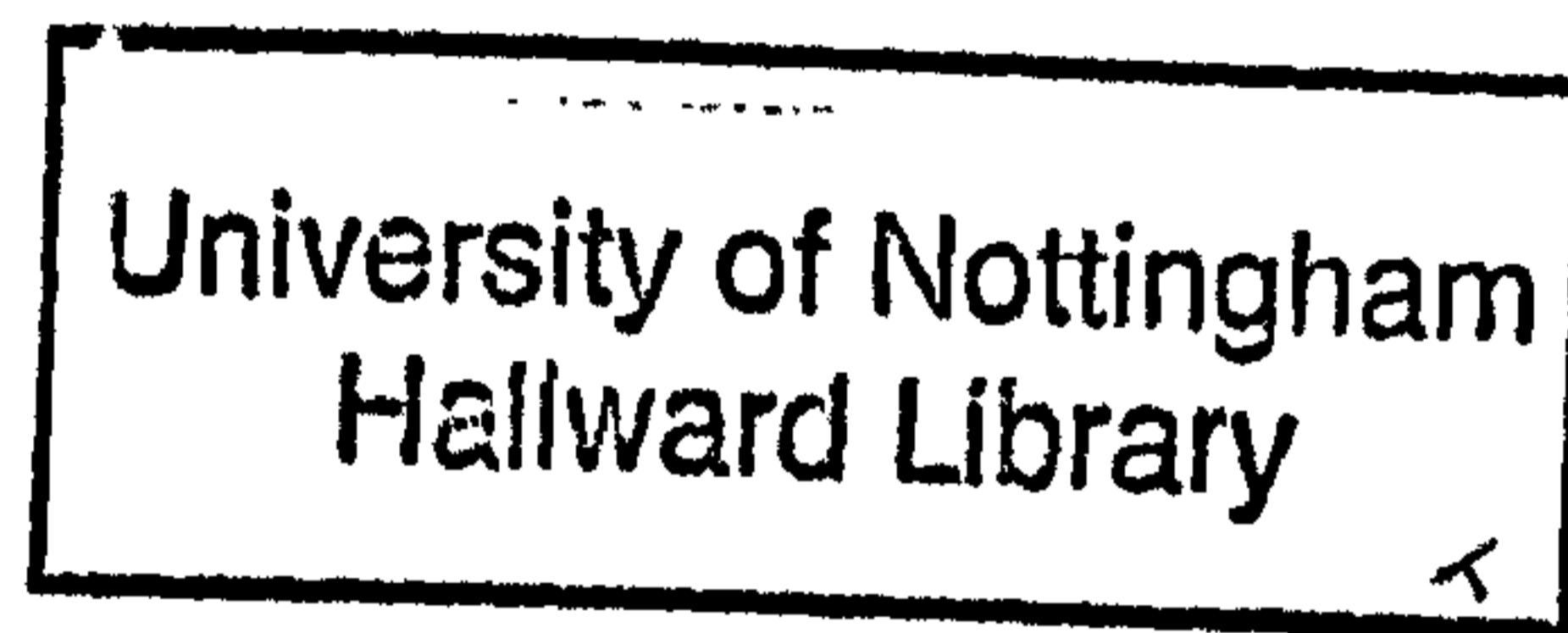


**ON BECOMING A PSYCHOSYNTHESIS THERAPIST:
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PROCESS**

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ABSTRACT

This research study is concerned with the motivation of psychotherapists who choose to train in Psychosynthesis. Psychosynthesis sits within the transpersonal school of psychology and is less well known than the mainstream schools of Psychoanalytic, Behavioural and Humanistic psychology. There has been considerable research into the motivation of those who choose a career as a psychotherapist, in general, but none into why someone should be drawn to this Spiritual model.

Life narrative interviews were conducted with twelve eminent Psychosynthesis psychotherapists. The interviews were recorded on audiotape and transcribed. The format was of a semi-structured interview based on five key questions. At the end of each life narrative interview, the participant was asked to reconnect with the moment of choosing, to allow an image to come and then to draw. The drawings were then explored with the participants, who were invited to explain the meanings of the images and symbolism contained in them. Comparative thematic analysis was used to identify key and minor themes in the interview data. The symbolism and imagery in the drawings were considered in relation to transpersonal theory.

The initial results suggested that those choosing to train as Psychosynthesis therapists shared, to a considerable extent, the 'dysfunctional' childhood backgrounds reported in earlier research as common among psychotherapists trained in a wider range of therapies.

The earlier research had framed the choice to train as a psychotherapist as stemming from a 'negative' motivation. This is an interpretation from the perspective of 'depth' psychology. This research study suggests another possible motivation, from the perspective of 'height' psychology. 'Height' psychology suggests that human behaviour and human choices, can be motivated by 'higher' as well as 'lower' needs. The findings support the concept of 'dual motivation', a term which was used by one of the research participants, based on her observations of the many therapists she had trained in Psychosynthesis over a long period of time. This term captures the essence of the two dimensions of motivation.

The anticipated strong interest in Spirituality was confirmed in the data results but the dimension of Mysticism, which had not been anticipated, emerged as a strong feature in three of the life histories. All twelve participants been drawn by the inclusive nature of the model, which they felt facilitated an unusual degree

of freedom in therapeutic practice, without compromising the integrity of the model. The central Psychosynthesis techniques of visualisation, meditation, imagery and disidentification, emerged as strong factors in the choice because clear and effective results had been experienced in both personal work and work with clients. Two therapists identified the dual focus on Heart and Mind as attractive to them. In Psychosynthesis theory, Heart is more than emotions; it encompasses a dimension of the Will (Good Will or the Will to Good).

Surprisingly, the marginality of the model was identified as a positive attraction by two of the therapists, as it echoed their own marginalised life positions, especially in childhood.

Lastly, the experiential nature of Psychosynthesis therapy was valued as giving a creative and enlivening dimension to practice. The analysis of the drawings further confirmed the strong Spiritual orientation of the therapists. The symbolism in the drawings was overwhelmingly of a Spiritual nature with the dominant symbol of Light appearing in ten of the drawings. Other transpersonal symbols appearing included a path or journey, a chalice, the rose and new birth.

The results suggest that Psychosynthesis offers a model of what it is to be a human being, which is validating and affirming at a

personal level to those who are attracted to a transpersonal psychology. Furthermore, it offers experiential and creative techniques, which are experienced as powerful and successful ways to work therapeutically.

1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. The History Of Transpersonal Psychology

Psychosynthesis sits within what is sometimes described as the Fourth force of psychology, that is the Transpersonal, the first three being Psychoanalytic, Behavioural and Humanistic. Transpersonal psychology could be described as falling outside mainstream psychology and therapeutic training (West 2000). It is less well known to the public in general and to those considering training as a psychotherapist. Historically, a medically based model, Psychoanalytic training, dominated therapeutic training and provision. Medicine was often the background of those appointed to work with young children and their families in the Child Guidance Clinics established in the 1940s. Currently, a medical model seems to again be taking pre-eminence within the Health Service (Hansen 2007). Following Lord Layard's report in 2006, the government is moving to greatly increase access to psychological therapies within the National Health Service, with particular emphasis being placed upon the provision of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, which is seen as offering time-limited and 'empirically measurable' results (NICE 2006).

Transpersonal psychology is not 'centre stage' in its status, but the researcher argues that it is important as it advances the exploration of:

The farther reaches of human nature

as Abraham Maslow (1969) put it so well, more than thirty years ago.

Why the participants had chosen this particular therapeutic training was of interest because transpersonal psychology and therapy are not mainstream. What factors might draw a candidate for training in such a model of psychotherapy?

Transpersonal psychology is often seen as originating in the writings of William James, who pioneered the psychological study of spiritual experiences in "The Varieties of Religious Experience" (1901).

Kasprow & Scotton (1999) argue that James took a more pragmatic view when investigating spiritual experiences, than did the later Freud. James saw the inherent bias in considering spiritual experiences from a particular theoretical framework, or cultural or religious perspective. He suggested that it was more fruitful to judge spiritual experiences by their effect on people.

Freud, on the other hand, in *Monotheism* (1913) and *The Future of an Illusion* (1928) characterised spiritual experience largely as a regressive defence.

As West (2000) comments:

At best Freud had an ambivalent attitude towards spirituality and spiritual experiences, and his view of religion was even more negative (West, 2000, p.15).

Freud (1963) asserted that religious needs had their origin in the helplessness experienced by the young infant and its longing for the father. He considered that religion provided false explanations for the uncertainties of life. Freud considered the purpose of life to be the striving after happiness, or at the very least, the avoidance or minimizing of suffering. He could not accept the validity of so called '*oceanic experiences*' which some of his clients described to him, describing them as 'strange' and commenting that:

They fit in so badly with the fabric of our psychology (Freud, 1963, p.2).

Carl Jung (1971) was perhaps the first clinician who argued that a spiritual approach to the practice of depth psychology was a legitimate one. Kaspro & Scotton (1999) suggest three ways in which Jung contributed to transpersonal theory in psychology.

Firstly, that in contrast to Freud, he introduced the principle of trust in one's psychological process, linked to the belief that each person has natural tendencies towards growth and evolution.

Secondly, Jung suggested that psychological development did not necessarily stop with the attainment of ego maturation and rational competence. It was possible for it to continue throughout a person's life and might include the attainment of higher states of consciousness.

Thirdly, (and it is here that one sees obvious links with Psychosynthesis) Jung asserted that:

...transcendent experience lies within and is accessible to everyone, and that the healing and growth stimulated by such experiences often make use of the language of symbolic imagery and nonverbal experience, which are not reducible to purely rational terms (Kasprov & Scotton, 1999, pp.13-14).

1.2. Psychosynthesis

Assagioli (1888-1974) was a contemporary of both Freud and Jung. He respected and valued Freud's views but considered them limited. As Jung would do after him, Assagioli became a psychoanalytic 'heretic', refusing to accept Freud's reductionism and neglect of the positive dimensions of the human personality. Of Jung he said:

With Jung, I had a more cordial relationship. We met many times during the years and had delightful talks. Of all

modern psychotherapists, Jung is the closest in theory and practice to Psychosynthesis (Keen, 1974, p.2).

Roberto Assagioli was trained in Freudian psychotherapy; indeed, this was the only therapeutic training available at the turn of the century. In his clinical practice at a large psychiatric hospital in Zurich, he began to develop his own ideas about human functioning. These ideas were influenced by his background and wide scholarship and it is useful to understand something of this in order to comprehend the model of Psychosynthesis, which he developed.

Assagioli came from a cultured, upper- middleclass, Jewish family. His father died when he was young, and his mother remarried. His education was a typical classical one, including five years of Greek and eight of Latin, together with the study of several other languages. Within the family home, Italian, French and English were all spoken. Hardy (1989) comments that like all Italian school children of that era, Assagioli was very familiar with Dante Alighieri's work, particularly the Divine Comedy. The influences of Dante and Plato are clearly apparent in his work. Assagioli lived in Venice, until he went to medical school in Florence, in 1906.

In his childhood he had a close relationship with his parents and they encouraged him to visit many European countries, including Russia. He was therefore exposed to a wide range of cultures and ways of living from an early age. During his childhood, his mother became a Theosophist and so he was also introduced to the fields of spiritual and esoteric knowledge. Assagioli was interested in Jewish culture and for most of his life he belonged to Jewish organisations and received Jewish newspapers.

As a medical student his PhD dissertation was a critique of Freudian theory and it is from this basis that one can begin to understand the psychological model that Assagioli developed. Assagioli felt that Freud had made an important contribution to understanding the human psyche, in emphasising the role of the unconscious, but he believed that Freud's view of what it is to be a human being was a limited one. In addition to his training in Western medicine and psychology, Assagioli had studied the major world religions and Eastern philosophy. He was of course knowledgeable in Judaism but was influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism and the Christian traditions. He practiced Hatha and Raja yoga. He had, as Whitmore states:

...an abundance of contacts and interchanges...among these were: Russian esoterist P.D.Ouspensky, German philosopher Hermann Keyserling, Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, Sufi mystic Inhahayat Khan, Zen scholar D.T. Suzuki, psychologists Victor Frankl, the founder of

Logotherapy, and Robert Desoille, creator of the guided-daydream (Whitmore, 1991, p.6).

Firman & Gila (2000) add to this formidable list, Assagioli's personal contact with the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber.

This wide-ranging interest in intellectual and spiritual traditions formed the fermenting ground from which Assagioli developed his model of Psychosynthesis. His professional involvement with 'patients' in a clinical setting provided the other side, the relevance of the model to human life and the human struggle.

Whitmore describes the transition through Freudian psychology to transpersonal psychology eloquently. She notes that Psychosynthesis had its roots in Psychoanalysis, since that was Assagioli's initial training in psychiatry. She goes on to state however that Psychosynthesis went beyond the two previously accepted schools in psychology, Psychoanalysis and Behaviourism.

She states:

Freud's theory of the unconscious psyche stressed the impact and the consequence of childhood experience upon adult behaviour. Behaviourism addresses itself to dysfunctional behaviours and is used to replace them with socially acceptable and less painful adaptation (Whitmore, 1991, p.6).

However, in the late 1950s a radical shift occurred in the field of psychology- the emergence of the third and fourth forces, of

humanistic and transpersonal psychology. A key feature of humanistic psychology was that it:

...promoted a movement away from the earlier tendency of psychology to limit itself to pathology, towards what the human being is capable of becoming. It studied self-actualised people and psychological health, and formulated a model of a healthy, fully functioning human being (Whitmore, 1991, pp.6-7).

West (2000) notes that transpersonal psychology is often seen as an offshoot of humanistic psychology but argues that it is in fact a unique psychology in its own right. He quotes Hendricks and Weingold (1982) in support of this claim:

Transpersonal approaches draw upon the first three forces while going beyond to see humans as intuitive, mystical, psychic, and spiritual. Above all, humans are viewed as unifiable, having the potential for harmonious and holistic development of all their potentials (West, 2000, p.32, quoting Hendricks & Weingold, 1982, p.8).

West (2000) argues that most humanistic therapists operate from a holistic model, which sees people as physical, emotional, mental and spiritual beings. As a consequence:

... spirituality and spiritual experiences will tend to be tolerated and perhaps even welcomed as phenomena to be explored, but the traditional humanistic therapist is less likely to be experienced in working with such phenomena than the transpersonal therapist. Whilst the training programmes of humanistic therapists may touch on the spiritual and the transpersonal, this will not tend to be in any systematic, worked-out way. Consequently the response to the client's spirituality will usually depend on the individual practitioner (West, 2000, p.32).

1.2.1. The Concept of the Psyche

The word 'Psychosynthesis' can be broken down into its root words, to give an initial sense of its meaning. Just as 'psychoanalysis' means the analysis of the psyche, 'Psychosynthesis' means the synthesis of the psyche. It is useful to make explicit the various meanings ascribed to the term 'psyche' and in particular, how the term has been used in psychotherapeutic models, such as those of Freud, Jung and Assagioli.

Before going on to explore the concept of the psyche in therapeutic models, it is relevant to consider of the meaning of the term, 'psyche', in both its mythical and philosophical roots. In both perceptions it has been seen as, 'that which goes on after the death of the person'. In modern terminology this would be referred to as the 'soul'. The Greek philosophers, especially Plato, considered that the body was mortal, but that the soul is always there and is reincarnated. Its nature is:

...pure and everlasting and immortal and unchanging (Plato,1961).

A consideration of the major world religions suggests a range of different perceptions of 'soul'. In the Abrahamic faiths, such as Judaism and Christianity, the soul was believed to be eternal, but not to reincarnate (Melling, 1987). In Hinduism, the soul, the atman, is the witness of both the gross and the subtle body. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna declares that for the soul there is neither birth, nor death, nor does it ever cease to be. Hinduism and Buddhism share a similar perspective: in Hinduism there is only one soul, the Divine Being. Similarly, in Buddhism, there is one Divine and eternal soul, and we are all part of it. Many theories make a distinction between the soul and the 'subtle body'. In the esoteric traditions, as with 'soul', 'spirit', and so on, the term 'subtle body' is often used in a rather vague sense, with different esotericists using it to describe different things.

Kheper (2009) suggests that there are grades of increasing subtleness-the gross (representing physical consciousness) the subtle, (representing the psychic/interpersonal), and the very subtle or causal, corresponding to the transpersonal, the Theosophical Devachen and Steiner's 'Spirit' realm. A variant on the concept of subtle bodies is found in both Alchemical Taoism and the 'Fourth Way' teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky (1957) where it is said that one can create a subtle body, and thus achieve post-mortem immortality, through spiritual or yogic

exercises. The 'soul' then is not something one is born with, but something that one has to develop through esoteric practice.

Moving on to explore the ways in which the term psyche has been employed in psychotherapy, one again encounters different perspectives. Psyche does not always equate with 'soul'. When it does, one is usually looking at a transpersonal model.

