therefore promote their own value system in the counselling process.

It is this match of spiritual awareness and/or perspective that seems to lift the taboo on mentioning spiritual issues for the client (West 2000) and it is perhaps the therapists’ understanding of their own faith issues, coupled with self-awareness and an
understanding of the counselling process that gives them competency in this area (Wyatt 2000, Lines 2002, Griffith and Griffith 2002).

These counsellors who have a Christian faith therefore provide one way of addressing the spiritual needs of the client population that has been neglected (Richards and Bergin 2005). Working within the faith base has allowed them to access the resource that the spiritual dimension can bring to dealing with the problems of life (Sperry 2001, Woodruff 2002, Foskett 2001, Pargament 2007) and to fulfill the BACP guidelines in this area (Harbourne 2008).

There is a cry from the literature to develop spiritually sensitive counselling (West and Biddington 2009, Benner 2001, Thorne 2001). It is clear from the quotes above that these practitioners are doing this, but perhaps not all to the same level of competency or in ways that the profession in general might accept.

Overall, most of the practitioners are able to work with a wider variety of belief systems other than their own, with a good level of awareness of their own position and the difficulties that this may bring, in line with Wyatt (2000). However, a there are few, whose Christian beliefs override total acceptance of the clients’ belief systems and allowance of client autonomy, for example, Reg and Grace. This seems to be because, like all the other counsellors they want the best outcome for their clients. In their view, this vision of the ‘good life’ (Lynch 2002) would ultimately be an acceptance of the Christian faith, particularly with their strong evangelical position in mind. It is understandable that ultimately the best spiritual care as they see it is to introduce the client to the person of Jesus Christ. This for them is care offered to the whole person, which the literature supports (Thorne 1998, Lines 2002, Swinton 2001).

Both Reg and Grace worked in Christian counselling centres where all their colleagues were Christian. In this they were similar to all group 3 practitioners. It was interesting to note that Reg was qualified at Masters level through a UK university, whereas Grace had only trained on Christian counselling courses to certificate level. Both had many years of experience dealing both with Christian and non-Christian clients in agencies open to the general public. So being able to give a client space for their own belief system and spirituality is not just a matter of level of training. Nor is it dependent necessarily on the context of the counselling. Other counsellors in this sample worked in Christian counselling centres and did not take the same position as Reg and Grace. It appears that some individuals may choose not to put their own belief
framework aside when working as a counsellor and may act because they see this as in the best interest of the client. They may not even be aware of the depth of the effect of their belief system on their work, or how useful understanding one’s own belief system can be in understanding the lives of clients (Rowan 2002). So there is a continuing need to alert practitioners to the desirability of self reflection on this issue if they are to work safely and well (Harbourne 2008).

**Personal Reflection**

When I met Reg and Grace, although it was evident that their Christianity was far more overt in the counselling room than mine would ever be, I was struck by the fact that they were trying to do the best for the clients that came. It was just that their belief in an evangelical kind of Christianity was so solid that it became overt. So Reg imposed ‘Christian boundaries’ on the behaviour of some of his clients and Grace would go down the route of introducing evangelical teaching if given an opening by the client.

Yet in other ways they provided good listening and counselling skills. They were not just ‘people wanting to do good’. They were educated and experienced in the work they did and valued in their community for the service they provided. I mused on how this fitted with my experience of being a faith-based counsellor.

When I started counselling I was working in a Christian Counselling centre with all Christian colleagues. I also had a strong evangelical understanding to my Christian faith. Even though, as I worked my way along the counselling path I learned to bracket off my own beliefs, it was sometimes really difficult not to allow my faith position to ‘leak into’ the counselling room. It was a real tussle to be authentic and yet non-invasive. I think what helped me was that I was not right in the centre of church life at the time. I was able to distance myself when necessary. However, both Grace and Reg had been full time Christian workers of one kind or another for much of their adult life. Being asked to bracket off what must feel like the very core of their existence must be very difficult indeed, if not impossible. If we go back to the beginning of chapter 8 we are reminded that all of the interviewees agreed that their spirituality cannot be separated from the rest of their being. I suppose it is a matter of knowing it and holding it in such a way that it does not interfere with the client’s process.

Certainly for me the task became easier as I did consistent personal development work both in individual therapy and in group work. I learned when I was
stepping on people’s toes! I wondered how much personal work Reg and Grace, or for that matter any of the practitioners in this study had done. It wasn’t a topic that came up in our discussions very often. Perhaps there is room here for a further study on the level of self-awareness of counsellors with respect to their value systems. I wondered too whether those who are completely entrenched in a particular faith position, who are not only of a faith by persuasion, but also by employment such as vicars, pastors, fulltime Christian workers and the like, have the capacity to allow the spirituality of the client to be explored particularly when it is very different from theirs. Another topic for a further study!

**A final comment on this section**

Overall then these practitioners are clearly of the opinion that in the counsellor/client dyad a Christian/Christian or Christian/spiritually-aware-client works well and has distinct advantages. They talk about being able to pick up the spiritual clues that might be missed by a non-spiritually aware counsellor, or not tapping into a great resource for healing. They cannot really comment on what it would be like the other way around, i.e. non-spiritually-aware-counsellor/spiritually-aware-client as this is not part of this study. But the inference is there that the client is at least likely not to be treated as a whole and perhaps things important to that client might be at best ignored (see Jenkins 2005, Jenkins 2011, Griffith and Griffith 2002). On balance, although there are difficulties and the need for some faith based counsellors to become more educated and self-aware with respect to the effect of their own belief systems in the counselling process, having a reasonable match between the belief systems of counsellor and client seems to support positive client experiences.

**Summary Section 8.3: Client Spirituality**

1. There is a positive gain when the counsellor/client dyad share a spiritual understanding, even if that understanding is not identical.
2. Most of the counsellors can recognise and accept different belief and value systems of their clients.
3. A few counsellors are so deeply embedded in their faith position that it becomes overt in their counselling. This does not seem to be only due to counsellor qualification level, type of training or counselling context.
4. Counsellors who have a spiritual dimension in their own lives have a sensitivity to the spirituality of their clients.
5. Some differences between counsellor and client belief systems can cause problems but can mostly be dealt with in supervision.
6. Expectations of a Christian client on a Christian counsellor can hamper the therapeutic process and need to be addressed.
7. Counsellors who have had personal difficulties with faith issues have a particular understanding with clients experiencing the same.
8. Spiritually sensitive therapy may allow clients to deal with issues that are difficult to approach in the church setting.
9. Client issues can affect the belief structures of the counsellor.
10. Continuation of encouragement of self reflection of counsellors on the effect of their belief system on the counselling process is necessary.

SECTION 8.4: CONTEXT, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE OF THERAPY

In this section evidence and discussion will address three different but related topics. These are:

1. The effect of the context in which the counselling work takes place.
2. Language usage and its effects.
3. The transition (or not) of counsellors between the cultures of the Christian and the secular counselling worlds.

Evidence from the practitioners – context

The context of counselling is clearly an issue for some of the practitioners when those who have a very different belief system enter the counselling room. For example, Rebecca (G2) is aware that because she works in a Christian counselling centre clients have preconceptions about what that might mean.

*I know that some of my clients want to check out my Christian credentials because of my ethnic background and accent. There are so many assumptions about what ‘Christian’ means. So all the time I am checking out our shared meanings.*

Some may hesitate to bring certain material:

*Clients may think that abortion is a taboo subject.*
and certainly she would sometimes inwardly have to hold onto her own feelings.

_Due to my faith stance, I would also hold within me a sadness if someone chose to have an abortion._

The context that counselling takes place is noted by some practitioners to have an effect on the work that takes place. For example, Diana feels it is very important to work in a place that provides and atmosphere conducive to working in the spiritual dimension. (She sees private clients in a work attached to a hospice).

_Diana (G1)  It is fantastic place to work and actually one of the reasons is that it that taps into spiritual stuff for me. It feels very spiritual to work in. It just allows people to be whatever they need to be, whenever they need it_

If the context of the context is overtly Christian, it can give a sense of security for the counsellor.

_Yi (G3)  Firstly there is the setting, a Christian counselling centre. This helps me to have a professional framework and sets the boundaries of our meetings._

However, it can limit the kind of issues they are prepared to deal with.

_Reg (G3)  We offer people a Christian context, with Christian boundaries and values, no preaching or cajoling. We do enter into Christian values with people who want to. Occasionally we, I will refer to my perspective on this without any pressure on the person. But we own our Christian basis at the very beginning of a counselling relationship, ‘This is a Christian agency - we will not... for example help someone to have a better affair or be part of any such process. We do not approve of the affair but we do approve of the person and so there is a dilemma._

At the extremes, the Christian context can be very overt.

_Grace (G3)  Our rooms are equipped with various tracts and Christian stuff as well as non-Christian stuff, bible to be given away, bible notes to be given away._

But she would see this as justified because she works in an overtly Christian agency.

_Grace (G3)  They know that I am a Christian from a Christian church._

Some clients may find this helpful. Others may be alienated by it, depending on their perspective on life including their faith position.

Certainly most of the practitioners who work in Christian counselling centres feel that Christian clients are more comfortable than they would be in a secular setting.
Sian (G2)  We are a Christian based counselling service and clients from other churches want to come and sometimes they need to explore what is happening in their life with their spirituality and how it all fits together and it is part of understanding the individual as an entirety. So I wouldn’t cut the spirituality off. I am quite happy to include and support it. If you go to an NHS counsellor there is …you could get anybody and they may not give any regard to the spiritual aspect, which some of my clients wish to explore.

They recognise the need to explore the expectations that such a set up might bring.

Gaynor (G2)  They come because they think it is safe... and it is Christian, but I always have to do a lot of explanation with somebody about what their expectations are. I put my cards on the table, that I work with you as you are and maybe we will look together at some of those challenges about your expectations perhaps of me, perhaps of others and how that relates to your own personal faith.

Although counsellors were aware of the impact of the immediate context on the counselling process, there was little comment on the impact of the larger society or how attitudes towards Christianity and other Grand Narratives may be less than favourable (Kvale 1992, West 2011c). What there was tended to be in respect to training, rather than to their counselling practice. For example, Reg relates a particularly difficult experience many years after the event.

Reg (G3)  On this particular course, if you were a Buddhist that was really acceptable. If you were a Christian... a person said they were a Christian. The group facilitator said, ‘Just a minute, let’s check, are we all Ok with working with a born again Christian?’ ...as though that was some stigma or some issue and that is so inappropriate! If I came in there saying that I believe in the Loch Ness Monster that is fine. Don’t worry about it. But if I am a Christian I am not allowed.

Discussion - context

It is clear from the literature that cultural factors are important in counselling because understandings and expectations between counsellor and client will be affected (Totton 2008), however that cultural divide is constructed (Richards and Bergin 2005). It seems reasonable to extrapolate differences in spirituality and belief structure to be included here, as all are ways of finding and expressing ‘meaning’ in the life of both the individual and the community (Zaf 1991). In any case, most forms of spirituality are bound up in culture (Christodoulidi 2011). As John Swinton says in his interview:-

JS  It looks as if you are just counselling the person in front of you, but in fact you are counselling the whole community, or you are working within the whole community, some of which you understand and some of which you don’t.
The evidence from the practitioners indicates that although there are negatives in working within a completely Christian environment, for some clients it may be the most appropriate context. Even so, assumptions about the nature of the work and the relationship need to be addressed. What is clear is that reflection by the counsellor on the effect of the counselling environment that they create and work in is essential (Jenkins 2011, Pitner and Sakamoto 2005).

Some literature points to the possibility of better outcomes if the client and the therapist are culturally matched (for example: Laungani 1997, Su 1998, Loewental and Rogers 2004, Farsimadan et al 2007, West 2011c). Certainly if a therapist has a negative attitude towards a particular group or cultural factor, then outcomes will inevitably be less successful (Moodley and Murphey 2010). Conversely, if the practitioner is positively inclined to a cultural factor such as Christianity, the outcomes are likely to be more favourable. They are perhaps in a better position to deliver culturally appropriate interventions (Bogdanska 2006, Collins and Arthur 2010). This is evident from the practitioners, who feel they can allow the client to explore the whole of their being in a culturally appropriate way.

It was interesting to note that overall, few of the practitioners talked much about the context in which they worked, other than to name it and even fewer commented about the effect that the context might have. It is not clear why this happened. It could be that it was an aspect that received little reflection or it may be that for them the effects were so obvious they did not need to state them (see: Adler 1975, Bogdanska 2006, Zaf 1991).