In the psychoanalytic model, Freud (1923/1961) suggested a structural theory of the psyche, suggesting that it had three components. These are the Id, the Ego and the Super-ego. The Id represents the instinctual drives of the individual, which remain largely unconscious. The Ego, which is conscious, serves to integrate the drives of the Id with the prohibitions of the Superego. The Superego represents a person's conscience and their internalization of societal norms. Thus, the term 'psyche' refers to the conscious and unconscious functions of the mind (and this translates as 'of the brain', rather than the later debate which sought to differentiate mind from brain). Freud's model of the 'psyche' is purely a psychological one, does not include any notion of 'soul'.

Carl Jung (1971) used both of the terms 'psyche' and 'soul'. However, he wrote much of his work in his native tongue of

German and, as the German word 'Seele', means both 'psyche' and 'soul' there may be problems in some translations of his works. However, Jung was careful to define what he meant by both terms. He wrote:

I have been compelled, in my investigations into the structure of the unconscious, to make a conceptual distinction between soul and psyche, By psyche, I understand the totality of all psychic processes, conscious as well as unconscious. By soul, on the other hand, I understand a clearly demarcated functional complex that can best be described as a 'personality'
(Jung, C.G., 1971 Def.48 par 797).

So in Jung's terminology, 'psyche' is a comprehensive term, but 'soul' is more restricted in meaning and refers to a functional complex, or partial personality, and never to the whole psyche. It is often applied specifically to the 'anima' and 'animus' for example. In this connection it is used in the composite word, 'soul-image'. Jung's model of the psyche is a transpersonal one, but as Rowan (2008) suggests, the term 'transpersonal' has a different meaning for Jung, than it has for Assagioli. This difference is further explored later in this thesis.

In Psychosynthesis, the model of the psyche is extended to include spirituality. One might describe Freud's theory as offering a psychological model, and Assagioli's theory as offering a psychospiritual model of what it is to be human. A discussion of Assagioli's model of the psyche, with reference to the 'Egg' diagram, now follows.

1.2.2. The 'Psyche and the Egg Diagram

Assagioli's 'Egg' diagram of the psyche includes what Freud termed the preconscious (which Assagioli termed the middle unconscious), and the unconscious. But where Freud spoke only of the depths of the unconscious (what Assagioli termed the Lower Unconscious) Assagioli added the heights of the unconscious, which he termed the Higher Unconscious or the Superconscious or the Transpersonal Unconscious. Psychosynthesis and other transpersonal models are therefore sometimes referred to as 'height psychologies' (Visser, 2003). The Higher Unconscious goes beyond the realm of the personal, to the realm of the transpersonal. Psychosynthesis proposes that we have to move into the spiritual realm for an explanation and understanding of the Transpersonal.

Since the work of Assagioli, other significant figures have proposed models of psychospiritual development that add substance to theories of the Transpersonal, for example Wilber, (1980; 1981a; 1983a; 1983b; 2000). Wilber's model proposes that spirituality and the Transpersonal is not one and the same thing. The individual has the potential to evolve from early and lower stages of psychospiritual development (the Prepersonal) through to the Personal and perhaps to the Transpersonal.

Rowan (2008) suggests that many of us achieve the Personal level but that only some of us will progress to the transpersonal level. This issue is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4 of this thesis where the concept of Spirituality is further explored.

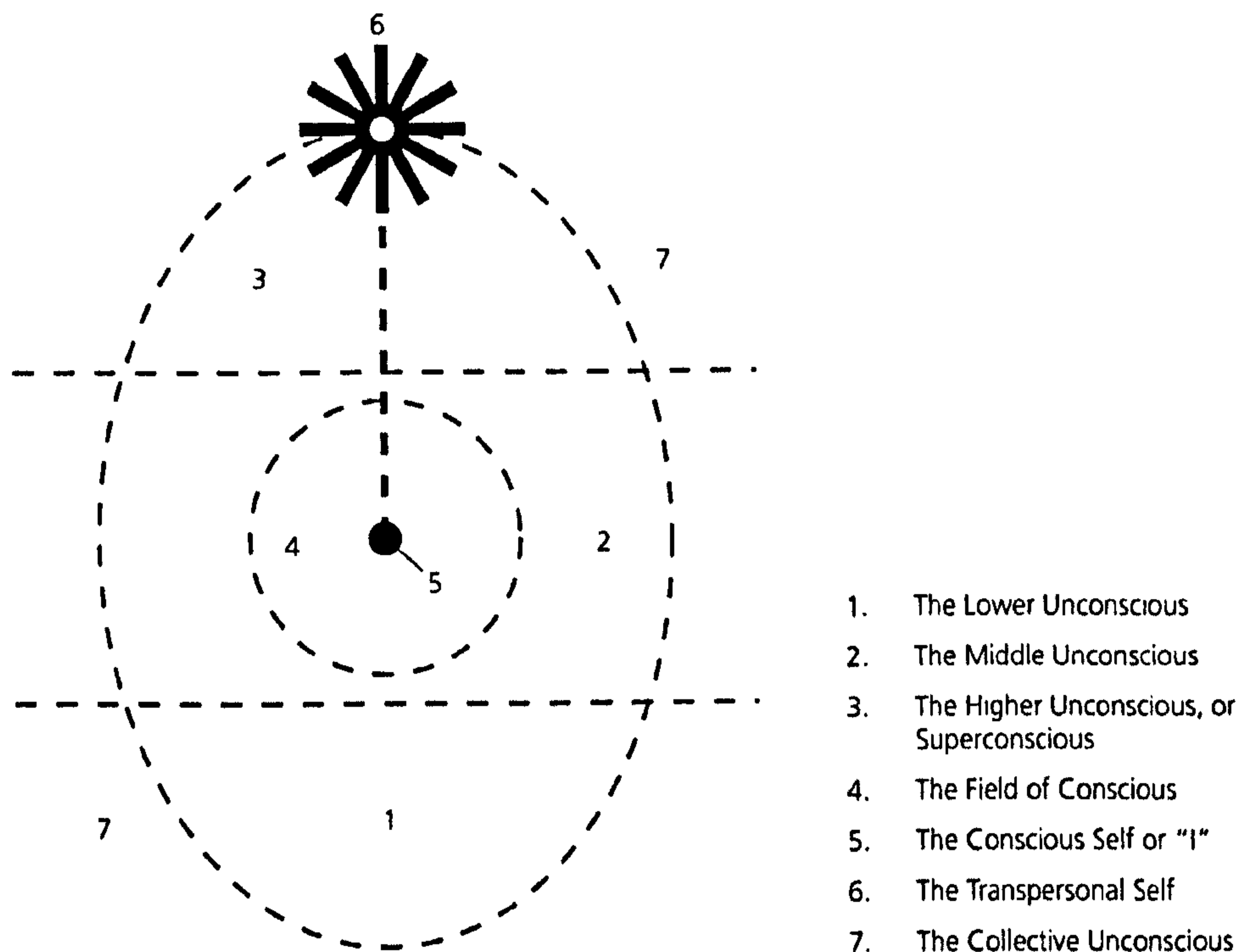
Firman and Gila (2000) have integrated Assagioli's ideas with recent advances in Psychosynthesis theory, and relate this to contemporary developmental research, object relations theory, self-psychology, intersubjective psychology and trauma theory.

The model of the 'psyche' is relevant to both psychoanalytic therapy, Jungian therapy and to Psychosynthesis therapy. In psychotherapeutic work, Psychoanalysis seeks to understand human psychology by exploring the various components of the psyche.

But, as Firman & Gila (2000) suggest:

In developing Psychosynthesis, Assagioli sought not only to employ analysis-analytic insight into the human personality and its dysfunction-but synthesis as well, an understanding of how human growth moves towards increasing wholeness, both within the individual and in the individual's relationship to the world at large (Firman & Gila, 2000, p.14).

FIGURE 1: THE EGG DIAGRAM



(Assagioli, R. 1933-34)

The Egg diagram was first published in the *Hibbert Journal* in 1933-1934. Assagioli always described the Egg diagram as a 'map', which he distinguished from 'the territory'. It is still the tradition for Psychosynthesis trainers when presenting the Egg diagram, to write in the corner of the board, "This is not the truth". This is to acknowledge that the map is offered as a working hypothesis rather than a dogmatic description of psychological reality. Furthermore, as Ferrucci (1982) suggests, like all maps, the Egg diagram is:

*...an impoverished, static version of the actual territory
(Ferrucci, 1982, p.43).*

However, it is a useful tool to facilitate exploration of the psyche.

The human psyche, as depicted in Assagioli's 'Egg' diagram, has five conscious and unconscious dimensions.

- The Lower Unconscious
- The Middle Unconscious
- The Higher Unconscious
- The Collective Unconscious
- The Field of Consciousness

In Assagioli's egg diagram, the lines dividing the different dimensions of consciousness are broken, not solid. This represents the idea that material from any level of the unconscious, can invade, or be deliberately brought into consciousness. Assagioli described this process as a "*psychic osmosis*" (Assagioli, 1993, p.23).

The Field of Awareness

The usual understanding of the term 'conscious' is 'available to introspection', and this relates most clearly to the field of awareness or field of consciousness [(4) on the egg diagram]. This represents whatever is in our awareness at the present moment. The field of awareness, or field of consciousness is often shown as a circle, but Parfitt (1990) shows it as amoeba shaped. This is a useful way to suggest the fluidity of awareness,

in that what enters awareness or what replaces a current thought or feeling is constantly open to change. The field of consciousness is distinguished from the 'centre of pure consciousness and awareness', which is the 'I' or Personal self (5) on the egg diagram.

The Middle Unconscious

Area (2) on the egg diagram represents the Middle Unconscious. Material in this area is not available for introspection at this exact moment in time, though it can be retrieved quite easily and quickly. Firman and Gila (2000) have elaborated Assagioli's ideas about the Middle Unconscious, suggesting that it has an important function of storing many individual elements outside awareness. That is to say that the Middle Unconscious holds the mapping, or 'schema', (Piaget, 1976) of our experiences, which are subsequently integrated into more elaborate structures, since:

The diverse elements which form the more complex expressions cannot remain in consciousness, or we would simply be unable to function beyond the most basic level: our awareness would be so filled with the many individual elements that a focus on broader, more complex patterns of expression would be impossible (Firman & Gila, 2000,p.26).

When held in the Middle Unconscious, these individual elements have the potential to be synthesised into novel, more complex modes of expression.

Furthermore, Firman and Gila's (2000) thesis of Primal Wounding attributes the vital function to the Middle Unconscious, of integrating the split in the psyche between the Higher and the Lower Unconscious. They propose that in both the Higher and the Lower Unconscious, splitting and repression serve to keep aspects of our human experience out of awareness. When an integration of split elements of the Higher and Lower Unconscious is achieved, this is tantamount to an expansion of the Middle Unconscious.

The Lower Unconscious

On the Egg diagram (1) represents the Lower Unconscious. Assagioli suggested that this held and processed a number of areas. It holds repressed material, which has been pushed deep down in the psyche, so that we no longer 'remember' or own it as part of us, as it is too threatening or too painful to confront at this present moment in our lives. In Freud's (1923/1961) model of the psyche this is the Unconscious, a broad term which is not differentiated into separate dimensions, in the ways described by Assagioli.

In Assagioli's model of the psyche, the Lower Unconscious holds our personal psychological past, including long-forgotten memories that would be too painful to allow into consciousness and have been repressed deep down out of awareness. This is part of what Firman and Gila later referred to as 'splitting'.

Assagioli described the Lower Unconscious as the repository of the basic instincts towards sexuality and survival and the basic physiological functions over which we (ordinarily) have no conscious control, such as the beating of our heart, the inhalation and expiration of breath.

So far, Freud and Assagioli could be said to agree on the existence of the conscious mind, the middle conscious and the unconscious, although their terminology differs, as does their view of what might be contained in the unconscious (especially concerning Assagioli's concept of subpersonalities). A more obvious difference opens up, however, on the concept of the Collective Unconscious (7) on the Egg diagram.

The Collective Unconscious

Both Jung (1968) and Assagioli proposed that individuals have both a personal and a collective unconscious. That is to say that

we carry both personal unconscious memories and are part of a vast reservoir of universal unconscious material, by being members of the human race. Within this are contained archetypes, which are symbolic representations of shared human experience that have appeared in every race and time. Examples include the Mother or Father archetype and the Hero. However, although Jung considered that the Collective Unconscious held a transpersonal dimension, Rowan (2008) argues that he:

Tried to cram everything spiritual into the Collective Unconscious and confused different levels within the spiritual realm, thus reducing them all to different aspects of the Collective Unconscious (Rowan, 2008,p.30).

In his essay, "The Structure of the Unconscious", published in France, in 1916, Jung says:

The collective unconscious comprises...that portion (of the mental functions) which is firmly established, is acquired by heredity, and exists everywhere; whose activity is, as it were, automatic; and which is in consequence transpersonal or impersonal (Jung, CW. Vol.7, par 454).

Rowan (2008) argues that Jung in fact confuses the collective unconscious with the transpersonal, by:

...lumping all things spiritual into one framework, The Collective Unconscious (Rowan, 2008,p.37).

Rowan describes this as a kind of reductionism:

Where Jung is forced by his own logic into saying that the spiritual is nothing but the psychological (Rowan 2008,p.30).

Assagioli does not make this same 'error' since he distinguishes between what Wilber (2001) would later term the prepersonal and the transpersonal contents of the collective unconscious.

Assagioli (1975) considered that the Collective Unconscious contained both archaic and primitive archetypes (which in Wilber's terms are Prepersonal) and Superconscious archetypes (which are transpersonal). Consequently, to say all archetypes are transpersonal is to make for confusion and, in Wilber's later terminology, to commit the Pre/trans Fallacy (Wilber, 2001). Assagioli and Jung agreed to disagree on their conception of archetypes. In Assagioli's view, archetypes were universal principles that unify, heal and give meaning. Consequently, Assagioli did not view archetypes as bi-polar (having their opposite), but only as positive and evolutionary (Source: Personal communication with Diana Whitmore, 21-06-09).

The Higher Unconscious/Superconscious

A major difference between Assagioli's model of the human psyche, and that of Freud and Jung, opens up when Assagioli introduces the concept of the Higher Unconscious, or Superconscious or the Transpersonal Unconscious, [(3) in the egg diagram]. Assagioli's proposition of the Higher Unconscious, challenges conventional psychology by introducing the spiritual

dimension to the psyche. Jung did acknowledge a spiritual dimension to the psyche but differed in his views of it to Assagioli. However the spiritual dimension in Assagioli's model marks a clear departure from Freud's model of the psyche. Whilst Freud considered that so called 'spiritual' urges were merely distortions of sexual and aggressive energies, which had been sublimated, Assagioli felt that it was a reductionist error to perceive spiritual drives in such a way, although he did accept that elements of this could occur in cases of neuroses. Assagioli saw spiritual drives or spiritual urges as:

... real, basic and fundamental as sexual and aggressive drives (Assagioli, 1993, p.194).

Whitmore (1986) explains that the Superconscious is the term used to designate the higher (or sometimes experienced as deeper, depending upon one's inner cosmology) spiritual region of the psyche. The difference between the Superconscious and the personality is one of level, rather than of nature. At the Superconscious level there is no differentiation or separation between me and you and the opposite is true at the individual level (Source: Personal communication with Massimo Rosselli, 03/05/09). Superconscious experiences fundamentally consist of an emerging awareness of the activity occurring in the higher levels of human awareness. They carry with them a qualitative charge and transcend our normally limited consciousness. The

Higher Unconscious is always available to us but we are not always in touch with it. Assagioli considered that individuals might have moments when they experience the Higher Unconscious, but they are unlikely to be constantly in touch with the Higher Unconscious. Assagioli asserted that the Higher Unconscious denotes:

...our higher potentialities which seek to express themselves, but which we often repel or repress (Assagioli, 1993,p.22).

As with the Lower Unconscious, this area is by definition, not available to consciousness, so its existence is inferred from moments in which contents from that level affect consciousness.

Assagioli therefore defines the terms Superconscious, unconscious and conscious as adjectives since they are:

...temporary conditions of a psychological fact (Assagioli,1993, p.24).

There comes a point at which what was Superconscious becomes conscious, remains in the conscious mind for a greater or lesser period of time, and then returns to the Superconscious state (Assagioli, 1993, pp.23-24).

Assagioli asserted that more sustained contact with the Higher Unconscious might be achieved by consistent, conscious and deliberate effort, through the practice of meditation, for example. At other times, the Higher Unconscious might 'break through' into conscious awareness unexpectedly and temporarily. Grof (1989) originally referred to such occasions as 'spiritual

emergencies', but later revised his theory to call them 'spiritual emergences' rather than 'spiritual emergencies'.