**Evidence from the practitioners – language usage**

Overall, the practitioners were aware of the assumptions language usage might bring and made allowances for it when dealing with their clients.

*Elizabeth (G1)* If I am in the person-centred world I talk about acceptance and stuff I like that, but if I am in the Christian world I will talk about the Love of God, Agape, of offering that love. Just the whole thing of how Jesus is. It is the world you are in and what language it uses. I am careful about the language I choose, depending on the context in which I am working. I might behave differently also. For example, in a church (praying) situation I might get a picture or impression of something and I would probably offer it. If such an impression happened in counselling I would probably know it, but not say anything.
Rebecca (G2) I try to work with the language of the clients, the words they use and the meanings they attribute to them, as this gives them confidence that I will understand them. I believe that it increase their feelings of security when the range of meanings are clear.

Reg (G3) My language does change from client to client. I think I want to see them as they are. I want to identify with them in ways and words that connect. Most times I can do. If somebody came from a church background, very steeped in Christian terminology I will relate to them in that. I do not use a Christian vocabulary with (non-Christian) clients. I try to phrase things free of Christian jargon.

However, difficulties are inevitable. Making assumptions about the meaning of language can easily lead to misunderstandings, even if you are a Christian counsellor, working with a Christian client.

Diana (G1) I remember working with someone who went to an Anglican church and she knew I went to church. So she would say things like, ‘Forgiveness and atonement’ and all that sort of vocabulary and it would be very easy for me to assume that I knew what she was on about. I ended up in... it wasn’t that sticky – a – position but I had assumed one thing by it and followed down this path, which was not the path she was going on. She ended up over there and I ended up over here. Since then I have learnt that whenever they say that vocabulary to say, ‘What does that mean for you?’ before we start exploring it, otherwise I can end up in the wrong place.

Ivan also recognises this danger but he also sees how our professional language holds little importance to the client. It is the healing process that counts.

Ivan (G1) You can also fall into the trap of assuming that someone knows what you mean by certain words and it could be something completely different.

A transpersonal therapist would work from a feeling of that the person is remembering, discovering. An existentialist would say that the person is creating. If it is leading that person to health, who cares what exactly is going on?

Discussion - language

Culture and language are inextricably linked and assumptions are often based in the language we use, the descriptors of our experience (Laungani 2004). The academic interviewees were very aware of this and the need to choose the most appropriate way of communication.

JS You have to decide which language has priority within the therapeutic encounter and your own personal journey.
Certainly what may be appropriate in a Church setting may not be appropriate in the counselling room and vice versa.

\textit{BT} \quad I certainly feel myself that a lot of the experiences in either the spiritual or psychological realm are the same and we are actually applying different vocabulary as we try and grapple with them.

In summary, counsellors in all groups were very aware of language usage and recognised that in different contexts, language usage might need to be changed. They also recognized that using a common language, with shared meanings would help the client, even if this meant checking out those meanings to avoid misunderstanding.

\textbf{Evidence from the practitioners- cultural transition}

All of the practitioners in this study had been Christians long before they trained as counsellors or psychotherapists. So to some degree they have all had to make some kind of cultural transition, some kind of adaptation to the culture of psychotherapy and counselling. Those in groups 1 & 2 seem to have taken on much more of the ‘counselling culture’ than those in group 3. There is a greater awareness of journeying to an expanded understanding.

\textit{Diana (G1)} \quad It is still very much a journey.

\textit{Rebecca (G2)} \quad Personal integration takes time because you have to experience things and then reflect on them at deeper levels.

Margaret expresses how her faith and psychological understandings have come together and supported each other on that journey.

\textit{Margaret (G2)} \quad ….what the courses that I have done, the training that I have done and just the on-going-being the person that I am has shown me is that a very real gift I can give to my clients in my work is to just be with them and be myself. I am just able to be who I am. I actually feel that is what my faith has been calling me to do. What has been very interesting is that person centred counselling is enabling me to live that out. I don't think I really had the courage to do it before. I think in paying attention to my own personal growth and having things like personal development groups to go to and interestingly as well, being amongst people who don't necessarily carry my faith, I feel I have learnt from that and it absolutely goes with what I understand to be the life of a disciple to be.

There are no such remarks from Group 3.

\textbf{Discussion}
If we look at this as an aculturalisation process that takes place in stages (Adler 1975, Bochner 1982, Zaf 1991, Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman 1995, Sussman 2000, Pantelidou and Craig 2006) then perhaps those in groups 1&2 are further along this process.

I wondered about the process in group 3. All had been exposed to some psychological theories as a result of their counselling training. Some of this was at an advanced level, e.g. Reg had a Masters in Counselling from a well respected UK university. Yet for some, the overriding parameters of their work and their thoughts were within the Christian perspective. It was as if they had come into contact with the psychological world, examined its teachings and then retreated. This is something that Alder (1975) notes as a possibility in cultural transition, a returning home when the two world views are both evident as a way of dealing with (or not dealing with) the dilemma of integration.

**Personal Reflection**

Thinking about Bochner’s model of cultural adaptation (Bouchner 1982), I can see great similarities here in my travels towards integrating my Christian and psychotherapy worlds.

**Stage 1: rejection of values of adopted culture**

When I started my counselling training and before that, anything that did not come with the label ‘Christian’ was definitely suspicious, if not dangerous. My safe world was my Christian one. Thoughts that challenged my version of Christian doctrine were just ‘wrong’.

**Stage 2: Rejection of old culture and blind swing to new**

As I heard more psychological theory I found much sense there and acceptance of me that was very different from my Christian heritage. I swung into ‘Everything that is Christian is useless or archaic’. What was interesting was that I questioned every point of doctrine, every motivation of Christian peers, but my relationship with God stood firm. I did not reject Him and He did not leave me. By the end of the process I knew what beliefs I had left were mine and not just absorbed from my evangelical context.

**Stage 3: Vacillating between the two cultural norms**
I seemed to lead a double life, having two understandings of how ‘people worked’ but no idea as to how to put these two perspectives together. It felt like I belonged to neither group but held a lot of knowledge about both. This I think was the beginning of the angst that drove me into the research initially. It was the loneliest time of my life.

**Stage 4 Integration: Finding value in both cultures and a rational that gave meaning and significance.**

This has happened slowly over the course of the research as I have talked to others in similar positions, read a great deal and tried to express my journey to others in a host of different ways. I think the first step was to realise that I was an edge dweller in both worlds and that was sometimes an uncomfortable place to be. I met other edge dwellers and that place did not seem so lonely. I began to value that place and feel more comfortable in it. I saw that it had value for those who inhabited the two worlds.

I encountered resistance from those of both worlds who would have me nearer the centre of their world. I struggled a bit with this one because there is a deep feeling of belonging that comes from being in the centre of things and that was part of me too. Then I realised that actually I belonged in each world just as much as anyone else but that my place was where I was... near the edge and if I tried to put myself anywhere else I just would not fit.

I thought of times in the past when I had been involved in my church with all sorts of things, seeing others in that place seemingly content and wanting some of that. But in myself I knew I just did not fit. I was utterly uncomfortable and did not belong there even if they did. I only found contentment when I found my place near the edge... happy in myself and useful to the community in a different way from those in the middle.

But being on the edge does not mean I am not part of the world. I don’t feel as if I am dangling into space and holding on grimly. I feel comfortably sat these days in both the psychological and faith worlds and the great thing is that mostly it feels like one world. When the two worlds come together it is fantastic, and they do mostly. I think that is because I have found that the essential cores of the two are in fact very similar.
In the Christian world I believe that it is God’s love that is the most important thing, expressed in so many ways and I think I along with so many others have a calling to express that love to the world. This love is agape love… the love that asks for no returns, no kick backs etc. It is this love that changes lives. Similarly in the counselling world I have come to realise along with many eminent theorists and practitioners before me that my presence, my offering of unlimited positive regard, my being willing to take emotional risk with my client is the thing that makes the difference. So I may have many theories in my background, many techniques I could use, and many thoughts in my head, but as Brian Thorne puts it, it is the ‘quality of tenderness’ that matters. This is what promotes growth in the client.

So these things are at the core of my being, the core of my understanding of myself and my work. The Christian and professional world coincide utterly at this point. My worlds feel totally integrated.

Now there are times where the two worlds don’t fit together so neatly… yet I can see the value, truth and usefulness in each. So for example with thoughts of client’s total self actualisation and autonomy and the Christian idea that we are on this earth to do God’s will. It is then that I sit in the liminal space between the worlds, holding on to both until the way to put them together becomes clearer…and it usually does over time. There is always learning in sitting in the ‘not knowing’ and just holding the paradox. With all of this, peace has come and for the most part, angst has dissipated. I am who I am, with this entire huge field to play in. Sometimes I may move more in one world than the other, but mostly the two worlds have become one and my identity of being a contented edge-dweller feels secure.

**Summary: Subsection 8.4: Context, language and culture of therapy**

1. Context was not high on the agenda of concern for most practitioners in this study.
2. Generally speaking the practitioners were aware that the context of counselling affects expectations and assumptions on the part of both therapist and client. This awareness lessens in group 3 practitioners.
3. The context is seen to affect what issues are brought to counselling by the client.
4. Although there are some negatives if the context is overtly Christian, there are also positives. There is evidence that counsellor client matching e.g. the possibility to explore spiritual issues brings better outcomes.

5. The choice of language was seen to be important across all practitioners groups, with appropriateness to the client being a high priority.

6. Little attention was paid to the effect on the counselling process of the wider community and cultural norms.

7. Those practitioners in groups 1 & 2 seem to have moved further along a cultural transition process between Christianity and the counselling and psychotherapy world. Some of those in group 3 seem to have looked at psychological culture and firmly returned to their Christian roots.
The Findings and Discussion Part of this thesis has been a very long one. In this chapter I will draw out the major themes, bringing together thoughts from chapters 5 – 8. I will point out where the practitioners are in line with the academics' view of best practice from both the literature and from the academic interviews and where they differ. I will major on the findings with respect to the practitioners and I will leave my reflections on my own personal journey until the following chapter on Emergent Thoughts.

The inevitable place of spirituality in the psychotherapy process


The very clear view of all the practitioners in this study is that inclusion of the spiritual element in counselling is not only desirable but is inevitable. They agree with Thorne that it is impossible to exclude it entirely if the counsellor has a faith (Thorne 2011, West 2009). So if these practitioners are to be authentic in their therapeutic relationships (Rogers 1980), it follows that their faith is present with them and may affect the therapy process, whether it is verbalised or not (Gerson et al 2000). It is also clear from the literature that there is a mismatch in the availability of counsellors and psychotherapists who are competent and willing to work with clients including the spiritual dimension and the level of need or desire for this amongst the client population (Grof and Grof 1989, Rowe 2001, Dein, 2004, Thorne 2011, Hay 2002). This being so these counsellors who are alive to the resources of the spiritual dimension (Mearns and Thorne 2000) are in a position to offer counselling or psychotherapy that is sensitive to the spiritual need of their clients, something that is in short supply from the profession.
in general (West and Biddleston 2009, Benner 2001). It is clear from the interviews that although the practitioners were all practising Christians, they were able to work well with clients with different forms of spirituality (for example: Margaret (G2) Rebecca (G2), Joy (G1), all on p 182). There seems to be two different factors here. Firstly there is the belief structure and personal faith that acts as a resource. Secondly there is the ability to find space to allow different belief structures of others. Most of the practitioners in this study were clearly able to do this. However, Thorne in his interview warns that “A therapist who is in some way caught up in the notion of the essential rightness and incontrovertibility of some of his own beliefs and practices is clearly going to land in a very considerable mess. Because they may come a point where he or she feels that there is no option but to really direct the client and express ‘The truth’”. A few of the practitioners from group 3, that is the group with highest level of Christian influence in their work, either could not or chose not to work with different belief structures in a completely accepting way. This seemed to be because their view of the ‘good life’ (Lynch 2002) was so strongly embedded in their Christian beliefs.

The development of the counsellor/psychotherapist with relation to spirituality

The literature is clear that the counsellor/psychotherapist needs to tend to their own spiritual development if they are to work with the spiritual dimension in therapy (Rowan 2005, Thorne 1998, Thorne 2002, Sullivan 1998, West 2011). All of the practitioners in this survey clearly do this. They are all active members of worshiping communities and they all talk of their faith as a huge resource in their lives and work. They talk specifically about using prayer as a support for themselves and their work (Gubi 2008, 2011, Rose 1996). Some see the work they do as a specific calling from God on their lives. They are in this respect clearly in line with the practices espoused by the academic interviewees.