Assagioli asserted that it was from the Higher Unconscious or Superconscious, that we receive our higher intuitions and inspirations, which might be, for example, of an artistic, philosophical or scientific nature. He also argued that an innate sense of right and wrong could be attributed to the Higher Unconscious. (Although sociologists and many psychologists would of course argue a strong learned and cultural component to this moral 'sense' which indeed, Assagioli (1975) would accept). Acts of a humanitarian and heroic nature were also attributed to the same source, as were 'higher' feelings such as altruistic love. Assagioli had received a Classical education and was very familiar with the works of the Greek philosophers. He had a particular affinity with the works of Plato and one might surmise a comparison between Plato's concept of the virtuous man and Assagioli's conviction of man's inherently spiritual nature (Source: personal communication with Piero Ferrucci, 22/07/09). Exceptional abilities and exceptional intellect were explained as stemming from this source (genius). Assagioli further argued that states of contemplation could be achieved when the Higher Unconscious or Superconscious was in operation.

Subpersonalities and the Unconscious

The Psychosynthesis concept of 'Subpersonalities' has relevance to all levels of the unconscious, including the Higher Unconscious, since Subpersonalities can exist at any level of the unconscious (Whitmore, 1991). Subpersonalities can be described as ways of thinking, feeling and acting that have crystallised into automatic patterns. Many of them come into existence during childhood as the best way the young child 'knew' how to survive, but they can also form at later stages in life.

It is useful to consider Subpersonalities in relation to the various dimensions of the Egg diagram. Repressed aspects and parts of ourselves (subpersonalities) in the Lower Unconscious will be more primitive in their nature and less well developed and differentiated, as we have unconsciously repressed them. So, for example, if as a child I was not allowed to be strong and powerful, I will have a five-year-old assertion, that got repressed at that level of development.

In the Middle Unconscious are the Suppressed parts of ourselves, that we know we have, but do not like, and consequently push down, such as the Frightened child, or the Critic.

In the Higher Unconscious are the potential states, the transpersonal qualities to contribute, the transpersonal element of all unredeemed subpersonalities. Haronian (1974) wrote of the 'repression of the sublime' referring to a retreat which may take place, from any involvement with the transpersonal at all.

However, In Psychosynthesis theory, even when the therapist is working with the Lower Unconscious, she is still working with the transpersonal, since every subpersonality has at its heart, a transpersonal quality that has become distorted. If the transpersonal quality is recognised and brought into awareness, it can be given expression in its true, positive sense rather than in its negative, distorted sense. Psychosynthesis therapeutic work with Subpersonalities, involves the processes of identification and disidentification. This involves the concretisation or personification of the subpersonality or part. In subpersonality work, the client firstly identifies with the part that may be expressed as an image or symbol. Subsequently, in stepping back to the 'I' the client is abandoning their usual standpoint and entering in to the standpoint of the subpersonality. Wilber (1993) asserts that working with imagery and symbols is work at the Subtle level of the Transpersonal.

Symbols are viewed as representations of the spiritual. Rowan (2002) states:

Every time we let the image speak for itself, every time we encourage the client to simply be the image, instead of thinking about it, reasoning about it, intellectually taking it apart, we are taking up the Subtle approach, we are entering what Watkins (1986) calls the Imaginal world, and what Hillman (1975) calls the soul (Rowan, 2002,p.21).

In such work, the client is involved in using the imagination in an active, rather than a passive way. Work with the active imagination first came out of the Jungian school: Jung first used the concept in 1935 (Collected Works, Vol 6). Corbin (1969) speaks of a mediating and intermediary world, which he calls 'mundus imaginalis', which is an imagined world, not to be confused with the imaginary. Samuels (1989) describes the Imaginal world as an in-between state, where images take the place of language. It is described as an in-between world because it is enacted between the conscious and the unconscious, and also between the therapist and the client. It is entered into actively, not drifted into without realisation of the process.

Rowan (2008) notes that not everything to do with the imagination is part of the transpersonal. Imagination, like imagery, can be observed in every level of psychospiritual

development. Children who are at the preverbal stage, can still have images, and therefore, as Rowan says:

In that sense, imagery is a primitive faculty...But beginning at the autonomous level, and even more at the transpersonal level, we find that images and symbols are better than language at in conveying certain things or in allowing ourselves to have certain experiences (Rowan, 2003,p.129).

Assagioli's proposition of the Higher Unconscious or Superconscious, challenges conventional psychology, by introducing the spiritual dimension to the psyche. This relates also to the ongoing debate concerning the nature of consciousness, mind and brain. That is, whether the mind can be equated with mere physiological and neural functions of the brain, or whether this is an inadequate and reductionist perspective (Lancaster, 2004). The major and contentious issue of consciousness is considered in more depth in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

The significance of the transpersonal in relation to the Collective Unconscious and the Higher Unconscious has been discussed. The discussion now moves to a consideration of the 'I' or personal self (5) on the egg diagram, and the Self, (6) on the egg diagram.

The Personal Self, or 'I'

The personal self, or 'I' is represented as (5) on the Egg diagram. 'Consciousness', in its usual, everyday sense, always has an object, or contents. It is always 'about' or 'of' something. This is very different from the 'I', which in Psychosynthesis is described as " a centre of pure self-awareness and will". In the psychosynthesis 'Identification' exercise, the person disidentifies from mind, body and feelings, and steps back to the 'I'. The 'I' is contentless, stable, immutable and permanent. It is described as having two dimensions: awareness and will. These are described as the Passive and the Active dimensions respectively, or as the Observer and the Actor. The 'I' bears loving and dispassionate witness to the actions, thoughts and feelings of the person (Assagioli, 1975)). Again, like the Higher Unconscious, the 'I' is seen as having a non-physical reality. In the Psychosynthesis model the goal of a personal psychosynthesis is to synthesis the fragmented parts of the personality around this centre, in a new, holistic way. The 'I' has the capacity to coordinate and harmonise all the psychological, emotional and physical energies of the person so that they live their lives from a place of 'skilful' will, as well as from a position of 'good' and 'strong' will. The capacity to do this needs to be developed, as

the will is seen as being like a muscle, which has to be constantly exercised, or it will become weak.

The Self

The 'I', or personal self, and the Self, or Higher or Transpersonal Self, [(6) on the egg diagram] are sometimes described as two sides of one coin and there is an intimate connection between them. As special as the 'I' is, it is in some senses, lesser than the Self, since it is:

...a reflection of the Self and its projection in the field of personality (Whitmore, 1991, p.1).

The 'I' can be understood, as Whitmore asserts, as:

...that small part of the Self with which our waking consciousness is able to identify at any moment (Whitmore, 1991, p.113).

The Transpersonal Self is the greater of the partnership.

Psychosynthesis differentiates the Self from the Superconscious. Assagioli distinguishes between the Superconscious activities (the transpersonal) and the Spirit (the Self), which goes beyond the Superconscious.

Whitmore describes the Self as:

...an ontological reality, which exists on its own level as a stable centre of life and the source of Superconscious

energies. The Self sends out its energies, which are stepped down in intensity, transmitted through Superconscious experience, and received, absorbed and utilised by the personality (Whitmore, 1991,p.115).

Again, Assagioli's model is defining the Self as having a non-physical reality: its nature is spiritual.

Furthermore, the Self is transpersonal exactly because it goes beyond the level of the individual and the personal. As Assagioli stated in an unpublished interview (Source: Psychosynthesis and Education Trust handout, 2009):

There is no end of the realization-from the personal to the transpersonal, from the transpersonal to the group Self, from there to the Universal Self. It may take years, even a lifetime.

As Whitmore (1991) states:

The Self is the point of synthesis of our whole being, of individuality and universality, or our connection with the larger whole of human existence (Whitmore, 1991, p.115).

It is the point of pure, essential being, which is unaffected by conscious experience. As Whitmore (1991) asserts:

It is not an experience but the One who experiences, the Experiencer (Whitmore, 1991, p.115).

The Self is contentless, indestructible and changeless. Assagioli described it as a:

...paradox, since it is itself immovable but it sets in motion, everything else...The Self is pure Being. Just as we never see the sun, only its rays and radiations, all our transpersonal experiences are experiences of radiations, qualities, and energies of the Self but not of the Self itself

(Source: Psychosynthesis and Education Trust, " Talks on the Self." An unpublished conversation with Roberto Assagioli).

Assagioli understood the Self as a reality, which could be experienced through the process and practice of disidentification.

Visser (1993) asserts that:

This Self-experience is, however, a category of its own, for the experiencer and the experienced are one and the same. The very word 'experience' is somewhat of a misnomer here. Nor can one say, properly speaking, that we identify ourselves with our Self, for the Self is the one that is doing the identification (and dis-identification). A better way to phrase this is that by dis-identification from the objects of consciousness the Self realises itself (Visser, 2003, p.3).

Rowan (2008) in discussing Assagioli's model of the Transpersonal, argues that Assagioli did not always make clear distinctions within the transpersonal realm, between what Wilber later termed the Subtle and the Causal levels of spirituality. Wilber (2000) described the Subtle level as the realm of symbols and images, archetypes, big dreams and deity figures. But at the Causal level, the level of spirit, we have to leave behind symbol and ritual, and use meditation as the prime method to experience the Transpersonal, and we are alone with the infinite divine.

The dimensions of consciousness evident in the Egg diagram have been elucidated in this section. With this 'map' of the

psyche Assagioli suggested that a synthesis was possible at two levels. One is at the level of a personal synthesis whereby the fragmented parts of the personality become synthesised into a new integrated whole around the 'I' or personal self. If this is achieved, the person can live their life more from their centre of consciousness, their 'choices' become real rather than driven by subpersonalities.

For some people, perhaps the majority, this may be enough. Beyond this, some individuals may achieve a higher level of synthesis, a synthesis at the transpersonal level. This involves the raising of consciousness so that one can live more of the time from one's deeper centre, or Higher Self. Psychosynthesis posits that, when the 'little self' and the Self are in alignment, we are more in touch with our essentially spiritual nature and can live our lives more fully and more joyfully.

Whitmore (1991) says:

Assagioli recognised and developed two mutually dependent aspects of Psychosynthesis: personal Psychosynthesis, which aims to foster the development of a well-integrated personality: and transpersonal Psychosynthesis, which offers the possibility of realising one's higher nature and purpose in life. He recognised the individual's need for meaning, both the meaning of our own unique existence and the meaning of the world in which we live, indeed that of life itself (Whitmore, 1991, p.8).

This section finishes with two further points about Assagioli's model of Psychosynthesis. These are that Assagioli added to the tenets of conventional psychology:

A) The hypothesis that each one of us has a deeper identity than the 'Personal self', that is the Self.

B) That life is a journey and we are each on a unique path of development (Whitmore, 1991).

Whilst Psychosynthesis is one of a number of transpersonal approaches, it was one of the first to develop and it is a leading model in the transpersonal field. It would be a huge task to consider each of the transpersonal models in depth and the researcher will, by focusing on just this model, be able to carry out an in-depth study of why eminent psychotherapists were attracted to this model especially.

The choice made by the research participants echoes the choice made by the researcher, who herself had chosen to train as a Psychosynthesis counsellor. At this point, therefore, the researcher explains something of her personal background and experience. These are perceived as relevant in contextualising her choice of research study and the perspectives adopted in it.

1.3. The Researcher's Story

During the 'postmodern' and 'Postexperimental' phases in the development of qualitative research, the importance of researcher reflexivity gained increased significance. Qualitative researchers are increasingly recognising the importance of attempting to explore their own motivations in choosing a research question and the influence of their research philosophy on the research objectives (Smith, 2008). The researcher is acknowledged as a co-creator of knowledge, who plays an important role in the construction of what passes for new knowledge and understanding (Ahern, 1999).

In this research study, the researcher's own story and her reflexive comments on the possible influence this may have had in her interpretations of the data are scattered throughout the text. However, a short personal statement is included at this point in the thesis. The intention is to further illuminate her reflections on her personal beliefs and life experiences, which may have contributed to her perspective in this research study.

The researcher acknowledges a personal interest in the topic of spirituality. She traces her interest back to her own childhood

and to her early deeply held Christian beliefs, even though there was no family involvement with religion. Indeed, for most of his life, her father declared himself to be a firm atheist and her mother a 'lapsed' Catholic.

The researcher feels that her own personal experiences of the operation of 'synchronicity' (Jung, 1971) in her life, affirmed her belief in 'meaning' in life events. A clear example of synchronicity can be given in her experience of a brief visit to San Francisco. The researcher was at the end of a two-week holiday, travelling around California subsequent to attending a one-week international Psychosynthesis conference at the University of San Diego. The return flight home was out of San Francisco and there was the opportunity to spend just a few hours in the city. The researcher's sister-in-law was at that time being treated with radiotherapy for a brain tumour and she had talked to her about working with imagery and visualisation to reduce the tumour. The researcher wanted to buy a book that explained such techniques and she knew the title. She had enquired about the whereabouts of an esoteric bookshop in a district of San Francisco where it might be found. Time was very short and she had literally ten minutes from entering the bookshop to find the book. The bookshop was chaotic; none of the books were

arranged alphabetically or by topic. There were two floors to the shop. The quest seemed hopeless, and the researcher's heart sank. Incredibly, she walked straight to the shelf and place where there was just one copy of the book she was seeking. There was just enough time to get to the airport for the homeward flight.

Furthermore, the researcher identifies parallels between her personal views which developed from a Christian foundation in childhood, to a much broader conception of spirituality, with the later 'wider definition of spirituality' espoused by the research participants.

The researcher also discloses personal, subjective experiences of a spiritual nature. She has disclosed these experiences to very few people, partly because she feels no need to convince anyone else of their authenticity, and partly because most people would probably dismiss them as inauthentic because they are not open to verification by 'objective' or 'scientific' methods in the Positivist sense. She has had two experiences of the presence of angels. These were clearly seen by the spiritual eye, not by the eye of the flesh, as Wilber (2000) would say. The researcher's experience was not of a vision, in the sense of something 'appearing' in the room. It was a profound and moving intuitive

certainty of angel presence, which she could clearly see, in great detail. The first experience was of one angel, seen in profile, at the side of her father's hospital bed. The second experience was of six angels, hovering above her brother's bed in intensive care. These experiences were felt to be real in a deeply intuitive way, and needed no verification from any other source. The researcher is reflexively aware of the possible cultural influences on the way she 'saw' manifestations of the spiritual (Oppenheimer, 2003). In a different culture, spiritual experiences might have literally been 'seen' differently, i.e. in different manifestations.

1.4. A Critical Reflection

In this section the researcher attempts to reflect upon and analyse her own 'story' from a more distant position. Firstly, she identifies three themes as having emerged in her own 'story' and then goes on to link these with her personal motivations and phenomenological view at the outset of the research, in relation to the research project.

The first theme is the researcher's own personal belief system, in which the existence and importance of a spiritual dimension to human life is accepted. This premise clearly set the backdrop to the choice of research project. Furthermore, the consequence of this personal belief system is likely to have been openness or even a bias towards, concurring with the participants' categorisation of their experiences as 'spiritual'. If the researcher had held a different personal belief system, she may perhaps have adopted a more 'sceptical', 'objective', 'positivist' perspective towards their views. Since, however, the research objective was to explore the meaning the research participants attached to their experiences and choice of therapeutic training rather than to establish an objective 'truth', the researcher suggests that her personal belief system did not bias or contaminate the analysis of the data.

The second theme to emerge in the researcher's own 'story' was a widening perspective on spirituality. As already noted, her early belief system was within a conventional Christian framework. As she grew older, her interest in spirituality however, prompted wider reading, extending beyond the literature of traditional religions into the esoteric literature. Also, with travel, she experienced different cultures and developed an appreciation of the diversity of belief systems. As an adult, personal friendships developed with individuals from a wide range of faith backgrounds, including Hinduism and Buddhism and with those of no faith convictions at all. These friendships stimulated deep discussions about the nature of spirituality and how it might differ from conventional religion. Consequently, the researcher developed her own, wider perspective of spirituality.

Although the researcher did not presume a wide inclusive view of spirituality in her research participants at the start of the research study, she was not surprised to see it emerge from the data. This is because Psychosynthesis as a model does not align itself with any particular religion. She does acknowledge however, that the parallels between her own wide perspective on spirituality felt affirmed by the views expressed by the research participants as the data analysis proceeded. The researcher is

aware of the danger of too comfortable a 'fit' between the values and views of the research participants and the researcher. The parallel in perspective between the research participants and the researcher was noted but not deemed to be a threat to the data analysis since, as already stated, the research objective was to explore meanings, not seeking to establish an objective 'truth'.

The third theme to emerge is that experience of what Wilber (2000) terms the 'spiritual eye' became part of the researcher's own biography as an adult. It is likely therefore, that her own personal experience of seeing with the spiritual eye influenced her perspective on the data gathered from the narratives of the research participants. Wilber (2000) argues that the 'eye of the flesh' is both inadequate and inappropriate to an understanding of matters of a spiritual nature. Whilst some researchers might be prepared to accept this premise from a purely intellectual perspective, this researcher feels that her personal experience gave her an appreciation of Wilber's assertion from an experiential position, which, from her perspective, added validity to his argument.

2. CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Occupational Choice

This chapter is a survey of the literature relating to occupational choice. Firstly, it focuses on occupational choice in the widest sense, i.e. why any individual might choose any occupation. Secondly, it focuses on the literature concerning the choice of certain individuals to become psychotherapists.

Gothard (1997) defines occupational choice as:

...a choice of a particular job, which is perceived as significant i.e., not a temporary post but one that at the time is regarded as fairly permanent (Gothard, 1997, p.2).

There is a good deal of literature on vocational choice in general. This relates to the fact that vocational guidance has grown as an academic discipline and as an attempt to provide practical assistance to those entering the job market and to employers. The theoretical underpinnings to vocational choice have evolved as part of the search to understand the complexity of influences, which might impact upon an individual's choice. This chapter seeks firstly to elucidate the changing ideas about occupational choice since the early 20th century. It will outline the various theories that have evolved to try to explain why and how individuals come to choose a particular career.

Understanding why and how individuals make particular career choices has been approached from a number of perspectives. As Super (1981) states, the academic discipline from which the researcher comes will influence how they approach the issue and the kind of questions they ask. Psychologists working on occupations have typically been interested in the role of aptitudes, interests, or personality, or in some instances, in combinations of these abilities and traits. Sociologists have tended to be concerned with social class and social mobility. Economists have dealt with financial determinants; educators have been interested in the role of education. Only rarely, until recently, have multi-disciplinary approaches and data been used. The following discussion attempts to outline the contributions of sociology and psychology to our understanding of the complex process of vocational choice.

Gothard (1997) asserts that whilst the disciplines of Psychology and Sociology have contributed most to the study of the individual and his/her place in society, it is Psychology which, because of its emphasis on the individual, has been more influential. The Psychological perspective will be considered first.

2.1.1. **The Psychological Perspective: Trait and Factor Theory**

Psychology was the first discipline to offer direction in attempts to match individuals to occupations. Beginning in the 1920s, Trait and Factor Theory asserted that each individual had fixed innate characteristics, which could be measured (Allport, 1921). Later Trait theorists stated that individuals could be assessed in terms of the talents and abilities they possessed and then matched to an appropriate occupation (Cattell, 1965). Choice could be guided so that individuals took up careers that were compatible with their innate abilities and their interests. This model was part of the 'Scientific Management' school, which sought to introduce a more 'rational' and scientific basis to the structure of work and the processes by which individuals entered the work force. The work of Taylor (1911) in the USA and Fayol (1916) in France were important in developing these ideas.

In the 1970s, Rodger (1971) developed a Trait and Factor working framework, the Seven Point Plan. This was, in essence, a talent matching approach, fitting a person into a matched job according to their abilities, aptitudes and personality. This came to play an important part in vocational guidance in England.

Zohar and Marshall (2001) suggest that the most widely used vocational guidance test in the world is based on Holland's six personality types. These are described in Holland (1958). Holland asserts that there are basically six personality types that can each be linked with a range of jobs best suited to that type of personality. Furthermore, individuals are attracted to others of the same personality type and consequently are likely to be happier if working with others of the same personality type. Holland's types are based on the individuals' interests and abilities. Zohar and Marshall assert that wide ranging research has repeatedly yielded these six personality types, which are:

- The conventional
- The social
- The artistic
- The realistic
- The enterprising

Social personalities form the largest category at thirty percent and there are more women than men in this group.

Characteristics of social personalities are listed as:

They like people and enjoy mixing with them. They are friendly, generous, helpful and kind and find it easy to empathise with others and can also be very persuasive. Holland also describes

them as idealistic, responsible, tactful and warm. He suggests that this type make good teachers and, particularly relevant to this research study, that therapists and counsellors are usually drawn from this personality type.

2.1.2. Personality Development Theories

A perhaps deeper psychological perspective of occupational choice is evident in the work of Roe (1951). Anne Roe was an American clinical psychologist who was one of the first to propose a theory of career choice based upon personality development. Three basic assumptions underlie her thinking: the importance of early childhood experience, how psychic energy is channelled in relation to the Unconscious, and the role of needs in occupational choice. Roe drew on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954) to explain the role that needs play in occupational choice. Childhood experience is seen as having a strong influence on basic needs. Roe proposed that:

- 1) Needs that are routinely satisfied do not become unconscious motivators.
- 2) Higher order needs (such as the need for beauty) will disappear entirely if they are only rarely satisfied, and lower order needs (such as the need for safety) will predominate.

3) Needs that are satisfied after an unusual delay, will become unconscious motivators, under certain conditions.

It could be argued, therefore, that occupational choice may be based on unconscious motivation related to the degree to which basic needs were or were not met in childhood.

Of further significance, in Roe's thinking, are parental attitudes towards their children and their consequences for child-rearing practices. Roe describes child-rearing practices in relation to attitudes to the child as falling within three ranges of polarities or opposite behaviours:

- Firstly, an emotional focus on the child can range from over-protective behaviour to over-demanding behaviour.
- Secondly, parental avoidance of the child can range from active rejection to passive neglect.
- Thirdly, acceptance of the child can range from acceptance in a casual manner, by default, to loving non-interference.

Roe suggests that the child's initial relationship with its parent's influences their later career choice in the direction of careers orientated either towards people, or away from people. In the category 'Towards people' she groups occupations related to

Service, Business Organisation, General Cultural and Arts and Entertainment. In the category 'Not towards people' she includes Technology, Outdoor and Science.

Roe's theory has a strong element of the psychoanalytic with its emphasis on the importance of childhood experience and the role of unconscious motivation. Gothard (1997) states that the theory has stimulated a good deal of research, which has not, for the most part, supported it.

However, Brown and Voyle (1997) argue that Roe's theory provides the only available model for explicating linkages between early childhood experiences, the development of the individual's need structure and vocational behaviour.

Tinsley (1997) argues that consideration and further debate of these issues (the role of parent/child interaction in influencing the need structure and vocational behaviour of the individual) is needed. Also, a vigorous programme of research to investigate the issues that these issues raise.

Tinsley (1997) sees Roe's theory, along with those of Ginzberg, Ginsberg, Axelrad and Hera (1951) and Super (1963) as introducing the developmental model of career behaviour. This

challenged the monopoly of trait and factor theory as a model for understanding vocational behaviour. Theorists such as Ginzberg (1951) and Super (1990) stressed the developmental nature of occupational choice. The developmental model will be considered next.

2.1.3. The Developmental Perspective

Ginzberg et al (1951) are credited with being the first to emphasise the developmental aspects of occupational choice. From this perspective, individuals make choices which reflect the stage of development they are experiencing. This includes their chronological age and mental and intellectual maturity as well as their social development as they experience themselves as members of a social system on both a micro-scale (family network) and macro-scale within the larger social system.

Ginzberg (1951) initially argued that the process of occupational choice crystallised very early in life (age 6-10). However, by 1972, he had come to see it as a lifelong and open-ended process, with individuals trying to keep their options open as long as possible. He did however, make the point that, in Western society, the crucial period of tentative educational and occupational choices coincides with adolescence, when young

people are often in emotional turmoil as they leave childhood and enter into the:

...estate of adulthood (Ginzberg, 1951, p.2).

Therefore, early career choices are being made at a time of transition in physical, emotional and social terms and Ginzberg argued that this is likely to influence decisions made about career choice.

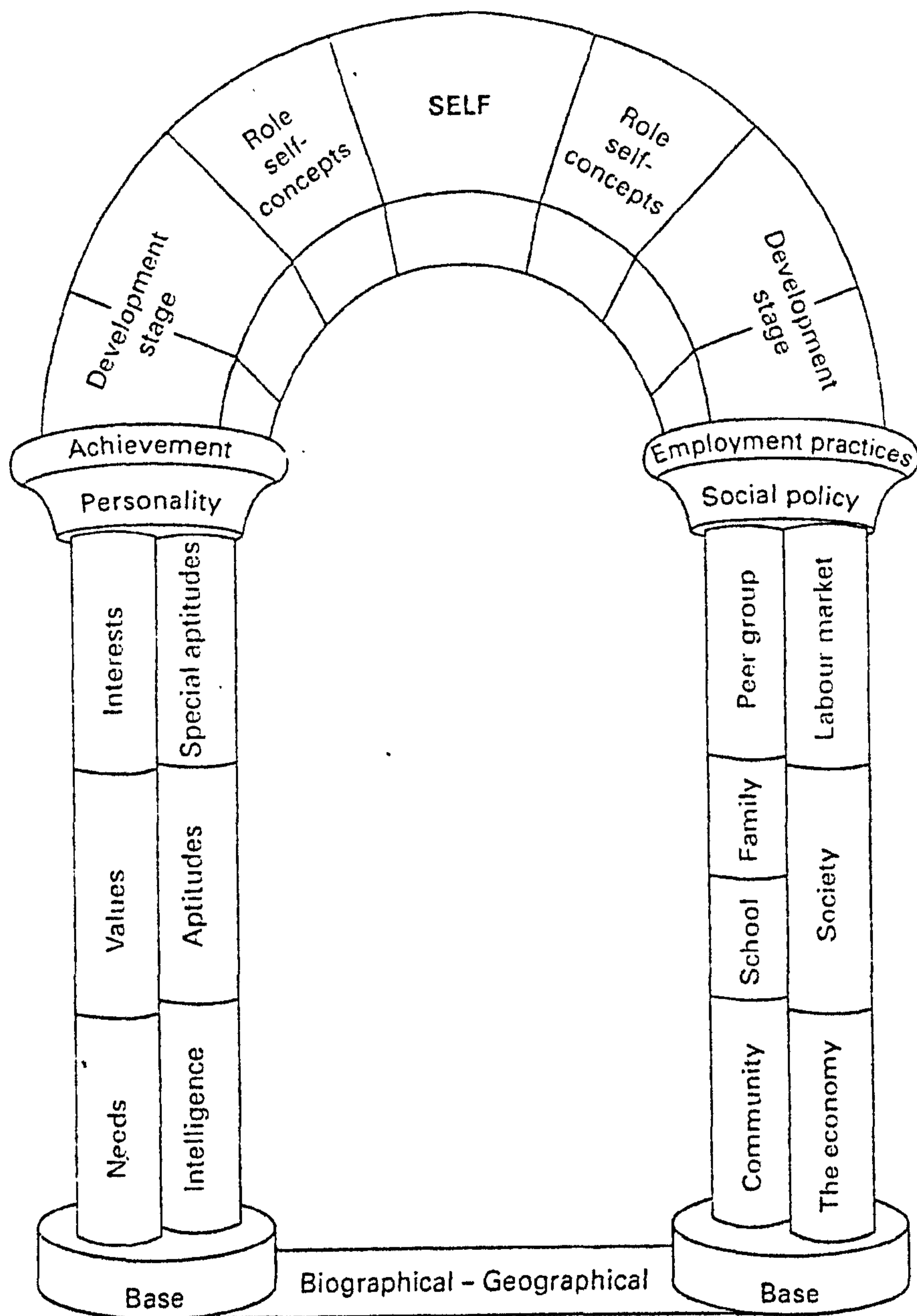
Furthermore, he drew attention to the modern phenomenon of sequential career choices. For centuries, people were educated and trained early in life and were able to make this one opportunity suffice for the whole of their lives. However, by the twentieth century, we had entered an era of such rapid advances in science and technology that the obsolescence of specialized knowledge had become accelerated. Consequently, individuals may have to choose a career not just once, but a number of times in their life span.

Ginzberg (1951) also felt that individuals 'optimise' i.e., they seek to make the best of what they have to offer and what is available. He recognised that the external environment, as well as offering opportunities, also imposes limitations. Consequently, the process of occupational choice has its roots in the interplay of the individual and reality. It is not useful to view it from a

polarised perspective stressing exclusively psychological or societal factors.

Super (1990) has also promoted the developmental perspective of occupational choice in which he developed the Archway Model, which suggests a synthetic structure to the process of occupational choice.

FIGURE 2: THE ARCHWAY DIAGRAM



The archway model

(Super, D. 1990)

In Super's model, the left hand side of the arch represents psychological factors and the right hand side the societal factors. Super stresses that the two columns interact and that:

...lines should be drawn...representing the dynamic interaction of individual and society. The capitals of the

columns represent the integration of each aspect of the individual and of society, whilst the arch is the career. The developmental stage on the left is childhood and adolescence and on the right, young adulthood and maturity. During these stages, the self-concept is developing and forms the keystone of the arch, the self (Super, 1990 p.25).

He describes the cement for the arch as learning theory and in particular, social learning theory (Krumboltz et al, 1976). Thus:

...interactive experiential learning, self-concept and occupations-concept formation take place through the interaction of the individual and the environment (Super, 1990, p.25).

By the 1960s a divergence of approaches to occupational choice had become clear. The primary split was between psychological theories and those that viewed the issue from a sociological perspective. Having outlined the psychological view point, the researcher will now go on to consider the sociological perspective of occupational choice.

2.1.4. The Sociological Perspective: The influence of Social Structures

In contrast to the developmental perspective of psychology, sociologists stressed the over-riding importance of the social structure on individual vocational choice. Whilst the sociological view on work does not reject the existence of the psychological inner self in people's work life, it does suggest that not only are individuals' subjectivity influenced by the existing social

structures and norms, but people's options are often limited by the social structure they are in. Some groups are privileged in terms of their socioeconomic milieu; others are limited by it (Peavey, 1993).

Early research into social class had suggested a strong correlation between social class and occupation (Marris 1964; Jackson & Marsden 1962; Abbott 1971). Later research confirmed these findings, suggesting that social class dimensions influence occupational entry at all levels of education (Kelsall 1972; Gothard 1982). The Dearing Report (1997) took evidence that indicated that social class was still a significant factor in deterring someone from entering higher education. The national statistics for the United Kingdom in 2004 showed that 44 percent of eighteen year olds in England and Wales, whose parents were in higher professional occupations, were studying for a degree or equivalent, compared with thirteen percent whose parents were in routine occupations (Social Trends, 2006). In this research study it was found that all twelve therapists had gone on to Higher Education in one form or another: four had been educated to Doctoral level.

Whilst social class divisions have preoccupied sociologists for many decades, gender and ethnic divisions have become the

focus of attention more recently. Women accounted for 47% of the U.K. workforce in 1992 and 45% in 2002 (Duffield, 2002). Although nearly half of these jobs were part-time, the figure emphasises the growing importance of women's position in the labour market. However, women continue to be underrepresented in certain occupations, particularly in more senior and powerful positions at work (Duffield, 2002). This can be seen both from the perspective of structural constraints which limit women's opportunities in the work force and from the perspective of how their "choices" are shaped and guided through the socialisation process (Roberts, 1996).

Ethnic minorities are similarly under-represented in certain occupations and in more senior and powerful positions (Dustmann & Fabri, 2005).

From a Sociological perspective, the individual's entry into employment has been described in terms of 'opportunity structure' (Roberts 1977,1981,1993,1997). Roberts maintains that, for all individuals, whatever their qualifications, the social structure determines their eventual occupation.

The process of socialisation creates a climate of expectation that is associated with particular educational careers and is

internalised by each individual. The process begins within the family, which passes on to most children traditional sex roles and values related to work. Through the socialisation process, expectations and aspirations are adjusted in line with gender roles, ethnic stereotyping and social class images within the family, the education system and the media.

2.1.5. An Integrative Framework

Having outlined the psychological and sociological positions on vocational choice the researcher will next go on to explore the theory of Krumboltz (1976) which can be seen as bridging the sociological and the psychological perspectives and is therefore an integrative theory. Krumboltz proposed a Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making. Lines (1994) describes the theory as:

...a halfway house between structural and developmental views (Lines, 1994, pp.6-7).

Krumboltz viewed occupational selection as a life long process, which involved many factors. These included learning experiences, which accumulated over time, their interaction with environmental circumstances and the individual's reactions and how they generalised their observations in relation to themselves.

Lines (1994) considers that one of the advantages of Krumboltz's theory lies in its focus on the process of change and what contributes to it. Consequently, it avoids the potential trap of the stereotypical labelling of clients, which can arise, for example, from 'stage' theories of occupational choice. He argues that the model is based upon a well-established theory of how people learn and change, i.e. Social Learning Theory/ Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977).

Krumboltz suggests that four key factors influence occupational choice:

Genetic Factors e.g.

- Musical ability
- Athleticism
- Strength etc.

Environmental Conditions e.g.

- Home and neighbourhood influences
- Macro-economic factors
- Demographic factors etc.

Instrumental and Associative Learning Experiences e.g.