Finding sufficient support

Finding support to work with the spiritual dimension can be problematic (Feltham 2000), although it is seen as essential if the counsellor is to work safely and well (Woodruff 2002). These practitioners demonstrate some of the difficulties that can occur. If the supervisor is thought not to be sympathetic to the spiritual dimension then some practitioners note their reluctance to introduce such material for fear of being judged incompetent (Gubi 2004, 2007, Yourman 2010). Also this fear can lead to reluctance to move from one supervisor to another, evidenced by a number of
practitioners in the sample, as few supervisors seem trained to work with material from the spiritual dimension competently (Aten and Hernandez, West 2000). So having a supervisor who shares the supervisee’s Christian faith on one hand sidesteps these difficulties and gives more accepting support. On the other hand, having a supervisor who shares the faith perspective could mean that blind spots can occur (Feltham 2000). In this group of practitioners there was evidence of some supervisory relationships that were straying away from the professional contractual arrangements normally expected. Some of the practitioners split their supervision so that they only take spiritually inclusive material to a sympathetic supervisor (Christodoulidi 2011, West 2011). This seems to be a pragmatic response to a very difficult problem, better than hiding material from supervision (Gubi 2004, West 2003, Hantoot 2000), but not as healthy as Alistair Ross says “…having a supervisor that accepts the whole of me”. It as if those practitioners who for one reason or another do not have such a supervisor are hamstrung. Either they are open in supervision and fear censure or they hide part of themselves and risk working unethically with part of their activity unsupervised. So there is a gap here between what the academics recommend and what the practitioners can actually manage to find.

Support from informal sources may also be lacking for the counsellor with a Christian faith. Colleagues may look on with suspicion (Thorne 2002). Even church support can be lacking (Thorne 2002, 2006, Propst 2010). This is evidenced in this study by a number of practitioners, who find themselves in a rather isolated place. Again the gap between what they academics say works for them and what is available for many practitioners is evident. It is not surprising that the image of the edge-dweller emerged from the interviews; so many of them found themselves living between two worlds, sometimes fitting together well and other times in opposition to each other.

It was clear from the practitioners that what they would value most is somewhere to talk about the integration of faith with practice (for example: Rebecca, Yi, Grace, Val). The research interview had provided a rare opportunity to do this. For most there had not been much encouragement in training to do so and only those with a Christian supervisor had any opportunity in that arena. Many found no real understanding of what they work entailed in their church contact. Even those who had a few like minded friends thought the idea of more space to do this would be useful. So the question of “Where might this be possible?” is left hanging.
The effects of culture, context and cultural transition

The literature is clear that the context and culture surrounding the counselling process affects the expectations that both clients and counsellors bring (Totten 2008, Richards and Bergin 2005 Christodouli 2011, Moodley and Murphey 2010). This is very much evidenced in the practitioners’ experiences (for example, Rebecca (G2) p191, Reg (G3) p192). This can be experiences positively or negatively. On the positive side, the shared Christian culture and language allows for a better communication between client and therapist (Zaf 1991). This may lead to a stronger therapeutic alliance and better outcomes (West 2011a). As training for counsellors to work in the spiritual direction remains patchy In the UK (Foskett et al 2004, Thorne 2011, West 2011a, West 2011b), a shared understanding of a faith perspective is more likely to allow the client to at least have some counselling that is culturally competent (Laungani 2004, Bogdanska 2006).

On the negative side, because the faith of client and counsellor has the same title, for example: ‘Christian’, it does not mean that belief structures are identical and that language usage is the same, for example: Diana (G1) p195, Elizabeth (G1) p 194). This is clear also from the literature (for example: Laungani 2004). So checking out of meanings remains important.

The immediate context of the counselling can also have an effect on the counselling process (Jenkins 2011). Certainly these practitioners were aware of this (Yi (G3) p191 Gaynor (G2) p192). Those working in Christian settings of one kind or another (some in group 2 and most in group 3) were much more overt in the kind of spiritual intervention they used such as prayer, forgiveness exercises offering scripture etc. Again, this is well documented in the literature (for example: Gubi 2004, Rose 1996).

The idea of Counsellors who have a Christian faith having to make some kind of cultural transition emerged as the project progressed. Certainly those in groups 1& 2 seemed to have travelled further along this road in line with many literature sources (Bochner 1982, Zaf, 1991, Pantelidou and Craig 2006). A number of them noting that they were on a journey (Diana (G1)) or that they had changed their views on differing value systems over time (Gaynor (G2)). Certainly if these issues are not addressed, it is clear that misunderstandings can and do occur, as seen in Laungani (1997) and
conversely, if they are attended to they promote higher levels of integration (Alder 1975, Matsumoto, Hiryama and Le Roux 2006).

The effect of all of this on client work

Many clients certainly valued the availability of working in the spiritual dimension. Of course we have to be aware of the fact that client reactions are those reported by the practitioners. This is upheld by works such as that of West and Jenkins 2006 and Jenkins, 2007, 2011 where the client voice is central. Certainly, there is evidence that for some clients a match between client and counsellor spirituality was very enabling and in one or two instances, essential (for example: Dawn (G1) p182).

It is evident from the literature that working at depth with clients is seen as one of the healing factors in the therapy process (Cooper 2005, Mearns and Schmid 2005, Mearns and Cooper 2005) and that this activity has many of the qualities of a spiritually aware therapeutic relationship (Knox 2007, Knox 2008, Rowan 2005, Wilber 2000). Practitioners in group 1 of the sample give details of such experiences. It seems reasonable to look at what exactly the practitioners are doing/not doing that may or may not promote this. Thorne (2002) declares that it is essential that the therapist develops a spiritual discipline so that he/she is prepared for the possibility of promoting such moments. In order to do this he/she needs to pay attention to him/herself, their relationship to others and to his/her natural environment. The practitioners in this study do this partially, but there is a gap indicated between what the academics in general recommend and what counsellors actually do. In particular, although many of them voice their desire to have an arena in which to talk about their own integration issues, it seems that in the present climate and culture of counselling there is little opportunity to do so. The result of this is perhaps that sometimes clients do not receive an optimum level of service.

This concludes the discussion based on the practitioner material. I now move onto the developments that emerged from living with this project over a considerable period of time.
PART 3

ENDINGS
CHAPTER 10: EMERGENT THOUGHTS

SECTION 10.1: MY PERSONAL JOURNEY

This section could have been presented as a final chapter in Part 2 of the thesis as it does represent the last phase of the heuristic process. Moustakas talks about this phase being a creative synthesis (Moustakas 1998). However, my experience was not one of enlightenment that came only in the end phase. As my personal process and understanding of the topic passed through various stages, thoughts began to emerge that eventually coalesced into a deeper understanding of the integration process. It was a cyclical process, rather than a linear one, with a host of inputs from a variety of sources facilitating change. So perhaps it was a gentle awakening to the tacit knowledge that at some level I already knew (Polyani 1965), a gathering together of disparate parts of me, enabled by the companionship, knowledge and experience of others. This chapter also includes an application of the understanding that emerged. It therefore seemed more appropriate to put it into Part 3 of the thesis where the consequences of this research are addressed.

Having collected my data and looked at what it was saying in relation to the literature, I reached a state where very little happened for what seemed a very long time. This is what I assume Moustakas means by incubation (Douglas and Moustakas 1985, Moustakas 1990). Throughout the journey so far I had experienced moments of new understanding, for myself (illumination) and I think of the process of integration in general (explication). I had recorded them not only in my research journal, but also in poems and stories (creative synthesis). I knew too that I was no longer in angst over this issue. Something had settled in me. I felt much more secure in both my professional stance and my faith.

Something had shifted as I spent time with other practitioners who were in similar situations. I knew that as I had journeyed along I had found a new way to be in the world, yet putting it all into words defeated me for many months. Throughout the research period I had been forced at various times to take time out from the project due to circumstances. I had moved country, move house twice and had some serious medical problems to contend with. It seemed to me that each time I returned to the
work, there was more insight, more settling of the angst. So the profile of my journey was not a linear one as is maybe assumed in reading Moustakas’ description of the heuristic process (ibid). It was more like a spiral, where I kept coming back to similar places after each break away from my desk and each time I seemed to arrive at a slightly different level in the spiral, seeing things from a slightly different perspective. As I went round the spiral, different inputs impinged upon me that took my process along and plotted out further steps of the journey. This sometimes came through reading, or through conversations with peers or an email from one of the interviewees commenting on something I had sent them. Sometimes it was just through daily living. It was not until I sat down to write the thesis in earnest in the spring of 2010 that I began to realise that the journey had come to some sort of completion, for now at least. I had found a peaceful place with it all. I could comfortably function in both faith and professional worlds without losing any of my sense of identity. It was as if it had been really necessary to tease out both psychological and faith influences, just to see what was there. But having looked at those influences, chewed them over, accepted them and their part in my life, I was able to sit with it all and be much more self accepting. I came to the place where I could say “All of this is part of who I am. All of this is OK”. I knew without doubt that my spirituality, my relationship with God was the basis of all of me. My two worlds were coinciding at a much more profound level than ever before. I had made the cultural transition from purely Christian world to a world that included both Christianity and psychotherapy. I could see the stages I had passed through (Bochner 1982).

I am sure that taking my angst seriously by engaging in this project had enabled me to find the time and space to find some answers. I am also sure I haven’t found all the answers yet and probably the day I think I have is the day I stop growing. The biggest engine to the process was the ability to talk to people in a similar position, to converse with three academics in the field and to find professional support that accepted me as a whole entity. These are the factors that seem to sing out of the research, that in order to be integrated we must find time, space and support to enable that to happen.

So the first major aim, to settle my own angst, had come to fruition, but what about the second one, to be of use to others in the profession?
SECTION 10.2: THE EMERGENCE OF A MODEL OF INTEGRATION

It is clear from the data that my experience is very similar to many of those that were interviewed. Many expressed one way or another, a desire to have more opportunity to talk about their faith and practice with like minded people. Many also had struggled with finding enough support to work on this integration from both formal and informal sources. These desires were in tune with the recommendations from the academic interviewees. Therefore it might be useful to find a way of stimulating such discussion, give practitioners a chance to talk and think around these issues.

We know from the literature that few practitioners read research papers once their training is finished (West 2011a). So disseminating these findings through the normal academic routes is not likely to be very productive. I therefore decided to move forward in two ways. Firstly I would aim to get short articles published in magazines that therapists actually read. This I have already done via ‘Thresholds’, the ASPCC publication. A number of my interviewees mentioned reading this and it is of specific interest to those who work including the spiritual dimension in their counselling. My intention is to get some more articles published as soon as the thesis is finished. Secondly it would be useful to provide workshop opportunities where practitioners learn a little about this research and are then challenged to look at their own state of integration and the support they have for their growth in this area.

With these thoughts in mind I constructed a diagram that might illustrate my ‘integration journey’ with the idea that I could use it to invite other practitioners to examine their own integration processes (Figure 10.1)
Faith World and Counselling world

Figure 10.1

How I see this model working for me:

As a psychotherapist with a Christian faith I live in and between two worlds. Each of these worlds has many influences within it and are represented by the different sectors of the circles. These influences vary both in their makeup and strength over time. The small circle in the middle aims to represent me, the practitioner able to move around in both worlds.

These circles of influence sometimes roll towards each other and overlap greatly. The whole of life feels fully integrated. Sometimes it is as if they hardly touch and I feel as if I am ‘bridging the gap’, often short of support from both perspectives. My further thoughts are that this might be better seen as two spheres with ‘Bubbles of influence’ that can move in 3-dimensions within those spheres, but for simplicity’s sake I will stick to two dimensions here.

As the wheels rotate, different areas of influence come into focus. When the parts in focus from the two worlds fit together, then there is little internal conflict. When
they are in dissonance then there is a difficult balance to be held and it is necessary to live with the paradox of believing in two things that seem to contradict each other.

The extremes of these states might be drawn as follows.

State 1. Almost total integration
State 2. Dissonance

Through spending time tending to my own spirituality and talking about many aspects of how that fits with my psychological understandings, I now find that most of my life is spent with the two circles almost completely overlapping, in harmony and experienced as one world rather than two. However, if I had not taken the two worlds apart to see what influences existed, that fit would not have been so profound. There are still times when I need to hold on to both of my worlds because they are telling me different things. I don’t experience this as having to choose between one or the other. It is a matter of sitting with the paradox and accepting that for now I cannot make these two worlds harmonise on the particular point in focus. In other words, it is OK not to know sometimes. That too is part of my experience and I have no need to fear it.