- Being rewarded for certain behaviours or seeing significant others rewarded for such behaviours (associated with this is 'modelling' which in Social Learning terms is how people acquire complex patterns of behaviour).

Task Approach Skills

How people feel about approaching key tasks and the typical behaviour they display e.g.

- Preparing for interviews
- Taking decisions
- Seeking information
- Handling authority, etc.

Arising from these factors are Self-Observation Generalisations, which can be defined as explicit or implicit self-statements evaluating one's own actual or vicarious performance in relation to learned standards. These could include career interests and may be specific or general e.g.

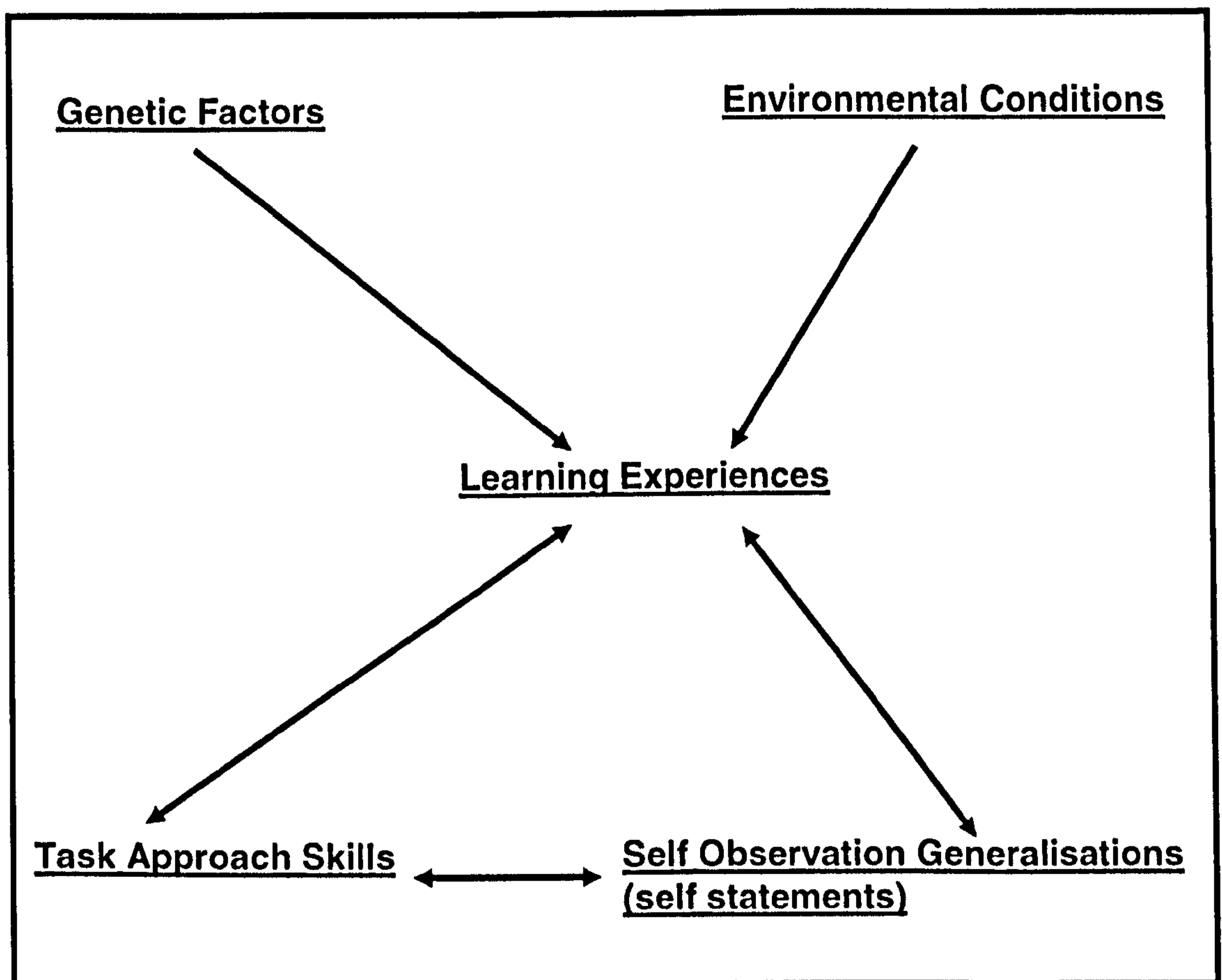
- I want to help people
- I want to be a nurse
- I like to make things

- I can't handle people, etc.

In summary, genetic factors, environmental conditions and how and what people learn will lead to habitual ways of approaching tasks and certain perceptions of one's self in relation to the world of work.

Lines illustrates this in diagrammatic form as follows:

FIGURE 3: LINE'S DIAGRAM



(Lines, S. 1994)

According to Lines, Krumboltz's theory is particularly valuable because it includes all the factors likely to influence career choice. It avoids the deterministic position of sociology by including the individual's way of either dealing with the difficulties presented in a life situation or giving up. It allows for the fact that no two individuals respond to a situation in the same way. This, he suggests, accounts for individuals with similar social situations, making different career choices, rather than both following a predictable path.

2.1.6. Constructivist Views on Career Choice

McMahon (2006) argues that, since its beginning in the early 1900s, career counselling (and therefore career theory) has been steeped in the traditions of the Positivist worldview. Grant and Johnson (2006) suggest that the last century was in fact dominated by a constant search for objective approaches to explain career ventures. (e.g., through the work of Super, Holland etc.). Interest, aptitude, values and personality measures promoted a "test and tell" mentality, with all other approaches and techniques receiving only passing attention.

However, Watson (2006) notes that underlying more recent developments in career theory and counselling has been a

philosophical shift toward Constructivism, the belief that individuals construct their own reality, their own truth. They assert that:

On a philosophical level, the movement from logical positivism to Constructivism mirrors the earlier shift from static to a more dynamic approach in career theory and counselling (Watson, 2006,p.45).

McMahon and Patton (2006) describe Constructivism as a worldview, a term used by Lyddon (1989) as serving the role of organising day-to-day experiential data.

As Reid (2006) notes:

Many established theoretical models seem narrow, overly classified and at odds with the dynamic realities of real lives in a rapidly changing world (Reid, 2006,p.30).

Constructivist approaches are interested in the subjective career as much as in the objective career. Objective career refers to the outward, observable indicators of a person's career path and positions. Subjective career refers to the person's perceptions and feelings about their career and achievements. Objective career has historically been the focus of career theories and research (Williamson, 1972; Dawis Lofquist, 1984; Super, 1990; Holland, 1992). More recent research has focused on the meanings career choices have for the person, i.e., subjective career (Collin & Young, 1986,1992; Amundson, 1994,1995a; Young et al, 1996 Polkinghorne, 1990).

What Constructivist approaches seem to offer is:

...alternate ways to understand the diverse meanings given to behaviour and action. Constructivist, interpretive, narrative and biographical approaches emphasise the need to explore 'meaning' and perceptions of 'truth' from the client's worldview (Reid, 2006,p.30).

Grant and Johnson (2006) note that this perspective bestows a:

... renewed interest and respect for attending to subjective and phenomenological input or explanations for career behaviour (Grant and Johnson, 2006,p.110).

A prominent feature of earlier career theories was the emphasis upon tests and measurements. These aimed to obtain a diagnostic and predictive evaluation of the type of careers to which an individual might be suited. Grant and Johnson (2006) however, argue that objective explanations are not as productive as was previously thought, whereas stories and narratives have a real contribution to make in understanding how people actually come to make career decisions. They suggest that the two sources can usefully be combined:

When incorporated with objective material such as interest, aptitude and personality measures, subjective means can represent a much richer and more accurate method of understanding how people actually engage in career planning (Grant and Johnston, 2006,p.110).

Reid (2006) describes a core condition of constructivist approaches as listening to the client's story:

...it is a listening that believes that the client's understanding of the meaning of events and how they think, feel and construe the impact of them on their lives is the important meaning (Reid, 2006,p.34).

Furthermore, these events are not a series of unrelated occurrences, they reveal a meaningful patterned construing of how the person sees themselves in the world, past, present and future. Young et al (1996) suggest a metaphor:

...of weaving a tapestry and creating a pattern by the interweaving of its threads (Young et al, 1996,p.479).

Richardson (1993) asserts that constructivism reverses the perspective so that rather than just looking at how people fit into the occupational structure, constructivists envision how work fits into people's lives. Constructivist career counselling aims to fashion careers that carry meaning for their lives and impose personal direction on their vocational behaviour.

Savickas (1997a) notes that constructivist metatheory has so far produced three compelling models for expanding and improving career theory and practice. The personal construct, biographical-hermeneutic, and narrative models are described as comfortably and comprehensively meeting the needs of clients who must make career decisions and plan their lives during a time of rapid change in society and its occupations. Cochrane (1997), for example has published a narrative approach to career

counselling that emphasises meaning-making, personal development, and identity by focusing on purpose, passion, and life history. Constructivism is a perspective on career choice that places the person at the centre of the dynamic. In this process the act of choosing is imbued with personal meaning and value. This is a very different perspective to earlier models.

2.1.7. Career Change

Post-industrial society has been characterised by rapid change, the disappearance of many traditional worker roles and the emergence of new career opportunities (Rifkin, 1995; Teixeira & Gomes, 2000). Studies in the United States at the end of the seventies already showed that between 10 and 20 percent of the economically active population had experienced at least one career change in a five-year period (Wrightsman, 1994). The present trend is for career change to become more frequent still. Included in the relatively new careers, is the field of psychotherapy, which has expanded alongside career opportunities within the health services as well as in private practice. In general, new career possibilities have been more accessible to those with a higher standard of education than those with limited educational qualifications (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

Career change is relevant to this study because seven of the twelve research participants came to train as Psychosynthesis therapists after previously practicing another profession. It is interesting to note that five of the research participants were professionally involved in education before their training in Psychosynthesis.

Chen (1998) carried out a meta-analysis of the literature on career theory and career transitions. The literature suggested a variety of reasons why a person might change career. Amongst these was a need to move on to the next phase of his or her life, relative to developmental life stages and progression from one life stage to another (Super, 1990). Career changes may also serve to meet the personal needs of an individual (Roe, 1956, Roe & Lunneborg, 1990). The mutual satisfaction between the person and his or her working environment may also trigger a change of career (Dawis & Loquist, 1984; Dawis, 1996). Similarly, Teixeira & Gomes (2000) found that dissatisfaction with the work involved in the first career was a factor in spurring the individual to change careers. This may stem from an initial choice that is incompatible, at least in part, with personal interests or it may relate to the kind of activity required by the employment, or again, the impact of work requirements on personal or family life. These two possibilities are not necessarily

mutually exclusive, and both can contribute to feelings of dissatisfaction that lead to change. This may lead the individual to make a conscious decision to change to a career that is more intellectually stimulating or more compatible to their personal interests (Tiedeman & O'Hara, 1963, Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990). Influential people such as parents and friends may also have been an influence in the initial career decision. Some first choices are choices of felt obligation. The person may have put aside their own aspirations (still at the formative stage) so as to conform to what society (especially families) expected of them. Likewise, such people may at a later stage, be an influence towards career change (Tiexeira & Gomes, 2000).

Young (2000) suggests that career can involve self-identity, and reflect the individuals' sense of who they are, who they wish to be, and their hopes, dreams, fears and frustrations. Super (1963,1980) suggests that the choice of a profession or university course reveals the attempt to translate a personal self-concept into occupational terms. If this is so, then career change may also be an expression of a shift in perspective of a person's self-identity and reflect their changing hopes for themselves. The researcher suggests that this is more likely to be the case when the individual has a secure financial basis from which to change career, since the change is unlikely to hold

financial threat. The research design included a question intended to reveal whether the career choice and the career changes were reflexively seen as a positive decision, or as a source of any regret for the participants.

Not everyone can afford the 'luxury' of choosing a career or changing to a career that is resonant with his or her core values. Economic necessity, especially when there are family dependents, may have to over-ride one's personal values and interests. There is however, a substantial literature that supports the importance of values in career and other life-role decisions (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Judge & Bretz, 1992). However, a number of theorists and researchers have emphasised how little work has focused on values in contrast to other related constructs, such as interests (Brown, 1996; Brown & Crace, 1996; Feather, 1992). This may be, as Feather surmises, due to the difficulties in conceptualising and measuring values, and in constructing a theoretical bridge between values and actions. A number of writers have stressed that work values are a subset of broader value perspectives (Brown, 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992). Nord et al (1990) offered a definition of work values as:

The end states people desire and feel they ought to be able to realise through working (Nord et al, 1990,p.21).

The researcher suggests that psychotherapy is not a career likely to incur high financial rewards for most practitioners. Other factors are likely to be at work in such a career choice. Life-values may be one such factor.

Research suggests that midlife is a likely time for career change to occur, for it is assumed that people have established themselves by then and are consequently more capable of making changes (Zunker, 1994). This might alternatively be framed as a 'midlife crisis' when a person looks back over their life's achievements and satisfactions and makes a conscious decision to change paths. Teixeira & Gomes (2000) concluded from their research that career change may be at times a recovery of something lost but also a construction or even appropriation of new ways of being.

Kanchier and Unruh (1989a) observed that subjects who made changes tended to see their professional positions as vehicles for self-expression and personal development. On the other hand, individuals who did not change placed greater value on security, power, position and other situational factors such as family responsibilities.

A great deal of research on career development is still based on quantitative analysis of data obtained through self-report instruments designed to measure variables that are supposedly related to the process of career change. (Fouad, 1994; Super, Savickass & Super, 1996; Super, Starishevsky, Matlin & Jordaan, 1963; Swanson, 1992). This research study used the format of life narrative, to allow a qualitative approach to elucidate meanings of career choice and career change of those factors.

Teixeira & Gomes (2000) found that the subjects in their research study had experienced dissatisfaction with their work in the first career. The focus of the data analysis in this research study is to try to identify what those factors might be.

So far a comprehensive range of theories about career choice have been explored. These theories have considered why any individual might make a specific choice of career. There is however a small body of research which has focused on why certain individuals might choose a career in psychotherapy. This is the focus of the next section.

2.2. Choosing a Career as a Psychotherapist

A small number of studies have explored the reasons why individuals might choose a career as a psychotherapist (Menninger 1957; Ford 1963; Henry, Sims & Spray 1971,1973;Harris 1975; Racusin, Abramowitz & Winter 1981; Dryden & Spurling [Eds] 1989; Sussman 1992, 1995). However, the notion of choosing is in itself a point of contention in the literature. Some researchers, e.g. Wheelis (1956) suggest that a psychotherapist cannot really be aware of 'what' they have chosen until they are well into mid-career. Wheelis (1956) examined the largely unconscious motivations that bring clinicians into the profession, such as the need for emotional connection and intimacy, and concluded that the initial 'choice' is far from an informed conscious decision. It is only after many years of schooling, training and financial and emotional investment that a therapist is able to see realistically what he or she has truly chosen.

Sussman (1995) came to a similar conclusion:

I had a strong feeling that what had felt like choice at age 22 when I first began my training was shaped by powerful forces out of my awareness. As I approached 40 years of age, I saw myself as making my first free choice regarding my occupation (Sussman, 1995 p.317).

Most of the research into who becomes a therapist and why, supports the notion of the role of unconscious motivation. (Menninger 1957; Ford 1963; Henry et al 1971,1973; Harris 1975; Racusin; Dryden & Spurling 1989; Sussman 1992,1995).

The awareness of the unconscious nature of many of our so-called 'choices' has developed from the theoretical precepts of Freudian psychology. However, Sussman (1995) asserts that whilst Freudian trained psychotherapists focused on the unconscious motivations of their patients, the unconscious motivations underlying their own choices were disregarded in the psychoanalytic literature.

Sussman's (1995) explanation of this apparent paradox is that it stems from a narrow conception of the therapeutic role, which can be traced to the Freudian view of the analyst as a mirror or blank screen (both of which are inanimate objects). In this sense the supposed detachment and objectivity of the practitioner have deflected attention from the therapist as being of interest or relevance. Sussman points out that this state of affairs cannot be 'blamed' on Freud himself, as Freud assiduously explored his own unconscious thought and his pathological tendencies, making them explicit in "The Interpretation of Dreams" (1954).

Sussman asserts that few other analysts have applied the same honest self-appraisal to their own motivations. However, the researcher challenges this perspective since psychoanalytic therapists are required to undergo a full analysis themselves as part of their training. This process would facilitate an understanding of unconscious motivation in their own lives, including their 'choice' of career as a psychotherapist.

Sussman does go on however, to suggest that since the mid-1980s, interest in the lives of psychotherapists has grown as a two-person model of psychotherapy has gained acceptance. (Goldberg 1986; Guy 1987; Kottler 1986). The psychoanalytic literature has moved away from a patient-centred focus and toward viewing the analytic situation increasingly as a *two-person situation*, involving significant input from both participants (McLaughlin 1981; Stone 1961; Wolstein 1959). This recognises the inevitable subjectivity of the therapist and acknowledges that powerful unconscious forces influence both participants.