The biggest difference in me before and after this research is that in my previous way of being I was see-sawing between the integrated and dissonant states regularly, but not really happy in either. I was certainly frightened of the dissonance, feeling that my two worlds might pull completely apart. Yet when they came together I struggled to hold onto my integrity. I think I worried that one world would completely swallow up the other and either I would lose my faith or my psychological understanding would get buried and forgotten. Now that see-sawing had gone, yet there remains a gentle fluidity allowing me to acknowledge all parts of my experience.

**CW10.1 Integration means movement**

*From rigidity to fluidity*
*From certainty to surprise*
*From insisting on solidity to embracing the shaky*
*To hold excitement and scare at the same time and not let go of either.*

*(Excerpt from Scott 2007)*
I wondered how my experience would fit with that of other practitioners. So I presented the wheel diagrams and some comments describing how I related my experience to them, to all of the practitioner interviewees (See Appendix 8).

These are some of the comments that came back.

**Diana (G1)**  The model is a really good fit to my experience. I (would) say that sometimes they (the two wheels) feel as if they overlap and at other times, or for other people they are totally separate. There is also the circle representing religion (which I think for me is organised religion and dogma) which fits somewhere, but where?? I wondered about the spinning wheels, presumably they can rotate at different speeds and don’t have to be locked together like cog wheels but can rotate independently?

**Maria (G1)**  I would say that the model did represent my experience as I was influenced by, and influenced, both worlds. However, I saw myself sitting more centrally in the faith world as that predominates for me, but I felt I was taking myself, and my faith, and putting them at the service of counselling. There were times when the faith issue was difficult, and this difficulty had to be held, but there were other times when it was reinforced particularly by clients.

**Carys (G2)**  Yes the model does represent my experiences of separate worlds. The difficulty of working under ethical practices forbids my sharing faith with clients, which restricts my life as a Christian who wants to share the Good News of Jesus. However I wonder if experience is important .....do we as experienced counsellor’s learn to live in these two worlds, do we continue to slip in and out of them depending on our individual clients needs, or will there come a time when we can truly integrate our two worlds without compromising so called standards according to BACP. If we are to be taken seriously as counsellors we need the backing of the weight of the BACP or we will stay within the church and be seen as pastoral workers.

**Joan (G3)**  The Faith World resembles a picture someone gave me in a prayer meeting once about the work I do. God was at the very centre of the wheel. The various aspects were the spokes. The rim was where the “rubber hits the road”, the direction the wheel is going in, where action takes place and that is through prayer.

**Jaygee (G3)**  I have always worked for Christian Counselling services, albeit ones which see many clients that are not Christian, the overlap of the two circles would probably be greater than is shown.

These comments show that the diagram and my explanation of my position had stimulated comment of one kind or another from across the groups of the practitioners. All seem to take the ideas a little further than those offered. This was encouraging. It
was stimulating debate. They also show that there is a fair degree of commonality in the experience, enough for me to consider using the ideas to construct a workshop in order to give practitioners time and space to think about their own faith/counselling integration, that is to fulfill one of the recommendations from the academic interviewees that for most practitioners was sadly lacking.

So far I have conducted two workshops on the theme of integration of spirituality and counselling. One of these was to a non-specific group of spiritually minded counsellors. The second was sponsored by ACC-Wales. The latter therefore attracted a mainly Christian audience, with a good percentage of those present from the evangelical wing of the Christian Church. (ACC has a statement of faith that members must be in agreement with, that has an evangelical flavour (see appendix 7).) In both workshops the findings of this research were presented in outline, with emphasis on areas such as:

- Paying attention to our language and that of the client
- Tending to our own spirituality
- Finding time and space to work on our own integration
- Finding the support to help us do this.

I used the ‘Faith world/Counselling world’ model to talk about my journey and invited them to individually work out what the faith and psychological influences were that played into their work and consider how much they overlapped.

A variety of exercises were used to help them explore their integration further (see Appendix 9) and in general, the results from the workshops were positive.

**From the ACC workshop:**

There were 50 participants and I received 37 feedback forms (see Appendix 10).

76% found the two-world model helpful and reflective of their experience. For example:

*I feel God has sent me here today, having recently been challenged in the counselling room by what I thought were two diametrically opposed worlds. The integration model has helped me to realise their connection in the clinical setting.*

Another said: *My experience fits well with the ‘two world’ model but today had reinforced that. It has given me a feeling of empowerment.*
24% felt no identification with the model

One participant said that they fitted:

Not at all... but that is because I grew up as a Christian and they were never separate.

And another; I see my world as ONE in which I constantly need to balance the spiritual and secular aspects.

46% found the opportunity to talk with others in similar situations very important.

For example, one participant found usefulness in:

...discussion with group members of their personal experiences of religion, spirituality, Christianity and how these integrate into their counselling roles

And another:

Other people’s experiences enabled me to reflect on what was happening to me.

35% reported making new discoveries about themselves or their work.

For example, one participant discovered:

...my compartmentalised existence. How did that happen?

And another:

It was difficult to fill in the faith world. This is the area I need to work on.

35% felt they had been ‘given permission to talk about a difficult subject and/or felt affirmed in the way they dealt with it’. For example:

The best thing was being able to explore the counselling and spiritual worlds and meeting up with other counsellors

or: It was the first time that I had ever felt that I had ‘permission’ to think and talk with others about this.”

I also noted that three participants said that they needed to think seriously about their present supervision arrangements. For example:

The thoughts re. my supervision returned again... very conscious that there were some clients that I ‘hid’ from supervision because of unhelpful comments in the past.

The ACC workshop was much bigger than the general spirituality one and I therefore obtained much more feedback from this

From the ‘general spirituality’ workshop I only received 3/8 feedback forms. This was mostly due to organisational difficulties. However, all of those returned were
positive about the usefulness of the model in reflecting on how they integrate their spirituality into their counselling work. They also valued the opportunity to meet and discuss such things with peers.

It was interesting that this group took the model and rather than use it as it was, came up with different images that would be more helpful for them.

Some examples were:

My circles would be somewhat different.
My model would be amoebic, rather than firm edges.
For me it’s more like a doughnut... with a lot of space in the middle... and the more cluttered that space becomes the less “well” I work...... though I am beginning to think that that space is also sacred space and so it’s all tied together somehow.

This initially surprised me. Perhaps I was being defensive of ‘my model’ thinking “How dare they change it?” However, very quickly I realised that the purpose of presenting the model is to stimulate thought, and discussion, to provide the space to tend to integration. This it had surely done, even if the route that those reflections had taken were not the same as mine.

So the question emerges, “Did the workshops achieve the set aims?” It seems, for the most part they did.

They raised awareness of the influences that may be informing counsellors practice. They gave opportunity and stimulation for counsellors to reflect on these issues. They also provided participants with the possibility of discussing the topic with others in similar situations and challenged some to think about the support they had to continue this work.

I think therefore that there is evidence that the “Faith world/Counselling world” model is a reasonable starting point to enable counsellors with a Christian faith to think through integrations issues and that such gatherings of counsellors are a very helpful stimuli to such thinking.
CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is divided into the following sections:-

SECTION: 11.1 Review and critique of the methodology
SECTION: 11.2 Review of the findings and emergent thoughts
SECTION: 11.3 The surprises that emerged in this project
SECTION: 11.4 Limitations of the research
SECTION: 11.5 Recommendations for training, supervision and practice
SECTION: 11.6 Recommendations for future work
SECTION: 11.7 Final thoughts

SECTION 11.1: REVIEW AND CRITIQUE OF THE METHODOLOGY

Heuristic Methodology is not used as frequently as other qualitative methodologies. However there was sufficient literature to build a rationale of working that allowed the project to proceed and work through to completion (Hiles 2001, 2002, 2008, West 2001, Etherington 2001b, 2004, Moustakas 1990, Douglas and Moustakas 1985, Nuttall 2006, Braud and Anderson 1998, McLeod 2003, Ankrah 2002). It allowed me as the researcher to be situated in the research (McLeod 2001a), overtly acknowledging how my values will affect the process and outcome of the research (Owen 1999, West and Talib 2002). It facilitated the exploration of a particular area by going directly to those who shared that experience (Husserl as cited by Moran 2000) and it enabled me to dwell in the data so that the tacit knowledge around the topic, knowledge already known at an unconscious level, might emerge (Polyani 1965).

In this project, the heuristic methodology set out specifically to achieve a number of aims (see chapter 3: Methodology p 76). The extent to which these aims are achieved are listed turn below.

1. Historical and academic pedigree


The literature is clear that, although there are good reasons for including the spiritual dimension in counselling, there are negative factors that need to be taken into consideration, such as confusion of boundaries (Richards and Begin 2005), the imposition of counsellor’s value system on the client and/or counsellor collusion in client avoidance of difficult issues (Gubi 2004). There are other ethical matters to be addressed (Frame 2000) such as working without adequate support because appropriate supervision is difficult to find (Gubi 2007, Yourman 2010, West 2010).

2. **Allowed the richness of the data to be collected and preserved (i.e. was expansive and inclusive)**

   Overall, pragmatically the methodology has been found fit for purpose (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Certainly the richness of the data gathered has been preserved (Creswell 1998) and I think presented representatively. The feedback that I have had from interviewees has been encouraging. Most have agreed that I have caught the essence of their experience and have asked for very little revision.

3. **Was congruent with the topic of the research**

   The methodology was found to be congruent with the topic of the research (McLeod 2001a). It allowed an open and exploratory approach to “find what was there” (Heidegger as cited in Mcleod 2001a). It asked open questions that allowed the interviewees to say what was important on this topic. It has
produced a much clearer picture of the breadth of what it is like to be a Christian and a counsellor/psychotherapist.

4. **Was congruent with myself as researcher and psychotherapist and allowed me to be honest and transparent in the research**

   This methodology fitted well with my professional identity (Etherington 2004) and in many ways paralleled the way I work with clients. Whether or not it allowed me to be honest and transparent (Mruck and Breuer 2003) is more difficult to assess. Certainly I have tried to show where my thoughts were at all stages of the project and I have been very aware as to how the project has moved my inner process of integration onwards. I have been able to express some of that and then share it with other practitioners, both inside and outside the project. This is an important factor in what McLeod calls "practitioner repertoire building", that is giving practitioners tools to be better counsellors (McLeod 2001b). Allowing the work to affect me (Etherington 2004) has in some ways been the easy part. In fact it was impossible to stop it. However, expressing what has been going on is much harder. I think partly this is a natural caution around too explicit self-exposure and partly to do with the issue of trying to write about spirituality itself. It is so nebulous but so intimate that it is difficult to express accurately (Swinton 2001). This I suppose is inevitable when we are looking at something that is "beyond the self" (Rowan 2005, Luckoff, Turner and Lu 1993, Schreus 2002).

5. **Allowed the research to be conducted in relationship**

   I was keen from the beginning to keep the parallels going with my psychotherapeutic work and that included working in relationship (Frank and Frank 2004). Is this really true of this research? Certainly, the interviews were full of relationship, with many comments like, "I think I have found a kindred spirit" (Joy (G1)). Also there has been a great deal of contact with the interviewees since. Only one (Ivan) failed to give me feedback and many of the others stayed engaged throughout. The feedback from the work I sent to them was often full of further comments and observations. They were very generous with their time. I think also their lack of need to make many corrections meant that I had heard and understood them for the most part. So as far as research can be 'in relationship' I think this work qualifies.
6. Had the view that findings of the research were a construction created by all those involved in the research

   Was this research really a co-construction (Gergen and Kaye 1992)? To some extent at least it was, because it relied on the interviewees’ input and then my framing of that into a coherent story. It was not however a 50/50 split. Inevitably my contribution to the making sense of the data was greater, as it was a filtering of their experience through my consciousness. It was me that was making new meaning from sifting and indwelling the data (Douglas and Moustakas 1985, West 2010).

7. Could allow exploration of meaning and specifically spiritual issues

   This was certainly true for me as the researcher. I have spent the last five years working out what is meaningful in my life. It also allowed the interviewees to explore a topic that was important to them (Creswell 1998, Moustakas 1998, Braud and Anderson 1998, West 2003, 2004, Hiles 2001, 2002). A number of them stated that the interview itself had prompted a lot of self reflection. With one (Rebecca), it had eventually propelled her into starting up a support group for like-minded counsellors in her area. For myself, the increased level of self reflection had given birth to the beginnings of creative writing. That writing has enabled me to better express my innermost thoughts, allowing deeper sharing of meanings that I make in my life adventure.

8. The methodology something that was practical and ‘do-able’ in the context

   The research project was able to be completed because counsellors/psychotherapists came forward and were willing to take part in both initial interview and later feedback. Their continued interest was key to the continuing of the heuristic process and final outcome. The extended time available in part time study (more than five years) gave enough space for the heuristic process to take place. So, pragmatically, the way the research was conducted facilitated completion (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

   It therefore seems clear that the research has been conducted on a secure academic and historical base and has to a large degree met the initial aims stated in the methodology chapter.
SECTION 11.2: REVIEW OF THE FINDINGS AND EMERGENT THOUGHTS

Although there is a large amount of material on the integration of spirituality with psychological theory in the literature, information of how practitioners actually negotiate that integration was sparse. There was very little about the experience of the ‘ordinary’ practitioner in the field. This project has certainly thrown light on that. It has shown that there are gaps between what the academics recommend for safe and efficacious work in this area, both from the literature and from the interviews with Thorne, Swinton and Ross.

Firstly, although most of the practitioners agreed with the academic interviewees that integrating faith and psychological understandings was very important, some actually had paid little attention to it before this research, partly at least because opportunities to do so seemed rare. It was notable that the research interview itself supplied an opportunity for the practitioners to think through issues arising.

Secondly, the construction of a sufficient support system to work with the spiritual dimension in counselling/psychotherapy is difficult to achieve. Appropriate supervision is not easy to find and support from faith resources is often lacking. There are ethical consequences to this as some practitioners in effect hide some of their work from their supervisor for fear of censure.

Thirdly, counsellors who have a higher degree of input from the secular world in this project were more likely to have worked on their personal faith/psychological integration and also were more likely to have found a sufficient support network. This could be seen as them making a kind of cultural transition from a purely Christian to a Christian/psychological framework. Those that live completely in the Christian world feel far less of the faith-psychology tension. They tend not to make the same cultural transition and struggle more with clients who have very different value systems from theirs.

From all the data, the idea of ‘the edge dweller’ emerged. This is such an eloquent picture of both my experience and that of those counsellors who straddle the Christian/secular boundary. It is noted occasionally in the literature (e.g. Propst 2010) but there is little written about it. Returning that image to the interviewees brought feedback of such resonance that it was as if we had formed some kind of
brotherhood/sisterhood. It was clear too that it brought some self-awareness to those who did not ‘straddle the boundary’, knowledge that their picture was a different one.

When this image was taken into the workshops again the resonance was there. More than that, it became a prompt for attending practitioners to think exactly what their world looked like. It provided the space to explore that so many of the interviewees said was lacking. It also brought awareness that they needed to evaluate whether or not the supervision support they had was appropriate.

SECTION 11.3: THE SURPRISES THAT EMERGED FROM THIS PROJECT

There were a number of surprises that this project threw up.

Firstly, as I had conducted a methodological pilot study before I began the main project. I was expecting the heuristic process to completely overtake me at times, which it did. What I had not expected was that my life experiences seemed to be paralleling the kind of spiritual and psychological journey that I was on. So the health problems and the way I began to understand them and the struggle of re-entering the UK culture after so many years abroad all seemed to fit into the research pattern one way or another. I am not saying of course that one caused the other, or that they are the same thing. Just that all of this was in the field at the same time and all of this helped in the end to make sense of my spiritual/psychological integration.

My second surprise was the level of resonance the image of the ‘edge-dweller’ had, combined with the resulting model. I was not expecting such enthusiastic response to what started out as a very personal reflection of my own position. It was very humbling and felt timely when I presented it at the workshops. What was even more amazing was that practitioners who did not have the edge-dweller experience also found the diagram helpful. It made them self reflect too. My reaction was one of gratefulness to be in the right place at the right time. I suppose I felt in some small way that I was being used by God.

The third surprise was the idea that integrating the faith and psychological perspectives could be seen as a cultural transition. This emerged towards the end of the research process through talking to my supervisor and another member of the PhD support group. Both were more aware of the literature on culture than I was. The way it fitted my experience and illuminated the transition/non-transitions of various interviewees was an eye-opening moment.
Lastly I have been surprised and grateful that the research has moved my own internal process on so far. I expected change. What I did not expect was to find a position in all of this that is very peaceful, where mostly my two worlds fit together. The bonus is that the peace remains even when they do not.

SECTION 11.4: LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

It is clear from the outset that this research emanated from my own personal angst of how to integrate my faith with my psychotherapy practice and still hold on to my integrity. It therefore makes the assumption that this is a desirable thing to do. Although the vast majority of the interviewees agreed with this, it is clear that a few just do not see the necessity or feel the tension between the two domains. This assumption must have affected the way I conducted the interviews which I did realise it very early on (interview number two) as I had a huge emotional reaction to Grace’s material. Her understanding of integration was very different from mine. However, I had taken the precaution not only to record the interview, but as always, record my immediate post-interview reactions. When I later listened to this I realised the assumption that I had made. Hopefully this awareness allowed me to hold back my own preference when listening to other interviewees, so that I could really hear and understand what they were saying. On re-listening to the tapes I could not find any evidence of a judgmental attitude or of assumptions made on my part. However as this is a heuristic and co-created kind of methodology then all of this is part of the overall pattern. Doing the interviews and dwelling in the data was rather like ‘swimming across the river’ in the allegorical story “The Journey” (CW 3.3. p87). Sometimes the waters were very choppy indeed. My re-reading scripts, listening to tapes and talking to others provided the ‘helping hand’ I needed to begin to get a different perspective on the work.

On reflection, I think that my passion for the research topic sometimes blinded me to the fact that it is not everyone’s passion. However, without this passion I would not have the energy required to conduct the research. Working heuristically actually allowed me to make use of this energy. As always, it is about keeping a balance and an awareness of what is going on in the unspoken realm at any moment in time.
There are other things about me as a researcher that I bring to the research that will inevitably affect its course. I am a white (almost) sixty year old female, a committed Christian, with many years of experience of evangelical Christianity behind me. I also have a particular education and set of life experiences behind me including living in an expatriate culture for many years. This in some ways means I come to the research as someone initially outside the UK counselling scene, though from the outset I had lots of contact in and with the UK through family and professional ties. I had trained in the UK, had always been supervised in the UK and had acted in a supervisory role for a UK agency long before the research project began. Yet I conduct the research as an insider, one who ‘sits in’ rather than ‘observes’ what is happening. I find this an interesting paradox and it surely must have been in the field of the research. It is perhaps another example of my penchant of being an edge-dweller and maybe in that position, although I am definitely an in-dweller of the research, I am near enough to the edge to get a slightly wider perspective.

Looking now at limitations imposed on this study by the structure and boundaries of the research

Firstly this is a qualitative piece of research and therefore no statistical analysis was ever intended. Of course this limits the generalisability of the findings, but the stories of the real practitioners that are told bring illumination to an area not well previously researched. Had I gone down the route of statistical analysis, then the individual voices of the practitioners would most definitely have been lost.

Secondly, this research looked at only the Christian counsellor’s perspective and although there are mentions of other faiths and other forms of spirituality, it could be argued that the focus is a narrow one. This was by design, not only because it overtly acknowledges my own position but also because if other faiths/spiritualities had been included then the amount of data to deal with would have been multiplied greatly and become unmanageable. Far better to leave those studies to other researchers! In working from an insider viewpoint I was much better placed to understand the perspective of those that share the same faith.

Thirdly as mentioned in the participant details, all of the interviewees were white and there was a preponderance of females in the sample. This was not of my choice. I interviewed all that responded within the research timeframe. It probably is reflective of the lack of ethnic diversity and of the male /female imbalance in the profession. It was a
sadness to me that this happened as I have since met a number of black and Asian counsellors who are interested in the topic. Somehow the advertising of the research did not enter their field of vision.

Fourthly I realise that I had high expectations of what the interviewees would be prepared to give me in terms of responses and feedback. This again I think is a product of me assuming that my passion is everyone else’s passion. Certainly most of them have stayed engaged to the end, giving me generous feedback and much food for thought. However, although I explained the process clearly at the beginning some clearly did not want to engage in more than minimal response. All but one (Ivan) responded to the initial sending of the transcripts and summaries, some with a large amount of further input. Later sendings of material usually elicited response from approximately half of the practitioners, different ones responding at different times. I suspect the lack of contact with Ivan was because of change of contact details.

Fifthly I could have dealt with the data in a different way. I did consider sending the scripts (with personal details removed) and my summaries of them to colleagues working in the field, to review. This might have alerted me to how much my own process was present in the research. So maybe I missed some insights here. However, I decided that sending both script and summary back to each practitioner in turn was a better option. It seemed clear to me that they were the best judge as to whether or not I had captured their experience accurately. I did talk a lot about my process both to my supervisor (Dr William West) and to my mentor (Dr Ken Evans) and in doing so I often became more aware of my process and what that might be doing in the research.

And finally, I realise that the client voice is not heard in this research. This was a definite choice right at the beginning. I was looking specifically at the counsellor’s experience of a particular issue and although the client’s experience would be an equally valid piece of research, again it was not where my passion lay. That is better done by those with a different passion, for example Jenkins (2006).

Hopefully, although this research has limitations the main aim of exploring the counsellor’s experience of integrating his/her faith and practice has been achieved. There are always other options that can be taken, other studies done. I think this is one particular journey that has take a particular route and found some useful insights into the topic in question.
It is clear that counsellors working with the spiritual dimension need space to develop their own spirituality and to reflect on how their spirituality affects their practice. But whose responsibility is it to create such a space?

Certainly there is a lot of evidence that this is not dealt with well on some training courses. Although there is some recent work in this area (Swinton 2010) suggesting spirituality is present but perhaps not verbalised in terms of faith, the practitioners in this study in general would say that there was not enough awareness of the spiritual dimension on many training courses. If as practitioners we wish to address the whole person, then trainers and training institutions need to reflect on what that might mean. If spirituality is sidelined in training then the likelihood is that it may be sidelined in practice via parallel process (Friedlander and Snyder 1983).

Supervision was definitely problematic for many of the practitioners in this study. However, supervisors cannot really be held responsible for the lack of education received in practitioners' training. They can only be responsible for what happens in their own supervision relationships. So perhaps the step needed here is to alert supervision trainers to the need for competent counselling and supervision of spiritual material so that supervisors can then be equipped to meet the need felt in their supervisees. It could be that Christian professional organisations such as ACC have a role to play here, promoting supervisor qualification level to competent counsellors amongst their ranks.

What of the individual? What is their responsibility? It struck me that some counsellors had gone out of their way to work at their own integration, through reading, through talking to peers, or going on whatever CPD courses were available. Others had done little and admitted quite openly in the interviews that they rarely talked about it. In some instances as they talked realised that they boxed off the two perspectives. Certainly it is noticeable since the start of this research project that the number of spirituality focused CPD opportunities has increased. So perhaps it is incumbent on each individual practitioner to look after their own development in this area, just as it is in every other one and make use of the increasing opportunities that do exist.
Finally, where could the research go from here? There are many avenues that could be taken. The difficulty may not be in deciding what to research, but where it might be possible. It took me a considerable amount of time and patience to find someone who would support such research (see Chapter 1: Introduction). However, some possible further topics for investigation might be:

1. Integration of faith and practice is clearly something that happens over time. Many of the practitioners in this study note how one perspective has influenced the other as they have gone through their training and continued into practice. It would be useful to interview those with a Christian faith as they entered counselling training and then at intervals throughout the training and beyond, to track their integration journey.

2. It is clear from this study that finding appropriate supervision to work with the spiritual dimension is problematic. A study that investigated supervisors’ competency to work with the spiritual dimension would highlight the extent of this problem and perhaps come up with some solutions. This could be initiated by contacting accredited supervisors via the BACP and/or ACC websites to find interested parties.

3. Useful research could be done into the experience of trainees with an institutionalised faith in comparison to those with a more generalised form of spirituality on their training courses. There is anecdotal evidence difficulties in this area (e.g. Reg in this study) and a number of writers (e.g. West 2011a) talk about negative transferential reactions around Christianity in training groups that then get carried forward into client work. A study looking at the training and/or supervision experience of trainees with a) a religious faith (Christian, Muslim, Hindu etc) and b) those with a more generalized spirituality would be useful.

4. From this study it has become apparent that one of the most useful kinds of support the practitioner can have/desires is a safe space to talk about their faith/counselling integration. Working with a group such as the one that Rebecca in this study has instituted, using action research methodology might enhance the development of such a group and provide some modeling for future groups.
5. Similar projects to this research could be done looking at either more generalised forms of spirituality or about the experience of counsellors who are members of organised religions other than Christianity.