As Sussman is himself a trained therapist, in the psychoanalytic method, this perspective is expected. The therapist is seen to play a significant part in the therapeutic encounters with the operation of transference and counter-transference dynamics.

From this perspective, the personal history of the therapist is likely to play a part in the dynamic and it is therefore important that the practitioner has brought his/her issues and psychological process in to conscious awareness during their professional development. In "A Curious Calling"(1992) Sussman suggests that both the patient and the practitioner have their own motives for entering into the therapeutic relationship and that these motives will inevitably shape all the subsequent interventions.

It is pertinent at this point therefore to discuss the literature that has explored the characteristics of psychotherapists in order to understand why they 'chose' the profession. A good deal of the research into this subject has been carried out by people trained in psychoanalytic psychology, it is hardly surprising therefore, that they take a psychoanalytic perspective.

Particular interest has focused on the family of origin and the experience of the psychotherapist as a child. Menninger (1956), himself a psychoanalytically trained psychiatrist, defined work as one of the highest forms of sublimation, a deflection to a constructive use of energy, arising originally in connection with hostile feelings and a destructive purpose.

He acknowledged that socio-economic factors were a reality that constrained career choice for many working people but that the

lucky individuals who appeared to have free choice were constrained and influenced by other forces. He believed that therapists experienced emotional rejection in their families of origin. Furthermore, that they project this history in their interest in lonely, eccentric and unloved people. As such a self-view is unbearably painful it is repressed and therapists experience on going self-healing through their professional functioning.

Ford (1963) also psychodynamically trained, collected data on trainee psychiatrists over a period of 15 years and drew upon the autobiographical accounts of 25 male psychiatric residents over a 3-year period of teaching seminars. He emphasised the unconscious nature of their motivations in becoming therapists.

He argued that their 'choice' arose out of a need to find their own identity. External success in other roles had been unable to satisfy this need.

Ford noted a pattern of dominating mothers who were central to the therapist's emotional and physical well-being and fathers who were passive and non-nurturant. There was strong identification with the mother who was seen as understanding, helping, or ministering to the needs of others. Ford notes a

seeming paradox in their perceptions of their mothers. Whilst some of them developed a degree of awareness in later life of the 'true' motivations underlying their mother's behaviour as placing heavy demands and expectations upon their sons, this did not seem to change their perceptions of her as kind and helpful.

Ford argues, from a psychoanalytic perspective, that underlying the choice of a career in psychotherapy are primitive identifications and objects from Pre-oedipal and Oedipal years. Of these, involvement with the mother and with the mothering functions seems most common:

Commonly reported were intense affective experiences from the Oedipal period, which, viewed retrospectively, appear to have constituted severe threats to the ego's integrity (Ford, 1963 p.482).

These complex forces are partly worked through during adolescence and early years to the ultimate commitment to medicine. A second, often prolonged working through process occurs within medicine prior to commitment to psychiatry. Rather like Menninger, Ford suggests that the training itself provides psychological insights and personal and emotional growth for the trainee:

Thus they are led to a formal commitment to psychotherapy both as a career and as a resolution of inner need (Ford, 1963 p.476).

Burton (1970,1972, 1975) conducted an oral history survey of a small sample of therapists and qualitatively analyzed their reflections. Like Menninger and Ford he felt that experience within the family sensitizes the therapist to emotional pain and provides powerful personal motivation for career choice. In this way, the professional role was a way to meet the therapists own psychological and emotional needs. Burton felt that in some senses this was dysfunctional as it unconsciously restricted the therapist's efforts at conflict resolution to the therapeutic encounters, at the expense of personal relationships.

Henry, Sims and Spray (1971, 1973) researched the origins and practices of the four core mental health professionals in the USA: psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and psychiatric social workers. They used two distinct but related approaches involving different samples and different instruments. The first approach was intensive-300 interviews with mental health professionals, 100 each from Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City. The second approach was extensive-a survey by mailed questionnaire, with the target sample of the total population of mental health professionals in the metropolitan communities of Chicago, Los Angeles and New York.

They looked at the four training systems that produce psychotherapists. They studied the ways in which recruits enter the respective systems of training, how they choose and select among the offerings in each system and how they emerge at the end as psychotherapists. Like Ford (1963) they differentiated between an initial choice of professional field and a later choice of professional speciality, which occurred after several years of formal training. The practice of the majority of these psychotherapists was based on psychodynamic, particularly psychoanalytic concepts.

Henry et al (1973) confirmed that the family relationships of therapists' family of origin were stressful. They cited physical illness, difficulties in expressing feelings and adolescent struggles over independence. They noted that such a background often appears to foster interpersonal sensitivity and a desire to understand human relations. However, unlike the previous researchers, they did not believe that these experiences were sufficient to account for the choice of a mental health career. Henry et al state they found nothing in the early family experiences that would account for their specific choice of mental health work.

Family background was deemed to be relevant, but for different reasons. The mental health professionals studied came in highly over-represented numbers from Jewish backgrounds, especially the male psychoanalysts. They were also from urban settings. The characteristic of urbanism reflects the pattern of Jewish communities to live in metropolitan communities.

Also there was a pattern of parental stock with Eastern European ethnic ties. This corresponds to the waves of Jews emigrating from Eastern Europe and settling in metropolitan centres in the USA. In an important sense, the professionals were a culturally homogeneous group but also a culturally marginal one. They tended to have a bi-cultural experience.

In more personal terms, the subjects also shared other characteristics. They tended to have rejected parental political belief systems in favour of more liberal positions. The researchers described them as 'religious apostates'. Also, they were socially mobile, a fact describing their occupation but also describing an additional aspect of the separation from the political and religious beliefs of their families. The researchers described the professionals as coming from a:

...narrowly circumscribed sector of the social world, representing a special combination of social marginality in

ethnic, religious and political terms (Henry et al, 1973, p.162).

This was seen as a key factor in distinguishing the psychotherapists.

The importance of family background was in transmitting:

...values, attitudes, and beliefs associated with ethnicity, class position, and religious and political orientations; and it demonstrated the extraordinary similarity in social origins of those who enter the four mental health professions (Henry et al, 1973, p.193).

The researchers suggest that many factors contribute to the strong link between the eastern European Jewish cultural tradition and the profession of psychotherapy, but they are all undoubtedly associated with the early secularisation of the core beliefs of this ethos.

Thus the emphasis on ritual rather than dogma and the strong accent on intellectual understanding – both parts of the cultural tradition of eastern European Jews- made them receptive to an intellectual, non- transcendental approach to understanding human behaviour, and their early acceptance of psychological determinism, with the result that they were early attracted to psychotherapy, particularly psychoanalysis (Henry et al, 1971, p.75).

It is in this context, the researchers argue, that the emphasis on the dynamics of early family interaction should be understood.

Combining the findings of the two pieces of research (1971, 1973) the researchers found that increasingly the origins of career choice:

...most often begins in family situated early religiocultural experiences that progresses selectively towards a common concept of a psychodynamic paradigm for the explanation of all behaviours- a paradigm that guides their choices and behaviours as they emerge from the training years into the practice of psychotherapy (Henry et al, 1973, p.162).

Interestingly, the researchers suggested that psychotherapists were also marked out by their superior intellectual development, which was evident from childhood. Parallel to this, they showed a pattern of early academic success.

The attraction of a high status position seemed also to be a motivator. As analysts have higher status than other mental health professionals and along with psychiatrists, require medical training before they can go on to train as psychotherapists (in the USA) so their motivation in occupational choice, seems to be linked to the higher status gained by becoming an analyst.

In 1975, Harris, a trained child psychotherapist, explored the childhood experiences of therapists who gained a reputation as particularly effective in treating children. Their effectiveness was judged by their referral to the research study by prominent local psychologists and the fact that they had survived practice for several years. Harris used a modified form of Henry et al's

intensive interview methodology to explore childhood recollections of a small sample of American child therapists (eleven therapists: four female and seven male). She concluded that emotional deprivation in childhood characterized these therapists. The therapists perceived their relationships with their parents primarily in negative terms. Their parents were reportedly unaware or unresponsive to their emotional needs. As children, the therapists searched for other adults to serve as role models with whom they could find emotional acceptance. Harris suggests that these childhood deprivations facilitated their capacity to empathise with their patients and so motivated their choice of career at an unconscious level and enhanced their professional work.

Racusin et al (1981) carried out research designed to bridge the clinical and empirical literature by:

...generating dynamic formulations from both qualitative as well as quantitative data (Racusin, 1981, p.272).

They used the intensive interview format of Henry et al but subjected the data to more expressly psychodynamic and family process analyses. Again the sample was small – fourteen therapists: seven male and seven female therapists. Using a structured series of ten questions they enquired into the family

of origin and the possible roots of the therapist's eventual occupational choice.

They concluded that:

- A) A lack of nurturance experienced by future therapists in their families of origin generated feelings of rage (Buss, 1961) and ambivalence towards interpersonal intimacy.
- B) The choice of psychotherapy as a career represents a defence against that helplessness by ensuring control over intimacy.

Racusin et al suggested that the lack of intimacy had various sources. For example, all fourteen families had at least one member with a physical or behavioural difficulty involving presumed psychogenic factors. Fathers had the highest incidence of physical complaints, followed by mothers and therapists themselves. Psychological difficulties were even more numerous.

Racusin considered these physical and behavioural conditions as:

...manifestations of conflicts surrounding intimacy in therapist's family of origin (Racusin, 1981, p274).

Racusin asserts that the need for physical care may lock the family into one dominant mode of expressing intimacy, which effectively precludes the reciprocal expression of emotionality:

The stricken person is the recipient and is not generally expected to reciprocate. The expression of intimacy in this setting may therefore be construed as developmentally primitive, as it parallels the uni-directional provision of nurturance by parents of very young children. At the same time, chronic physical illness allows the family to circumvent the need to negotiate intimacy and to express emotionality in a more mature manner (Racusin, 1981, p.274).

Racusin et al make the link that psychotherapy is likewise a non-reciprocal relationship, in which intimacy can be experienced, with the significant difference that the therapist now wields the power.

Alcoholism and child abuse constituted twelve of the thirty-eight psychological problems reported within the therapist's families of origin. Racusin notes that both syndromes frequently entail physical abuse (Adam, 1976). Physical abuse understandably links to ambivalence regarding physical intimacy, as the experience of intimacy in this context may have been literally painful, potentially fatal and very frightening.

Therapists were also frequently enmeshed in their parents malfunctioning relationships. Half of the therapists had a family role of satisfying emotional needs of family members, providing parenting in the form of responsibility for family functions or nurturing. Most of them had done this for at least one parent.

Three played the role of counsellor or mediator, which entailed being aware of the family's emotional life.

Like Harris (1975) Racusin et al suggest that emotional stress during childhood also served to sensitise the therapists to the pain of clients, so that negative experiences from their own childhood became a positive resource in their professional role.

Dryden and Spurling (1989) invited ten therapists to write an autobiographical account of their personal history and process of becoming a psychotherapist. This was followed by a questionnaire from which the researchers summarised the experiences of the ten as a group and in comparison to earlier research studies. Unlike earlier research the therapists were not predominantly from a psychoanalytic or psychodynamic background (one was psychoanalytic and one was psychodynamic). Two described themselves as Rogerian, two as Humanistic, two as Cognitive, one as Systems and one as 'Other'.

The researchers felt that their subjects were not:

...ordinary, run-of the-mill psychotherapists (Dryden and Spurling, 1989, p.220).

They were established and prominent therapists who had published, between them, an impressive volume of work and who were:

...passionately committed to The Art and Science of Psychotherapy (Dryden and Spurling, 1989, p.220).

The study produced rather different findings about the influence of the family of origin. Racusin et al (1981) had suggested that future psychotherapists often learned to serve as emotional buffers between parents, as well as siblings, actively facilitating communication, compromise and family harmony. Henry et al identified the role of caretakers, parentified children, who became skilled at sensing and satisfying the emotional needs of both parents and siblings.

Dryden and Spurling found that although there were some similarities with these descriptions, several differences were apparent. The ten psychotherapists described the marital relationship in their family of origin in rather positive terms, with only one indicating that the marriage was 'poor'. The authors state:

It would appear, from both the survey results and the individual biographies, that the marital relationships of the historical parents in our sample were at least minimally functional, if not entirely successful (Dryden and Spurling, 1989, p.221).

There is also little mention of serving as a buffer or family arbitrator in the autobiographies, even though most were first borns on whom this responsibility would have been likely to fall.

Contrary to the findings of Racusin et al (1981) who reported that virtually all their sample had at least one physically or emotionally disabled family member in their household of origin, only half of Dryden and Spurling's group indicated the same. Whilst two were saddled with care-taking responsibilities for family members, the rest apparently came from homes where they were permitted greater independence and self-expression. Although one (Thorne) had a highly developed, even burdensome sense of empathy from an early age:

...many seemed less pre-occupied with the emotional needs of family and friends, freeing them to interact with the environment in a more creative, explorative manner (Dryden and Spurling, 1989, p.225).

Sussman (1992) explored what he called the 'psychological make-up' of psychotherapists as well as the 'hidden aims' that practitioners may bring to the role. His interviews with clinicians revealed certain personality trends, which he considered might contribute to a sustained motivation to practice psychotherapy.

His research discovered that many therapists grew up playing the role of caretaker, go-between, parentified child, or burden-

bearer within their families of origin. Whilst therapists are often expected to exemplify good mental health and stability, Sussman found that many people were drawn to the profession precisely because they had experienced emotional difficulties of their own.

Sussman's later research focused on what sustained therapists in a career that he described as 'A Perilous Calling' (Sussman 1995). His investigations into the lives of ten senior psychotherapists explored how they had managed to avoid burnout and indeed thrive on their professional calling. One important dimension of therapeutic practice that emerged was that childhood experiences in the family of origin often provided the:

...raw material that was later shaped through professional maturation into sophisticated skill (Sussman, 1995, p.314).

The therapists described these experiences as having a profound effect on their interest in psychotherapy practice and they were identified as forming the core motivation to their career choice, their general psychological mindedness, and for their on-going passion for the work.

DiCaccavo's more recent research (2002) into the backgrounds and motivations of those choosing a career as counselling psychologists, adds something to the findings of earlier research.

She notes the findings of earlier research into the backgrounds of psychotherapists as identifying parent-child role-inversion, or parentification, typically being placed in the role of family caretaker (Burton 1994; Fussell & Bonney 1990). Similarly, research into the attachment patterns of clinical psychologists found that compulsive care giving was the most predominant insecure style of the group (Leiper & Casares 2000).

DiCaccavo notes that although the importance of early experiences of psychotherapists and clinical psychologists is being increasingly recognised, those of counselling psychologists have yet to be explored. Her research therefore looked at the early experiences of counselling psychologists compared with those who had not chosen to work as caring professionals. Her control group was taken from students in a School of Art and Design.

The initial results found that students who choose to pursue a career in counselling psychology reported more parentification, more parental control, more self-efficacy towards helping, and lower levels of parental care. Subsequent tests seemed to qualify this finding, and to suggest gender differences.

A lack of Mother Care was found to relate to Parentification for all female participants, whereas greater Mother Care was related to Parentification for all male participants. Earlier research had suggested that it is important to consider parentification on a continuum with extreme under-functioning or infantilization at one end, and destructive or over-functioning on the other (Jurkovic 1997). Some researchers (Cade 1989; Lackie 1983) have argued that under-responsibility and over-responsibility are flip sides of the same phenomenon. DiCaccavo suggests that men may become parentified through the route of under-responsibility:

By being more cared for by their mothers, men run the risk of feeling guilt and obligation, which serves to keep individuals enmeshed in family systems. They may seek to find an outlet for their own need to care for others by becoming professional helpers (DiCaccavo, 2002, p.470).

DiCaccavo observes that what is not clear at this stage is the link between parentification patterns and gender specific responses.

As DiCaccavo states:

Why females are associated with mothers who appear to have abdicated their responsibilities, as a result of their own parentification, whereas males are associated with mothers who used compulsive caring strategies to deal with their parentification (DiCaccavo, 2002, p470).

Gender differences also emerged when considering Self-efficacy to care as a predictor of Parentification. For women, greater Care

Efficacy was associated with higher Parentification scores, whereas for men, Care Efficacy was not a significant predictor of Parentification. DiCaccavo concludes that this difference is likely to be related to the different routes to parentification. Women who have not had their own parenting needs met as children, are likely to take on the parenting role at an early age and to develop a view of themselves as good at caring for others and being responsive to their needs (Self-efficacy). On the other hand, men who have been compulsively cared for by their parents are:

Denied the opportunity to care for others and thus may be less likely to perceive themselves as able to respond to the needs and distress of others (DiCaccavo, 2002, p.471).