A host of other possibilities remain, such as:

- Research into the power dynamics in supervisory relationships with/without a match of spirituality.
- More detailed study of supervision experiences involving inclusion/exclusion of spiritual material.
- Investigation into the idea of this kind of integration as a cultural transition.
- Research similar to this project across different ethnic groups.
- Research into the experience of pastors, and other religious leaders that become trained counsellors.
- Research into the attitude of church resources towards counselling and psychotherapy on both an organisational and a local level.
- Research into the very different worlds of Christian counselling in the US and UK.
As I come to the end of this long journey I find both a wanting to continue and a wanting to stop. It is enough… for now. Along the way I have had the privilege to meet so many generous people, generous not only with their time, but with themselves. This was my research project, but I could not have done it without practitioners to interview, books and papers to read, conferences to attend, a supervisor to lean on and colleagues to share with. If the resulting thesis is anything, it is surely a co-constructed edifice.

I started this project sitting in the PhD group over five years ago, rather scared and excited, feeling the acceptance and encouragement that was to be so facilitative on my journey. It therefore seems only fitting that I end with a tribute to all those I met there (CW12.1).
As I sat in the group today I realised that there would be precious few more of these occasions.

Finishing the PhD means more than getting to the end of a piece of academic work. It also means:

— Not partaking of the delights of William’s group any more
— Not foraying out of my Pembrokeshire cave into the wilds of Manchester every month
— Not seeing friends that have held me together so much over the last five years unless I make a superhuman effort to do so
— Not having student status, easy access to journals and the like
— Not having one foot in the clinical and one foot in the academic worlds.

I will really have to move in from the edge and sit amongst my professional practice more firmly.

I feel real sadness, a keen sense of approaching loss of:

— Times when I have been upheld
— Times when I have helped to hold others
— Times of real meeting
— Times of exploring so many different views, but never feeling anyone was trying to persuade or push me into becoming a clone of them
— Times of just being
— Times of great loss
— Times of huge enjoyment and mirth

But I also take away:

— A settling of my angst
— A far better sense of self
— An excitement rather than a scare of difference
— A knowing of worth
— A satisfaction of a chapter completed
— And a huge sense of gratefulness to those who have accompanied me on my journey

March 2011


Lincoln, Y. S. (2010). “What a long strange trip it has been...” Twenty-five years of qualitative and new paradigm research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(3).


McLeod, J. (2001b). Developing a research tradition consistent with the practices and values of counselling and psychotherapy: Why counselling research is necessary. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 1(1), 3-11.


**Relevant Websites**

*American Association of Christian Counsellors*
http://aapc.org

*British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy*
http://www.bacp.co.uk

*United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy*
http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk

*Association of Christian Counsellors (UK)*
http://www.acc-uk.org/
APPENDICES

1. Research Request
2. Initial Questionnaire
3. Consent form – general
4. Consent form – academics
5. Data gathering from interviewees
6. Christian/Secular influence on interviewees
7. ACC statement of Faith
8. Faith world/counselling world diagram
9. Worksheet from Integrating spirituality workshop
10. Integrating spirituality workshop feedback form
11. Three Wise Men paper
12. Ethical approval form
Appendix 1

Research request

Research Request

Are you a counsellor/psychotherapist with a Christian faith?
Do you use the spiritual dimension when working with your clients?
What effect does your faith have on your practice?
How do you put the two together?
What support do you have that facilitates this?

Supervision? Pastoral support? Discussion with peers? Ongoing training? Anything else?

I am at present doing a PhD at Manchester University and am looking for people who would be willing to be interviewed on these issues. This would take approximately one hour of your time.

It would also be helpful to have your feedback on a later analysis of the interview material.

The interviews would take place at a location and time of your convenience.

Interested?

Email me at: as@counselling-therapy.eu

Many thanks,

Ann Scott

Hue du Baston 46, 1420 Braine L'Alleud, Belgium. Telephone: 00322238/3140
Appendix 2

Introductory questionnaire referred to in Chapter 3: Methodology, section 3.3

Introductory questionnaire for proposed participants

Please indicate the degree to which you personally agree or disagree with the following statements.

Use: - 5. Strongly agree
4. Agree
3. Neutral
2. Disagree
1. Strongly disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The development of my relationship with God is a core value for my life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My Christian spirituality relates in important ways to my daily life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I regularly participate in some kind of communication with God, e.g. prayer, meditation, worship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I consider that I have been a Christian for more than 5 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have been practicing as a psychotherapist/counsellor for approximately ............ years. I am registered with ..............................................

Name ................................................. Date  .........................................

*To be eligible for the study, respondents needed to score themselves on a minimum of 4 (agree) in all categories.*
Appendix 3

Consent form for the practitioners referred to in Chapter 3, Methodology, section 3.7

Consent form - practitioners.

- I agree to participate in a research study conducted by Ann Scott. Looking at the question, "What is the counsellor's experience of integrating Christian faith with clinical practice?"
- I understand the purpose of this study and I am participating voluntarily.
- I give permission for the data to be used in the writing of a PhD thesis, and any further publication.
- I understand that every effort will be taken to ensure my anonymity and my confidentiality will be respected throughout the study.
- I also understand that my interview will be recorded and that I will be sent a transcript. I will be entitled to withdraw all or any part of it that I do not wish disclosed.
- I understand that I will be asked for feedback on the analysed data and that I can choose how much of this to give.
- I confirm that should psychotherapy or spiritual support be necessary following the interview, I am able to access it.
- I reserve the right to withdraw from the study without giving reasons at any time up to and including July 31st 2009. Notice of withdrawal must be given in writing.

Name of Participant                     Signature                     Date

Name of researcher                     Signature                     Date
Appendix 4

Consent form for academic interviewees referred to in Chapter 3:
Methodology, section 3.7

Consent form - Academics

- I agree to participate in a research study conducted by Ann Scott, looking at the question, “What is the counsellor’s experience of integrating Christian faith with clinical practice?”
- I understand the purpose of this study and I am participating voluntarily.
- I give permission for the data to be used in the writing of a PhD thesis, and any further publication.
- I understand that my interview will be recorded and that I will be sent a transcript. I will be entitled to withdraw all or any part of it that I do not wish disclosed.
- I understand that I will be asked for feedback on the analysed data and that I can choose how much of this to give.
- I confirm that should psychotherapy or spiritual support be necessary following the interview, I am able to access it.
- I reserve the right to withdraw from the study without giving reasons at any time up to and including July 31st 2008. Notice of withdrawal must be given in writing.

Name of Participant       Signature       Date

Name of researcher        Signature       Date
Appendix 5

Questionnaire to the practitioners concerning the inclusion of spirituality in their counselling/psychotherapy training referred to in Chapter 3:
Methodology, sections 3.4 and 3.5

Questionnaire for participants concerning the inclusion of spirituality in their counselling/psychotherapy training.

In each section, please underline all that apply.

Which of the following best describes the nature of your Counselling/psychotherapy training overall? (Secular is taken to mean anything that is not overtly Christian)

- 100% Secular
- 80% Secular-20% Christian
- 60% Secular-40% Christian
- 40% Secular-60% Christian
- 20% Secular-80% Christian
- 100% Christian
- Other. (Please specify) ......................................................

If your training included a spiritual content other than Christian, please give outline information.

In your counselling/psychotherapy training which of the following statements best describes the approach to spirituality in your courses?

- Spirituality was irrelevant to my principle counselling/psychotherapy training course
- Spirituality was neither encouraged nor discouraged on my principle counselling training courses
- Spirituality was recognised but not overtly encouraged on my principle counselling training course
- Spirituality was recognised and encouraged on my principle counselling training course
- Spirituality was included within teaching on diversity
- Optional modules/workshops on the interplay between psychotherapy/counselling and spirituality were offered by my training establishment
- Spirituality was included as part of the compulsory teaching syllabus

What is the highest level of course that you attended?

- Certificate level
- Diploma level
- Masters level
- Other. (Please specify) ......................................................

In which paradigm(s) are you trained? (Please tick all that apply)

- Psychodynamic
- Person Centred
- CBT
- Integrative
- Transactional Analysis
- Transpersonal
- Family systems
- Other. (Please specify) ......................................................

Any other comments on the inclusion/lack of inclusion of spirituality in your counselling/psychotherapy training?
### Appendix 6

#### Level of Christian influence on interviewees (See Chapter 5: Introduction to the practitioners)

Score given for each area of influence in work of the counsellors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Workplace</th>
<th>Supervision</th>
<th>External support</th>
<th>Number of Chn influences</th>
<th>Number of non Chn influences</th>
<th>Group for analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaygee</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Chn/sec</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Lots of secular contact</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Rarely Chn content</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Chn group</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Secular spirituality allowed</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Can speak of spiritual things</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Chn Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Lots of spiritual influence, not Chn</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan</td>
<td>Secular but spiritual</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Can speak of spiritual things</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Secular some Chn</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Mixture of Chn and non Chn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaynor</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carys</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Non Christian</td>
<td>Mostly Chn</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Chn Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Secular some Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Some secular/ some Chn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beth</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Secular, previously some chn</td>
<td>Secular, sympathetic mixture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Chn and secular</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verity</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Christian and secular</td>
<td>Christian some secular</td>
<td>Secular, some with spiritual understanding</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>Christian/ secular</td>
<td>chn</td>
<td>chn</td>
<td>Chn mostly</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Sectarianism</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Very strong Chn influences</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reg</td>
<td>Mostly secular</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>Chn</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sian</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Christian and secular</td>
<td>mixture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Christian and Secular</td>
<td>Chn some secular</td>
<td>Chn. Some secular</td>
<td>Mostly Chn</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>secular</td>
<td>Secular but spiritually accepting. Some Christian</td>
<td>Mixture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>secular</td>
<td>Secular with some Christian</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Mixture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Mixture</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Group 1**: Elizabeth, Verity, Joy, Maria, Diana, Jo, Dawn, Ivan
- **Group 2**: Margaret, Sian, Rebecca, Val, Carys, Ted, Gaynor
- **Group 3**: Reg, Greg, Jaygee Grace Yi, Dave, Joan
Appendix 7

Association of Christian Counsellors: Statement of Faith (See Chapter 10: Emergent Thoughts, section 10.3)

(As an example of an evangelical Christian understanding of counselling)

The Association affirms the central truths of the Christian faith as expressed in the Bible and historic creeds. God is one and this unity is revealed to man as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The ACC recognises this and specifically the Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture in all areas of belief and practice.

The Association acknowledges that there are different emphases within the various Christian counselling traditions and recognises that some Christian approaches are more at ease than others in drawing on insights from secular theory and practice.

Definitions - Basis of Christian Counselling
It is not our purpose to make all Christian counsellors think the same or counsel in the same way. However, we do expect our counsellors to have a specifically Christian worldview. A Christian counsellor works with overall assumptions that underpin his or her counselling. These may be implicit or explicit. They should be consistent with:

- What the scriptures reveal about the nature and activity of God - that He is both the creator and judge of human beings and their redeemer in Christ.
- People being created in the image of God - although, because we are fallen and sinful, they are in need of God's redeeming grace.
- Christ as the one true Saviour and Lord. Through His life, death, resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit, God has made available all the resources of His grace to rescue people, heal them and bring them to maturity and wholeness.
- God's work of justice and mercy in the world and His love towards all people.
- His work of rescuing people, even though they do not deserve it, and bringing them to faith and maturity in Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- The reality of a fallen world where suffering, pain, guilt, fear, broken relationships and fragmented communities occur.
- God's desire for His people to work to bring healing and wholeness of spirit, mind and body.

Christian Counselling
In light of the above, we may define Christian counselling as "that activity which seeks to help people towards constructive change and growth in any or every aspect of their lives through a caring relationship and within agreed relational boundaries, carried out by a counsellor who has a Christian worldview, values and assumptions".

Taken from ACC Website www.acc-uk.org
Appendix 8

Faith World and Counselling world diagram and notes sent to interviewees for comment (see Chapter 10: Emergent Thoughts, section 10.3)

Faith world/Counselling world

The counsellor/psychotherapist with a Christian faith lives in and between two worlds. Each of these worlds has many influences within it. Those with a broader take on spirituality will also have different of areas of influence on them.

These circles of influences sometimes roll towards each other and overlap greatly. The whole of life feels fully integrated. Sometimes it is as if they hardly touch and the counsellor is left ‘bridging the gap', often short of support from both perspectives.