Whatever the origin, both of these processes are likely to lead to an inappropriate expectation of the child to meet the needs of the parent and this has an adverse effect on the child's development (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973).

DiCaccavo concludes that the research highlights the need for counselling psychologists to take care of themselves professionally.

Individuals who, from an early age, have had their own care needs neglected are likely to have learned that caring for others is more important than caring for themselves, They are likely to find it difficult to ask others for help and thus risk becoming burnt out (DiCaccavo, 2002, p.471).

It is important therefore, that support systems are built in to the professional environment and that opportunities are available for such professionals to unburden themselves. Furthermore, it is important that in training, counselling psychologists should be required to undergo personal therapy themselves, so that they can have the opportunity to bring their unconscious motivations into awareness. DiCaccavo notes however, that mental health service cultures may deny opportunities for students and workers to discuss fears and needs, instead adopting a macho-stance to psychologist –client issues (Vincent 1996).

It has become clear that unconscious motivation has been highlighted by most of the research, as playing a key role in the choice to become a psychotherapist. This is not surprising, because, as Sussman notes, Psychoanalysis has had a good deal to say about the general question of the role of unconscious factors in the choice of occupation:

...it is generally assumed that even the most intellectual and sublime activities are powered, at least in part, by primitive instinctual strivings (Sussman, 1992, p.7).

The central theme to emerge from these earlier explorations of the motivation of psychotherapists, particularly in research conducted by psychoanalytically trained psychologists, is that of

the “Wounded Healer”. It suggests in some ways, a deficit motivation.

2.2.1. Choosing and Unconscious Motivation

An emphasis on the role of the unconscious might be anticipated, since most of the research into the occupational choice of psychotherapists has been carried out by researchers with a psychoanalytic or psychodynamic background. It might also be expected that the role of Transference and Counter-Transference in the therapeutic relationship be seen as particularly significant.

In Psychosynthesis, the powerful influence of the unconscious on behaviour is also acknowledged but the role of Transference and Counter-Transference is seen as less significant than in psychoanalytic therapy. Psychosynthesis theory suggests that Transference may well come into operation in the therapeutic dynamic, but that it is not inevitable. Furthermore, it may not always be necessary to work with the Transference unless it is acting as an obstacle to progress. It is considered that usually the Transference will dissolve quite naturally as the client begins to feel more in control of their life and as the therapist comes to be seen in a more realistic light as a human being with their own strengths and weaknesses (Whitmore, 1991). Issues of

Transference and Counter-Transference would be addressed within supervision sessions if they were felt to be operating in the therapy sessions.

Barnett (2007), writing from the perspective of a psychoanalytic therapist, suggests that if the motivations for choosing this field of work remain split off in the unconscious, there may be a real danger that clients may be used in some way by therapists, rather than be helped by them.

One such danger might be an unwillingness to challenge or interpret the client's patterns for fear of provoking an angry response or of losing clients. Earlier research by Storr (1980) found that experiences of loss, rejection and loneliness in the therapist's childhood, might underlie such reluctance to challenge.

Secondly, therapists might avoid emotional work, or keep such work at arms length by the defence of intellectualising.

Thirdly, if their own dependency needs were not met in childhood, therapists might fear such needs emerging in therapeutic work with their clients. One way of avoiding this might be to engage only in short-term work. An alternative

unconscious response might be to prolong a client's dependence on them by:

...responding only as a rather idealised mother figure, in an attempt to heal their own insecurities (Barnett, 2007, p.260).

Further implications might be incurred if the therapist has unresolved issues around an unconscious maternal identification. If this is the case then the therapist might find separation from the client difficult.

The therapist's own 'shadow' is another perilous area if it remains out of awareness. Psychoanalytic theory frames the 'shadow' as part of the concept of Narcissism; the dark, disowned side of the personality that the individual may find it hard, if not impossible, to acknowledge. In the therapeutic dynamic, a therapist may only be able to allow positive, self-affirming mirroring from the client if they themselves have been unable to explore their own shadow. This obviously has damaging consequences for the client.

For all of these reasons, it is important that the therapist comes to understand his/her reasons for choosing such a career. This understanding is likely to evolve over a period of time and can be facilitated, as Barnett (2007) suggests through a rigorous and in-depth training, along with personal therapy.

The researcher suggests that the Psychosynthesis model adds a further dimension to this dynamic. Assagioli, the founder of Psychosynthesis, felt that Freudian interpretations of motivation offered only a partial explanation of behaviour. He agreed with Freud on the powerful influence of the unconscious on behaviour. However, he differentiated between different aspects of the unconscious.

He termed Freud's 'unconscious' as the 'lower unconscious', suggesting that the human psyche also operated in terms of a middle unconscious (that which is currently out of awareness but easily available to the conscious mind, equating to Freud's pre-conscious) and the Higher Unconscious. This is a major difference between Freud and Assagioli who challenged the Freudian view that altruistic, inspirational, and creative acts derived from the sublimation of basic drives into more socially acceptable behaviour.

Assagioli argued that human beings can be motivated by 'higher' energies (those emanating from the Higher Unconscious) as well as lower impulses. Indeed, he went on to argue that the 'driven' behaviour of sub-personalities needs also to be understood in terms of 'top-down' influences from the Higher Unconscious. He

argued that sub-personalities have at their heart transpersonal qualities such as love; peace, joy etc. and that exploration of the behaviour of sub-personalities can reveal the transpersonal quality, which, if released, can help the individual live their lives in ways that meet their needs in constructive rather than destructive patterns.

From a Psychosynthesis perspective, occupational choice can often be understood in terms of a striving towards Life Purpose. From the perspective of transpersonal psychology the search for meaning is central to our lives (Frankl, 1970) and occupational choice is often an important part of our striving to find and fulfil our sense of life purpose. This is not to dismiss the influence of the 'shadow' side of our personalities but it does acknowledge the equal importance of the 'light', which is absent in Freudian psychology. The link between life purpose and occupational choice did infact emerge from the data and is discussed in detail later in the thesis.

2.2.2. Career as a Calling

An entirely different perspective can be seen in the work of Hall and Chandler (2005). They draw upon the earlier ideas of Everett Hughes (1958) who delineated two different perspectives of career choice: the objective and the subjective. The first

vantage point is from the outside perspective of the person, where career evaluation might be judged in terms of income, promotion, status etc. The second is the subjective perspective which values job satisfaction, self-awareness etc.

Hall and Chandler (2005) argue that from a subjective perspective, some individuals experience their deepest forms of satisfaction when they experience work as "a calling." They define a calling as work that a person perceives as his/her purpose in life.

They note that:

Whilst earlier notions of a calling were linked to divine inspiration to do morally responsible work (Weber, 1958, 1963), more recently it has moved from a religious connotation toward a broader secular view characterised by an individual doing work out of a strong sense of inner direction. Work that would contribute to a better world ([Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Lips-Wiersma, 2002a, 2002b; Wrzesniewski, 2003]. Hall & Chandler, 2005,p.160).

Hall and Chandler emphasise that a sense of calling is a highly individual, subjective experience, which allows for:

*...a self-relevant view of meaning
(Hall & Chandler, 2005,p.16, quoting Dobrow, 2004,p.20).*

That is to say that, the sense of meaning relates directly to perceptions the person holds of themselves. Researchers are currently exploring how to characterise the key features of a

calling, and how to distinguish it from separate, but similar constructs. Particularly pertinent is the concept of a 'protean' career orientation. This is characterised by the individual being (a) self-directed and (b) driven internally by their own values (Hall, 2002; Hall & Briscoe, 2004). Shepherd (1984) describes people with a protean career orientation as being motivated to follow their own distinctive 'path with a heart'. This is a path that expresses one's unique human potential and facilitates growth. What differentiates a protean motivation from a 'calling' is that the protean career may not necessarily involve a belief that one's career is to serve a purpose. As Hall and Chandler (2005) suggest, a 'calling' entails both having a protean career orientation and being conscious of having a strong sense of purpose. They go on to argue that:

As the processes of self-exploration (secular) and discernment (religious) suggest, to have an awareness of one's calling requires that the person have a clear sense of identity, or self-awareness. The individual with a clear sense of identity has clarity with respect to his values, life purpose, and aptitudes or gifts (Hall & Chandler, 2005,p.163).

The concept of career choice as a 'calling' does not negate the contributions of some of the earlier theories about career choice but rather adds a special dimension to the choices made by certain individuals. As Arthur et al (1999) and Drucker (1993) argue, one cannot dismiss the possible influence of socio-

economic, demographic, economic, or socio-political trends that either facilitate or hinder career choice. The realisation of a 'calling' may be subject to situational constraints. One could argue that a 'calling' is a luxury that:

...Only those born to privilege can experience (Hall & Chandler, 2005,p.167).

However, the dynamics appear rather more complex than they might seem on the surface. Hall & Chandler (2005) argue that one's socio-economic background could work either to facilitate or obstruct the pursuit of a calling. On the one hand, those afforded the luxury of not having to work for a living might consequently have the opportunity to make a choice that reflected their inner values and sense of self. On the other hand, financial privilege might result in a person never feeling the need to explore what truly inspires them in their life and therefore never realising that they have a 'calling'.

The researcher suggests that the notion of career as a 'calling' has particular relevance to the context of transpersonal psychotherapy, and that this provides a very different perspective to that of the 'wounded healer' articulated in psychodynamic research. It introduces a transpersonal perspective to the issue of career choice. Psychosynthesis, as a

psychospiritual model, emphasises the search for meaning and purpose in one's life as a critical life task.

3. CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This research study focused primarily on the question of:

Why a psychotherapist might choose to train in a particular therapeutic model. The specific model was Psychosynthesis, which is located within the transpersonal school of psychology and counselling.

The study also went on to explore the act of choosing from a Psychosynthetic perspective.

The researcher makes explicit her ontological and epistemological perspective, as these have direct implications for the research questions chosen and the methodology employed, which took an Interpretivist/Constructivist perspective.

3.2. Interpretivism

Guba (1994) uses the concept of "paradigm" to describe the researcher's interpretive framework. This is the net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggested that at the most general level, four major paradigms structure qualitative research: positivist and post-positivist, constructivist-

interpretive, critical (Marxist, emancipatory), and feminist-poststructural. Writing over a decade later, however, Guba and Lincoln (2008) add to these four paradigms the participatory/cooperative paradigm, which they describe as

An excellent example ...of the hermeneutic elaboration so embedded in (their) own view, constructivism (Guba and Lincoln, 2008, p.192).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest that qualitative research has had a complex history. It has meant different things to different people at different moments. They identify eight such historical moments across the twentieth century, and spilling over into the present time. The eight historical moments begin with the supremacy of Positivism, (1900-1950) followed by Post-positivism (the Modernist or Golden Age, in their terminology, 1950-1970); Blurred Genres (1970-1986); the Crisis of representation (1986-1990) the Methodologically Contested Present (2000-2004) and the Fractured Future (2005 onwards). They go on to acknowledge, however that:

...these moments are somewhat artificial; they are socially constructed, quasi-historical, and overlapping conventions. Some of them (or all) are still operating now even though they originated many years ago (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008,p.3).

A central facet of this view of the history of qualitative research could be described as the unravelling and unpicking of the

'certainties' of the positivist paradigm. Increasingly, the privileged position of the researcher has been challenged, the taken-for granted status of what might constitute 'knowledge' has been questioned and the ways of collecting data have expanded to include more creative methods.

The researcher identifies herself within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm. Ontologically, Interpretivism holds that knowledge of the social world can only exist through the subjective consciousness of actors. Knowledge is not some external property outside in the world that exists in its own right. Knowledge of something is always subjective. The aim of social research is to investigate the meanings and interpretations of social actors in specific situations. The traditional routes of Interpretivism are to be found in hermeneutics and Verstehen traditions of sociology or the phenomenological traditions of Schutz. They arose in the reactions of neo-Kantian German historians and sociologists (i.e., Dilthey (1976), Rickert, (1922) Windleband, (1916) Simmel (1904), Weber (1930) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to the then dominant philosophies of Positivism (and later, Logical Positivism). At the heart of the dispute was the claim that the human sciences (Geisteswissenschaften) were fundamentally different in nature and purpose from the natural sciences.

As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) point out:

From an Interpretivist point of view, what distinguishes human (social) action from the movement of physical objects is that the former is inherently meaningful. To say that human action is meaningful is to claim either that it has a certain intentional content that indicates the kind of action it is and/or that what an action means can be grasped only in terms of the system of meanings to which it belongs (Fay, 1996; Outhwaite, 1975, cited in (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p.191).

Thus, actions need to be interpreted in their context, this context includes the situation, culture, shared understandings, relationships etc. The meaning is not inherent in the action but socially constructed, inter-subjective as well as subjective.

Consequently, a smile can signal many different intentions, from compliance, to flirtation, to obsequiousness or even insolence. Equally, the meaning put upon the smile can be interpreted in many different ways by the observer, regardless of the motivation of the actor. This research study was infact an exploration of meaning. What meaning did the choice made by the research participants have for them?

This perspective of course takes a different stance from earlier positivist claims as to the nature of scientific research.

Interpretivists challenge the assumptions about the possibility of 'objective' knowledge and positivist methods to investigate it.

Other writers have taken this challenge to further lengths. Wilber

(2001) for instance, argues that what can be known, and how one may arrive at that knowledge can be classified into three areas. These are the sensory (through the body and the five senses), the symbolic or the mental (through the mind) and the contemplative (through the spirit). These are what Wilber terms the three eyes, or three ways of knowing. Wilber's classification challenges the positivists' claims about knowledge in relation to the spiritual realm. He argues that the methods of natural science are inappropriate and inadequate to a study of the spiritual realm. He asserts that positivists are making a category error in claiming that only phenomena which are 'out there', which can be quantified, observed and measured, are a valid focus for scientific research. The fundamental problem, from Wilber's viewpoint, is that such 'science' attempts to prove or disprove the transrational realm with 'merely' rational operations. His argument asserts that claims about spiritual experience cannot be effectively researched by those who have not had extensive training in the appropriate methods to do so, which are meditation and contemplation. From Wilber's perspective, positivists are suggesting the wrong 'tools' to explore the spiritual realm. Wilber argues that all valid knowledge, in whatever realm, consists fundamentally of three basic components, which he terms injunction, illumination and confirmation:

The instrumental or injunctive strand consists of a set of instructions, simple or complex, internal or external. They all have the same form: 'If you want to know this, do this'. The illuminative or apprehensive strand involves an illuminative seeing evoked by the particular eye of knowledge evoked by the injunctive strand. Besides being self-illuminative, it leads to the possibility of a Communal strand. This is the actual sharing of the illuminative seeing with others who are using the same eye. If the shared vision is agreed upon by others, this constitutes a communal or consensual proof of true seeing (Wilber, 2001, p.29).

Having explored the Interpretivist perspective adopted in this research study, and the reasons why this perspective seemed appropriate to the study, the researcher now goes on to consider the influence of the research objectives on the research philosophy.

3.3. Influence of Research Objectives upon Research Philosophy

As previously stated, the research study had two objectives:

1. To explore why the research participants chose Psychosynthesis as their therapeutic training model.
2. To explore the significance of the 'moment of choosing' from the participants' point of view, using the Psychosynthesis techniques of imaging and drawing.

The first research objective was to explore the understandings of the twelve Psychosynthesis therapists of why they made such a

career choice. As Psychosynthesis is a transpersonal psychology and a transpersonal psychotherapy, their choice can be interpreted as falling within a spiritual dimension. It can therefore be seen as a value-based choice, not a choice based upon practical considerations. The researcher considered that to explore a choice, which is clearly value-based, is a phenomenological undertaking, since it involves a search for personal meaning at a deep level. Furthermore the ontological status of that connected to the spiritual, or influenced by deeply held values also points to a phenomenological research philosophy. Epistemologically, new knowledge based on such a line of inquiry maybe predicted to be arrived at by probing the motives (possibly unconscious) of those choosing such a career.

Whilst the researcher acknowledges the possible influence of the external environment upon decision-making and the possible influence of unconscious psychological forces upon the individual's behaviour (Freud, 1953), she nevertheless considers that human beings do have the capacity to make conscious choices that are imbued with meaning for them.

The search for meanings involves an attempt to elucidate subjective choices and inner experience. A research philosophy needs to be in sympathy with such an objective. As Denzin and

Lincoln (2005) suggest, from a phenomenological perspective, the question of 'why' does not have the objective of predicting behaviour, but of seeking to understand the subjective meaning which the participant attaches to it. The research philosophy adopted by the researcher was consequently phenomenological.

The second research objective, to explore the 'moment of choosing' utilised creative methods of imaging and drawing. This resulted in the emergence of meaning at the symbolic level, which research suggests accesses deeper, subconscious psychological processes (Hall et al, 2006).