As the wheels rotate, different areas of influence come into focus for the counsellor. When the parts in focus fit together from the different worlds, then there is little internal conflict. When they are in dissonance then there is a difficult balance to be held and it is necessary to live with the paradox of believing in two things that seem to contradict each other. The level of overlap for individual counsellors varies. Some live much nearer the centre of one of the wheels. The second wheel is then seen as an addition, a secondary world

My further thoughts are that this might be better seen as two spheres with ‘Bubbles of influence’ that can move in 3-dimensions within those spheres. Sometimes only one is in focus for the practitioner, at other times many overlap and coincide.
Appendix 9

Worksheet from integrating spirituality workshop (see Chapter 10: Emergent Thoughts, section 10.3)

Integrating your Counselling and Spiritual Worlds

Exercise 1: Work out your own integration

- Draw two plain circles to represent your spiritual and your counselling world.
Think about the influences on you from both a spiritual perspective and a professional counselling perspective. Some of the above may apply to you. Others may be totally irrelevant. There may be other factors not mentioned here that are relevant to you.

Divide up and label the wheels with **factors that affect you in a language that is meaningful to you.**

Work out which of the factors in each wheel are important **at the moment.**

If you imagine that you rotate the wheels so that those two sectors come into contact, dwell on how they might fit together.

- Do they overlap? If so by how much, or are they completely separate?
- Is it a good fit with one supportive of the other?
- Is it a place with a few rough edges or high tension?
- Are the two perspectives of equal weight for you?
- Does one overwhelm the other?
- Do they meet at all?

Which of the sketches below best represent how this feels for you? Maybe you need to draw something different?

![Sketches](image)

**Exercise 2: Looking a little deeper at your own integration**

Choose someone that you feel safe working with

Please remember that you are responsible for your own well-being. Do only what is safe for you.

You need to work in pairs, each helping the other to focus on their integration in turn.

**Explorer**

Think of the paper integration exercise that you did, the kind of shape your integration seemed to fit

- Sit with the image for a while. It may help to close your eyes.
- As you do this exercise, try not to self-censor or be judgmental in any way. Just note what is there and accept what you find

**Listener**

Your task is to help to explore **without judgment or comment or interpretation**
• Affirm that you are following by using the “explorer’s” language wherever possible, summarising and reflecting as appropriate.
• Use the questions below to help the exploration, not necessarily in the order given. Take your cue from the “explorer” as to what might be helpful
  - Are there any bodily sensations relates to this image? Are you feeling anything in your body right now (Abdomen, chest, legs, neck head, arms etc) Just focus in on that bodily feeling
  - Explore the image. For example:-
    - Where do you feel it in your body?
    - Is it static or dynamic?
    - If it is moving or changing, what is that like?
    - Is it comfortable or uncomfortable?
    - Does it have colour or texture?
    - Are there any forces acting on it?
    - Is it exerting a force outwards or inwards?
    - Is anything else happening?
    - Are there any other questions you want to ask about this image
    - Do you want to change anything about the image?
    - What is it like sitting with your spheres of influence?
    - Is there anything you want to say to the image?
    - Is there anything you need to say or do before we finish?

Take about 10 minutes to do this. Do not rush it. You don’t need to cover all the questions.

Listener: Please give a warning that the time is coming to an end

Swap roles and repeat.

If you feel so inclined share any discoveries with each other.

Remember that you are not required to share any of this with anyone else unless you wish to.

Exercise 3: Creative Possibilities

Writing

Take the ideas, emotions, new knowledge, interactions that have passed through you today. Write a list of words connected to some or all of this and have a go at something on the list

• Write a story that incorporates these words…fantasy or reality
• Use the words to write a poem to say how you feel (doesn’t need to rhyme)
• Write about the difference in what you feel now in comparison with what you felt like at the beginning of the workshop
• Write a prayer about what you are thankful for, what worries you right now or what you need
• Do anything else that you would find helpful using the words in your list

**Drawing**

Draw something that represents an aspect of what you discovered in the focussing exercise

Draw something of your journey today

Draw something of your connection with God and/or with other people

Draw an emblem that says something of who you are
Appendix 10
Feedback form from ACC Workshop (see Chapter 10: Emergent Thoughts, section 10.3)

Integrating your Counselling and Spiritual Worlds

Evaluation

How does/doesn’t your experience fit with the TWO WORLDS model?

What was the best thing about the workshop?

Was there anything that you discovered in working through the exercises?

Is there anything you did not get today that you would have liked?

On a scale of 1 – 5 please rate the workshop on the following two factors

1 = negligibly help  2 = slightly helpful  3 = quite helpful  4 = very helpful  5 = extremely helpful

A. Working on own integration

B. A safe space to explore these issues

Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding the workshop?
Appendix 11

Paper written on the material from the interview of Brian Thorne, Alistair Ross and John Swinton. Published in Thresholds, Autumn 2008. BACP Publication (see Chapter 7: The Three Academics, section 7.1)

Comparing the Thoughts of “Three Wise Men” on the subject of Christianity/Psychotherapy integration

As part of a PhD research project on integrating Christian faith with clinical practice, I wished to investigate what the current thinking of academics in the subject area of Christianity and Psychotherapy can say to practitioners in the field. To further this aim I interviewed Alistair Ross, John Swinton and Brian Thorne during the year 2008. These were selected because, firstly they responded to my request; secondly they have recently published (or are in the process of publishing) work in this area; thirdly they represent a wide spread of both churchmanship and psychological schools. Alistair Ross is psychodynamically trained as a therapist and is a Baptist minister. John Swinton comes from a mental health/psychiatric background and is a minister in the Church of Scotland. Brian Thorne, a Lay Canon of Norwich Cathedral is well known for his person centred approach to therapy and is an active member of the Church of England. Both Alistair Ross and John Swinton would describe themselves as evangelical whilst Brian Thorne would say that he is a liberal Anglo-catholic.

As I interviewed these men, I felt I was in the presence of those who had spent much time thinking through issues in the area of faith/psychology integration – people who had reached a profound level of personal integration and wisdom. This is evident too in their writings (Ross,2003, Swinton 2001, Thorne 2004, Thorne 2006).

As I began to analyse the interview material, it became evident that although they may differ greatly in their theological and psychological positions, there were large areas of concurrence when talking about how Christian faith can be integrated into psychotherapy practice. It is these concurrencies that may be of use to the practitioner in the field.

All three of the academics interviewed had thought through these issues over a long period of time. Both Alistair Ross and John Swinton have formal theological training as well as their work in the psychological and academic domains. For Brian Thorne the integration of theological and psychological influences has been a growing factor over many years:

Brian Thorne “I would count myself fortunate in having both these influences (therapeutic and theological) going on to a very large extent simultaneously, right across the decades.”

There is evidence that these influences have enhanced his thought processes on how his faith affects his practice:

BT “(The) central doctrine…which has preoccupied me a lot is the doctrine of the incarnation. What does it mean for me that Jesus Christ is true God and true man? What is the implication of true man? What does that really mean for human beings in terms of their own evolution and development?”

“I see Christ as the exemplar. This is what human beings have it within them to be and that…relates to notions of human potential, notions of, in person centred terminology an actualising tendency, which will enable human beings , conditions being appropriate and favourable, to develop to the fulfilment of their own potential.”

John Swinton too sees integration as essentially part of the necessary understanding of the human being:

JS “I have quite a Hebraic understanding of the human person. These things are intertwined. What we are talking about is person’s psyche which is affected by their biology, their psychology and
And again, Alistair Ross sees no difficulty in integrating his faith with his psychological understanding of how the psyche works:

AR  “So my view of the person is essentially shaped by our human experience and our spiritual experience.

…the Holy Spirit could work as clearly through somebody’s psyche as he/she could through a worship experience or an engagement with scripture or in conversation with another person or through an expression that was through a spiritual gift.”

It is very clear for all three men that to leave spirituality out of the counselling arena makes no sense at all. It would be a denial of an important aspect of human experience:

BT  “There is a very deep sense...of what we might call the Divine Inheritance within the human being.”

“...this sense that somehow where two or three are gathered together then something else, if you like happens... something else is present, whether we call that the presence of God or the presence of the Holy Spirit or whatever it is, or whether we call it transformational power.”

JS  “I think the idea that you exclude spirituality from the counselling arena is actually impossible. It is culturally inappropriate... in reality you can’t do that... unless you don’t accept the possibility of the spirit.”

AR  “So my view of the person is essentially shaped by our human experience and our spiritual experience, which is that people have a spiritual dimension. It is often unacknowledged. That spiritual dimension makes itself felt present all the time, without necessarily being consciously spoken. That matches my belief about unconscious processes being at work all the time.”

…and it is impossible to take ‘spirituality’ out of the person:

AR  “There is spiritual life within you. It is in you. It is incarnate. It is not a separate thing that you put on.”

In line with most therapeutic thought, the client/therapist relationship is seen as an important healing factor. However, that thought is taken further in that this relationship at its best has a spiritual dimension:

BT  “The theological realm... is saying something about the quality of human relating which at times like those peak moments, is a pale reflection of the quality of relating within the Trinity.”

And that this kind of relationship gives the best conditions for healing and growth:

BT  “The doctrine of the Trinity proclaims the essential relationality of the human being. That too of course makes perfect sense in terms of the therapeutic encounter. It makes perfect sense in terms particular of the person centred emphasises upon the creation of the conditions of relationship in which human beings can best evolve.”

He recalls that this deep intense relating was described by Carl Rogers:

BT  “…there is a depth of encounter whereby he (CR) can actually say that his presence alone seems to be healing.”(Thorne 2004)

Brian calls this ability to relate deeply, “The Quality of Tenderness.”(ibid)

JS talks about a profound depth of contact that enables growth for both therapist and client. He labels this deep contact ‘interpathy’ (Swinton 2001):
“Interpathy actually means that you leave your culture behind and sit down in that strange land and look around. And you look at your own culture from the other side. So if you sit with a person with schizophrenia, rather than say, ‘You are having delusions and with a few drugs we will sort it out,’ you sit there and say, ‘Well actually maybe there is something I can learn from you, now I am trying to listen to you.’

“I guess the essence is opening yourself to the possibilities of being wrong on some things and there maybe insights here that you can gather and they will be beneficial to both of you.”

AR takes this further and emphasises the spiritual nature of the encounter:

“If you are meeting somebody at depth in their psyche and your psyche anything can happen and that can be a vital aspect of the spirit’s work, just as the spirit is working to generate dreams or images or metaphors that are redolent of that. Certainly there have been with all clients at some stage, a profound moment or what in another context you would call standing on Holy Ground.”

From Freud onwards the psychological and spiritual paradigms have developed along very different pathways. This was augmented by the fight for psychology to be accepted as a science. (McLeod 2001) The result has been a language divide where the supporters of the one perspective find it very difficult to understand the language of the other. JS is quite clear on using appropriate vocabulary within the context of the encounter:

“You have to have a variety of different languages dependent on whom you are speaking to and in what situation and whom you are addressing. You have to decide which language has priority within the therapeutic encounter and your own personal journey.”

…and the priority in therapy is always:

“…is the individual that you’re talking to, to enable them to find healing, to enable them to grow.”

Perhaps it is better for the therapist to be ‘bilingual’ (equally at home in both realms) rather than to translate from one to the other:

“You can actually lose things by trying to translate. So you have got to work about the best approximation to enable you to be able to do what you want to do.”

This could apply in a number of different ways, for example; in communicating in the faith realm about matters psychological; in working with a client who has a different spiritual experience and language to the therapist; in talking with therapy colleagues about spiritual experiences:

“I think it is about learning to be hospitable between the different knowledge and language structures that you work with. I need to respect you as you and not expect you to be me, and vice versa.”

BT, when talking about comparative experiences within the psychological and Christian realm, says:

“I certainly feel myself that a lot of the experiences are the same and we are actually applying different vocabulary as we try and grapple with them. People feel that there is a terrible dissonance between the two realms. I feel it is possible to hold particular beliefs, whether they are Christian or not that they are compatible with the psychological insights, certainly as far as the person centred approach is concerned.”

BT suggests that although there are points of difference, with reflection, many can be held as uncertainties:

“Some of the things that actually happen can have initially the appearance of contradiction…almost as if one is doing one thing and one is saying the other. Very often in my experience they aren’t actually contradictions, they are different sides really of the same issue. They are essentially paradoxes, and paradoxes can be held and in fact it is probably true to say that so many of the most important things in life are actually paradoxes.”
JS too shows that he is comfortable understanding the individual from the two perspectives, highlighting that different roles might be appropriate for different tasks:

JS
“For me I think religion has a supernatural dimension. Things like prayer and healing…. I am very comfortable with that, as long as it is properly understood. There is obviously a role for therapy as therapy and also a role for prayer as something perhaps different. How you bring these two things together is complicated.”

Both BT and JS agree that individual belief may be different from the doctrine of the church attended and may allow for much more fluidity of thought and action:

JS
“I think that people use religion in radically different ways, even within church communities. What the official line is, is quite different from what you and I may think."

BT
“If you actually examine what goes on from the inside, you will discover that the framework indeed is there but the amount of freedom and liberty which individuals actually experience is in many cases, vast.”

For those that hold a religious faith, all three academics see this in a positive light when it comes to the resources available for clients:

AR
“I view it (client spirituality) as a resource and if they have got people that they belong to, I would encourage them to use those friends as a resource. That is part of the ego continuum, because one of the things that therapy does do is that it can be very challenging in the sense of ego. Sometimes they might find that in their own personal relationship with God. I would not discourage that.”

He sees too that the ability to go beyond the self holds many possibilities:

AR
“I believe that one of the things that I work with, with clients is the capacity for transcendence, but if you are meeting somebody at depth in their psyche and your psyche anything can happen and that can be a vital aspect of the spirit’s work.”

BT agrees with him:

BT
“... there is a sense that comes of a kind of interconnectedness of all things and this seems to be in the end enormously significant, because so often clients have a sense of great isolation, of great loneliness. What actually happens I think on these particular occasions is that there is not only a sense of deep relationship with the therapist at that point, which of course is a release from loneliness as an empathic response is, but it is particularly strong at these times, but there is also a sense of after all we are not just lonesome in the universe.”

…and particularly when the possibility of eternal life comes into the frame:

BT
“I do now find that perceiving somebody as to use the theological jargon, an eternal soul does have very considerable meaning and impact. Especially, for example, if you are working with somebody who may be terminally ill or with somebody who for one reason or another is thinking about self destruction. To be able to perceive, to conceptualise this person as having an existence which goes beyond death I find is actually very powerful, whether articulated or not.

To have the opportunity to express that faith in a non-judgmental arena can be very helpful

AR
“A number of people I have seen have a faith background and their view is that we find something enormously releasing in a therapeutic context where they sense that somebody does have a faith perspective and is not judging them. They can say anything they like. Inevitably they say things in therapy that they could not say to anyone else in relationship too.”

However, the church experience for clients can be very difficult, such as:-
AR  “I have begun to realise that God will accept me (client), but in the church it is a somewhat condemnatory experience, the very antithesis of what it should be.”

BT recognises that the choice of therapist is often influenced by the faith question:

B’T  “What was important for some (clients) was to know that I was a Christian, because either they themselves were Christians or had a profound respect for Christianity, or because they had fallen foul of a particular kind of Christianity and knew that I embodied a rather different kind of Christianity. There were others who came to me because they felt I was essentially a person concerned with the spiritual dimension and it did not really worry me too much about what the nature of that spirituality might be.”

Sometimes things that initially seem unhelpful can become useful if viewed from a different perspective:

JS  “If it is something like the doctrine of original sin, somehow we are all condemned. It can be a negative thing, but it can also be a positive thing in a sense that that really means that we are all in the same boat. There is no way that you as a therapist or a pastor can point to me and say that I am more sinful than you are. But that is not the way it is framed. So really within the therapeutic context I think that there is a potential for theological reframing.

I don’t think you need to exclude theology from therapy because I think theology properly understood can be really useful.”

Although a firm religious framework can seem very restrictive, for some it can be very helpful:

JS  “For some people these are good places… safe places to be. I think particularly when I was working with long term schizophrenia; the last thing that they wanted was a kind of open community. In a very tumultuous psychic existence there was a little bit of stability there that was helpful for some people.”

Negative effect of faith can be a problem both for therapists and clients. BT concentrated on the problems a Christian therapist might have:

BT  “A therapist who is in some way caught up in the notion of the essential rightness and incontrovertibility of some of his own beliefs and practices is clearly going to land in a very considerable mess. Because they may come a point where he or she feels that there is no option but to really direct the client and express, 'The truth.'”

There can be difficulties for both client and therapist, particularly with regards to a more rigid kind of faith:

BT  “And I think religious belief which is founded really upon moral codes as being the most difficult fit, rather than on the experience of relationship with God.”

JS concentrates upon the connection between illness and sin as an area of difficulty.

JS  “There are problems within the evangelical tradition and therefore…the juxtaposition between illness and sin. You experience what you experience because of something that you have done

AR agrees that this strong evangelical point of view can cause difficulties:

AR  “I think within the development of evangelicalism there can be quite a strong both perfectionist and splitting view. And there are some clients for whom it is always a defence”

However, this tendency is not exclusively a problem for the evangelicals:

AR  “It would be unfair to simply say all the issues are in relationship to evangelicalism In that I do find some, several of my liberal colleagues, on different areas just as dogmatic. It would also be true that the psychoanalytic community is sometimes not known for its tolerance of alternative viewpoints.”
A specific difficulty arises if a client wants ‘faith based answers,’ from a
therapist:

AR  “Where I would not help the process if they are looking for me to get to provide them with faith
answers.”

…or in specific clinical presentations:

AR  “The other place where faith often is not helpful is with clients who have got fairly severe
depression. Because it is bad enough having a sense of condemnation from human parents, if
you then have a belief in God where you actually believe that God condemns you. I think it makes depression for Christians a much more painful experience. Because all the things that should be
supporting them suddenly are oppressing them.”

All three men see supervision as an important element in the support of therapists who work in the spiritual
dimension, but it is not the only factor that enables them to function safely and efficaciously in this way:

AR  The standard is I suppose, what actually supports me? And that would be through colleagues that
I can talk about both, faith colleagues and professional colleagues and through supervision.

I do have a spiritual director. I also have been in therapy where issues of spirituality have been
addressed, from a Jungian perspective.

He sees the choice of supervisor as key to working in this area

AR  “The key thing is to find a supervisor that wants to supervise you. If spirituality is you then that has
to be included.”

BT agrees with this:

BT  “Obviously it (support for working with spiritual issues) comes from a supervisor and it has been
very important for me throughout my whole career to have a supervisor who is as fully at home
with a spiritual understanding of reality. Which has meant over the years the sometimes I have
had a supervisor who actually in many ways shares my kind of Christian perspective on reality.
Other times not. So that the supervisor it seems to me is a crucial ingredient in this.”

He also had other support:

BT  “I usually managed too to have a psychiatrist floating round the background, who was also
Christian.”

And recognises that a sound basis in his own spiritual life is essential:

BT  “I have been a member of a worshipping community all my life and the whole business really of
what I would call a spiritual discipline is fundamental really for most therapists.”

He also sees that authenticity both in the therapy and spiritual realms has
been the bedrock of his practice:

BT  “There is something both about religious practice on the one hand and therapeutic practice on the
other, which can become habitual and therefore can lapse into the unexamined life. I believe
myself that it is so important for therapists to be scrupulously honest with themselves that we
must do all we can not to let that happen, which in practice means therefore that I suppose a
great deal of my life I have been at pains to ask myself questions like, ‘What is it that I truly do
believe?’”

And he recognises that spending time and effort thinking through these issues
brought dividends:

*BT*  
“So there must be a real solid sense of where you actually stand in relationship to some of these really quite fundamental issues.”

JS comes from a psychiatric rather than psychotherapeutic background and is now involved with practical theology. Therefore his take on supervision is rather different. He still sees it as a useful support for work in the spiritual dimension, but it is not always easy to find:

*JS*  
“You would seek out those who tended towards that perspective themselves. In the NHS like in any other organisation you get people very supportive and people that are very anti.”

So what can the practitioner glean from these wise words that will directly help them in their practice?

It is striking how much similarity there is from men who have arrived at their present situation through very different routes. The main points of agreement could be summarised as follows:-

- Personal integration of faith with psychological beliefs is important. If we are to work well and safely in this area it is essential that we spend time and effort thinking through our personal position.
- Sometimes we have to hold paradoxes - two truths that do not meet - in healthy tension. This requires fluidity of thought and some flexibility in the belief structures.
- We need to think about our language usage and use what is appropriate in context. We need also to pay attention as to how we translate between the paradigms, understanding that this is only an approximation of experience and being prepared to hold that which is ‘lost in translation.’
- There are definitive positives in acknowledging the spiritual dimensions in therapy, particularly in the area of resourcefulness for clients. However, there are traps and difficulties attached both to the faith of the therapist and that of the clients. Awareness of these possibilities is essential.
- A secure support system for the therapist to work in the spiritual dimension is necessary. This could come through supervision, but other elements such as peer support and active engagement in faith activities are also important. Continuing self reflection on both professional and faith issues and how they intermesh will help the therapist to stay authentic.

Personal reflections

As a female researcher, young in writing about integration (but not in years!) I was a little apprehensive about interviewing three well respected male academics. I was impressed by their graciousness and their eagerness to help in my project. I found that I was encouraged in the knowledge that although their perspectives on therapy and Christianity are different, their understanding of principles for good practice was, in large part, very similar. These guidelines validate my experience as a trainer, supervisor and therapist. It gave me hope that with such agreement it might be possible to encourage Christian counsellors and therapists to stop ‘hiding their spirituality under a bushel’, to be more available and congruent with clients and at the same time, more transparent with their supervisors.

As I interviewed these men, I experienced the privilege of talking through this issue and found benefit in that alone. I gained new ways to think about my own integration of faith and practice. In particular I found the space set aside for this purpose particularly helpful.

The next phase in the research is to look at the data gathered from practitioners and ask the questions, “Do they do what the academics say they should, and if not, why not? Where are the areas of difficulty and what can be done to ameliorate them?”
References


Appendix 12

Ethical Approval Form

Research Ethics Declaration Form

ETHICAL PRACTICE IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

If there are any ethical implications to the research to be carried out, you must provide a brief statement (as directed below) explaining how these issues will be addressed.

NAME OF APPLICANT: Ann Scott

PROGRAMME OF STUDY:

PhD

AREA OF STUDY:

Spirituality/Religious Studies

TITLE OF DISSERTATION/THESIS:
The Counsellor's Presence of Inpatient Children with Clinical Psychosis

STATEMENT

Declaration

I have read and understood the Guidelines on Ethical Practice in Research and I have discussed these with my Tutor/Supervisor. I attach the required statement, which indicates how I intend to approach these issues in my Dissertation/Thesis. Guidelines are available in Postgraduate Research Handbook and Postgraduate, Taught Handbooks. Please tick as appropriate:

Does the proposed research involve human participants? Yes ☑ No ☐

If you have answered yes to the above question, then ethical issues will need to be addressed.

Please tick one of the following boxes:

☒ The research involves the use of human participants.

☐ The research involves the use of non-human participants.

☐ The research raises no ethical issues.

Applicant's Signature: Ann Scott

Print Name: Ann Scott

Date: 1 Jan 07

Supervisor's Signature: I Soley O'T

Print Name: I Soley O'T

Date: 1 Jan 07

This form should be returned to the Postgraduate Office, School of Education.

This form should be returned by:

PhD students with progress review documents after the first 6 months (full-time) or 18 months (part-time) registration.

Postgraduate Doctorate students with progress review documents after the first 18 months of registration.

MPA students after first 6 months (full-time) and 12 months (part-time) registration.

Teachers/Masters/DDCE students after first 6 months (full-time) and 12 months (part-time) registration, unless otherwise stated in the Course Handbook.

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS WILL BE COMPLETED AFTER YOU HAVE SUBMITTED THE FORM.

SECTION 1 - REVIEW PANEL/PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

The proposal has been reviewed:

☒ Ethical issues have been adequately addressed

☐ Further information is required from the applicant

☐ Refer the proposal to the School Ethics Committee

Chair of Review Panel/Programme Director: [Signature]

Print Name: [Signature]

Date: 1 Jan 07

SECTION 2 - SCHOOL ETHICS COMMITTEE

The proposal has been re-reviewed and the outcome of the review is:

☒ Ethical issues have been addressed

☐ Refer to University Ethics Committee

Chair of School Ethics Committee: [Signature]

Print Name: [Signature]

Date: 1 Jan 07

SECTION 3 - UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE

The proposal has been reviewed by the University Ethics Committee and the outcome of the review is:

☒ Proposal has ethical approval

☐ Proposal does not have ethical approval

Chair of University Ethics Committee: [Signature]

Print Name: [Signature]

Date: 1 Jan 07