Epistemologically, the methodology deemed appropriate in Interpretivist research is that which facilitates exploration of meaning at a personal, subjective level. The inquirer in Interpretivism becomes part of an interaction or communication with the participant or subject of the inquiry. The findings are the result of the interaction between the inquirer and the subject. Reality becomes a social construction. So it is the inquirer's constructions of the constructions of the actors that form the content of this thesis. The researcher deemed a qualitative methodology that employed a phenomenological approach to collect participant narratives to be appropriate.

Interestingly, the focus on career choice as a topic of research and the methodology of life narratives resonates strongly with current developments in career counselling. Peavey (2004) suggests that the language and vocabulary of counselling that was developed in the Positivist era may be becoming obsolete. What has emerged has been a shift in focus to 'narrative truth' rather than 'historical truth' (Grant and Johnson, 2006). As Reid (2006) asserts:

A narrative is not the straightforward telling of an event but is a representation of the event imbued with meaning from the teller's perspective (Reid, 2006, p.31).

Phenomenological perspectives were established as philosophical positions for some time before psychological investigators developed a set of methods to go with them. Giorgi (1970) refers to these methods as "a human science approach", in contrast with the dominantly behavioural and analytically cognitive "natural science" approaches favoured by academic psychology. These two sets of attitudes and methods in regard to psychological investigation are quite different epistemologies. The first is oriented towards "predicting and controlling behaviour", (Watson, 1913) and the other toward studying consciousness as it is experienced, in oneself or in someone else.

Phenomenology is a broad spectrum encompassing a number of differing research methodologies. These include empirical

phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, dialogic phenomenology, individual phenomenology and interpretive phenomenological analysis.

3.4. Phenomenological Analysis: Phenomenological Method: Thematic Analysis and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

The phenomenological methodology employed by the researcher in this study was that of Thematic Analysis, which shares a number of characteristics with the more recent development of Interpretive Phenomenological analysis (IPA). It is pertinent therefore to state the basic tenets of IPA since the researcher feels that these make a useful contribution to the earlier model of Thematic Analysis, and her methodology drew upon both models. IPA emerged within UK psychology with the work of Jonathon Smith in the 1990s. The approach is phenomenological in that it attempts to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself. This perspective acknowledges that the research process is a dynamic one where the researcher takes an active role. The researcher is trying to gain insight into the participant's personal world, to take, in

Conrad's (1987) words, an 'insider perspective'. However, the researcher cannot do this directly or completely. The researcher's own conceptions are the filter through which she tries to make sense of that other personal world, through a process of interpretive activity. Smith and Osborn (2008) refer to this as a double hermeneutic as it has two stages:

The researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p.53).

Interpretive phenomenological analysis is therefore, as Smith and Osborn note, intellectually connected to hermeneutics and to theories of interpretation (Ashworth, 2008; Packer and Addison, 1989; Palmer, 1969). Within IPA, different interpretive stances are possible, since the researcher combines an empathic hermeneutics with a questioning hermeneutics. Its phenomenological origins prompt a concern with trying to understand what it is like, from the point of view of the participants, to take their side. However, this can also involve being alert to an unspoken text, or a deeper level of meaning in the communication. Smith and Osborn (2008) suggest that this is likely to lead to a richer analysis and to do greater justice to the totality of the person. IPA also has links to symbolic interactionism, (Denzin, 1995) with its focus on how meanings

are constructed by actors within both a social and a personal world.

3.5. Constructing the Research Question

In most qualitative research the researcher does not try to test a predetermined hypothesis but rather to explore an issue or experience in depth and with some flexibility (Langdrige, 2004). This was the position taken by the researcher in this research study. The purpose of the research study was to explore the understandings of twelve eminent psychotherapists of why they had chosen a particular transpersonal model, Psychosynthesis. The researcher drew upon earlier research in focusing her research question. Her research question took a more particular focus however. The earlier research, carried out in 1996, by Dryden and Spurling, had investigated the more general issue of why those who took up Psychotherapy training were motivated to do so. The participants in their research study were drawn from a range of therapeutic trainings, whereas all twelve participants in this research study had chosen a specific transpersonal model of Psychosynthesis.

In planning the structure and content of the interview, the researcher used the format common to many semi-structured interviews.

Robson (1993) states that the semi-structured interview is likely to include:

- *Introductory comments (probably a verbatim script)*
- *A list of topic headings and possibly key questions to ask under these headings*
- *A set of associated prompts*
- *Closing comments (Robson, 1993, p.238).*

This is the format that was used by the researcher. The introductory comments explained the purpose of the interview and the structure it would follow. A short list of key questions was used to focus the interview on specific issues. Prompts were used to follow up points where further information was needed to clarify or to give an example. The researcher closed by giving the participants the opportunity to say anything they felt important which had not been covered in the interview.

The researcher drew on earlier research in selecting a small number of open-ended questions. This was research by Dryden & Spurling (1989) in which ten therapists, from a range of therapeutic traditions, were asked to contribute a chapter to an edited book. They were invited to reflect on why they had become psychotherapists. Their contributions were structured according to certain headings.

These were:

- Why did I become a psychotherapist?
- How did I become a psychotherapist?
- When did I become a psychotherapist?
- What sustains me as a psychotherapist?

Dryden & Spurling amplified these broad areas with further questions aimed to direct the participants to give greater details.

For example, in relation to Question One:

"Why did I become a therapist?"

The participants were asked to describe:

- Any sort of family tradition in this area,
- Whether their desire to be a therapist met with approval and support from their families,
- Whether there were any particular examples of being helped – or not being helped - at times of crisis which might have been significant in influencing their desire to become a therapist,
- What kind of fantasies, ideals, longings or myths were associated with becoming a psychotherapist, (e.g., Freud's identification with the figures of Oedipus and Moses),

- What kind of person did you think would make a good therapist and
- In what way did you consider that you might or might not measure up to this?

In relation to Question Two,

“How did I become a psychotherapist?”

The participants were directed to consider their training, how they:

Learnt the art or science of psychotherapy (Dryden & Spurling, 1989, p.220).

They were further directed to reflect on this under a number of sub-headings:

- How and why did you choose one particular type of therapy?
(E.g. through recommendation, chance encounters, reading?)
- What professional transition did you have to make in order to become a psychotherapist (e.g. were you involved in one of the helping professions or did you come from the outside field? What accounted for your professional transition?)
- What drew you to one particular school or orientation or repelled you from others?

- With what personal beliefs and aspects of your character did your choice of a particular school or orientation resonate?

Spurling & Dryden then went on to pose specific questions about the impact of the formal training upon their emerging career as a therapist and to ask them to apportion weight and significance to different aspects of the training. Following this, the therapists were asked about the influence of events and relationships outside their formal training.

It can be seen therefore, that Dryden & Spurling used quite a structured format in their research. They posed a large number of questions for the therapists to answer and they were very specific in the questions asked.

This researcher chose to be far less directive in her research design. She did not ask a large number of questions but used just five key questions to focus the participants upon her central research issue.

These were:

- Looking back over your life (and this might mean going back to your childhood), what do you think influenced you in your decision to become a Psychosynthesis therapist?
- What in your values or beliefs resonated with Psychosynthesis?
- What pushed you away or repulsed you from other models of therapy?
- Looking back now, do you still feel you made the right choice?
- Are there any things that I haven't asked about that you'd like to add?

The researcher wanted to allow the therapists to tell their own stories. She did not want to direct them to consider issues she might consider significant but to allow them to explore and reflect upon their experience with the minimum of interference from her. She did not want to impose her own frame of reference upon the reflections. The researcher also felt it important to make as few prior assumptions as possible. McLeod (1994) suggests that this is usually appropriate in:

...highly phenomenological research interviews where the emphasis is on recording the spontaneous, free-flowing meanings that the interviewee is able to articulate...and then to facilitate the exploration by the participant of what

this phenomenon means to him or her (McLeod, 1994, p.80).

The researcher therefore composed a short list of just five questions, which seemed to focus the interviews as closely as possible upon the research issue. These were supplemented by follow-up questions, which were often probes, to encourage the therapists to clarify certain points or to give more detail at times. As the researcher grew in confidence with the completion of a number of interviews, she became more relaxed about asking supplementary questions to follow up points of interest.

The research differed from that of Dryden & Spurling therefore in a number of ways.

- Firstly, they did not focus upon just one specific 'type' of therapist but chose therapists from a number of different 'schools' of therapy. This researcher chose to explore why the therapists had chosen one specific and fairly marginal school of therapeutic training.
- Secondly, Spurling and Dryden used a much more detailed and directive format in the questions put to the therapists.

This had the effect of leading them to consider certain issues, regardless of whether or not those issues might have emerged as relevant had the therapists been left to follow their own

direction. This researcher chose minimal directions in the interview format so as to lessen the likelihood of leading the participants.

The researcher was conscious in the choice of method, that articulate individuals were suitable subjects for such a method. This is because they need less prompting to elucidate their thoughts and feelings. For participants with lesser communication skills, a structured format might have been more appropriate, for example, the use of a questionnaire with multiple choice answers. Walsh (1996) notes that is one of the challenges in qualitative research:

To what extent can human beings articulate their experience, and through what methods can articulation be achieved? (Walsh, 1996, p.378).

A third way in which this research differed from earlier research, including that of Dryden and Spurling, was in the use of imaging and drawing to focus on the moment of choosing. This is in keeping with the wider ways in which research is now being carried out and the findings reported, especially in the field of transpersonal psychology. Braud and Anderson (1998) note that ways of reporting research findings have hugely expanded, to include modes of expression from literature, poetry and drama. Creative methods such as drawings, poems, stories and

metaphors are even being used in research conducted in organizational settings (Brossine, 2008).

3.6. The Sample

The majority of qualitative research is conducted on small sample sizes, which facilitates a detailed analysis of individual transcripts, and a detailed interpretive account of the cases included.

This allows for:

... sufficient in-depth engagement with each individual case but also allows a detailed examination of similarity and difference, convergence and divergence (Smith and Osborn, 2008,p.56).

The aim of the research is to:

...say something in detail about the perceptions and understandings of this particular group rather than prematurely make more general claims (Smith and Osborn, 2008,p.56).

Whilst IPA does not reject the possibility of more general claims for larger populations, its focus is:

...the painstaking analysis of cases rather than jumping to generalizations (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p.56).

This mode of inquiry is termed 'idiographic', because it has been derived from the examination of individual case studies, which make it possible to make specific statements about those individuals. This contrasts with the more common approach in

psychological research, which can be described as 'nomothetic' (Smith et al, 1995). In nomothetic research, analysis is at the level of groups and populations. Consequently, research can only make probabilistic claims about individuals: for example, there is a 90% chance that person x will respond in a certain way.

When choosing a sample, IPA researchers usually try to select what is termed a 'purposive' rather than a random or representative sample. The purpose is to find a more closely defined group for whom the research question will be significant. In some cases, the topic under investigation may itself be rare, and this will influence the boundaries of what is seen as a relevant sample. The researcher in this study was influenced by these factors in selecting her research sample, which was small (twelve psychotherapists) and drawn from a professional community related to a particular model of psychotherapy.

3.6.1. Numbers and Characteristics of the Sample

Twelve therapists: seven females and five males were interviewed for this research. To protect their confidentiality a coded letter system, rather than their actual names was used. The researcher felt that this small group of individuals had something of particular value to contribute to the research study, and were therefore a 'purposive sample' in IPA terms. Each of

them had many years of experience to draw upon from their careers as Pyschosynthesis therapists and as teachers in the training of Psychosynthesis therapists.

The sample also reflected the gender imbalance of those undertaking training as psychotherapists. Psychotherapy is a predominantly female profession, as demonstrated by the comparative percentages of female and male members registered with The British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists: 84% female, 16% male (Source: BACP Statistics, 2007). This figure has to be qualified by the fact that members are only requested to provide information about their gender, not required, and only 60% volunteered information about their gender.

The researcher had established contacts with potential subjects during her training and from subsequent contact with such therapists, through attending and participating in two International Psychosynthesis conferences. These were in San Diego, California, in 1976 and in Bologna, Italy, in 2000.

All except one (**DY**) of the therapists were chosen on the basis of their eminence within the field. **DY** was selected on the basis of recommendation via another therapist and because of her

particular circumstances. This subject was an elderly lady (in her 80s) who lived as part of a religious community. She had been one of the first to undertake Psychosynthesis training in England. She was of interest to this research both for her unique life situation and her obvious intellectual capacities. As Psychosynthesis is unusual as a therapeutic model, in asserting the deeply spiritual nature of human beings, it was particularly pertinent to include one subject who had explicitly chosen to commit her life to a spiritual path. Furthermore, given her vocation, it was likely that she, of all the participants, would have had the time and inclination to reflect on the factors that led to her choice to train in Psychosynthesis.

The twelve respondents represented five nationalities. Psychosynthesis was firstly and primarily developed in Italy by Roberto Assagioli, who was an Italian doctor and psychotherapist. A strong training tradition continues to operate in many Italian cities where Psychosynthesis Institutes were established. It was appropriate, therefore, that Italian therapists should form part of the sample. Three Italian therapists were interviewed: **A**, **M** and **P**, all of whom lived and practised in Italy.

Psychosynthesis spread to the United States after the end of World War II and became well established in North America

(Schuller, 1988). The researcher interviewed two practising psychotherapists living in the States, (**E** and **I**). American therapists later split into two camps, which found expression in two training institutes in England. Representatives of these two institutes were interviewed, three from one institute (**N**, **MF**, **D**) and two from the other (**W** and **DY**).

From the 1960s onwards, Psychosynthesis spread across Europe and beyond. The last participant represents this expansion (**T**). He was a French Vietnamese therapist who had grown up in Vietnam but who undertook his professional training in France where he continued to live. The researcher considered that her sample, being almost totally of a white ethnic background, fairly reflected the ethnic composition of the psychotherapy profession in the United Kingdom. BACP statistics demonstrate this overwhelmingly with almost 22,000 of their members designating themselves as 'White' in ethnic origin. 'Black-Caribbean' is the next largest group, and they total only 370 in number.

Amongst the sample, the researcher included some therapists who had met Assagioli personally (**N**, **E**) and some who had been trained directly by him (**D**, **M**, **P**, **A**). It seemed important to gain the perspective of both those who had encountered Assagioli

personally and those who had never met him. This was especially relevant as Assagioli was described as a very charismatic personality who had a significant impact on those he met. The relevance of a personal relationship with 'the master' seemed to have some bearing on the motivation of certain of the therapists. It was important therefore, to compare those therapists who had never known Assagioli to those who had been directly influenced by association with him.

3.6.2. Career Change

A further feature of the sample is that seven of the twelve research participants came to train as Psychosynthesis therapists after previously practicing another profession. It is interesting to note that five of the research participants were professionally involved in education before their training in Psychosynthesis

DY had a first career as a teacher of physical education and later entered a religious order, before training in Psychosynthesis. **MF** worked for many years in Further Education and continued with this even after she trained as a Psychosynthesis therapist. Participant **I** taught in High Schools for many years before her training as a psychosynthesis therapist. **W** described his first career as an 'educator' and he also had a business running a bookshop and importing esoteric books to sell. **A** had not

planned to teach, but took up Assagioli's suggestion to do so and taught in Further Education for eighteen years.

The remaining seven participants had pursued a diverse mix of professions before training as therapists. **MK** had a first career as a physiotherapist. **M** trained as a medical doctor and then specialised in psychiatry before training in Psychosynthesis. **N** had been 'put on the stage' as a child and had continued her involvement in theatre for many years. Later she had a successful business designing and producing ribbon cushions after Assagioli had spotted her talent for drawing. **T** obtained an MBA from Harvard and had planned to teach business studies at university in France. However when he returned to France, he found there were no opportunities for him to do so and so with others, he set up a Humanistic Growth Centre in Paris. Later on, he trained in Psychosynthesis. **P** initially followed his father's wishes to train as a pharmacist, but after the first year at university, changed courses from Pharmacy to Philosophy. When he later met Assagioli he studied with him and trained as a therapist. **E** seemed to always have been working as a therapist and did not have a previous career. **D** trained initially as a Gestalt therapist, but after a Peak Experience on first meeting Assagioli, she trained as a Psychosynthesis therapist.

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3.6.3. The Interviews

The interviews involved the therapists in telling their life story.

They were therefore to be of a very personal nature.

Consequently, the researcher felt it was important to create as much 'safety' in the interview as possible (Altman, 1975; Marsh, 1988). This was achieved in a number of ways. Firstly, the participants were asked where they would like the interview to be conducted; the researcher accommodated herself as much as possible to the wishes of the participants. She did not ask the participants to come to a place designated by her. This might have had an adverse effect upon the response rate. This was particularly so as a number of the participants selected for interview lived in other countries to the researcher such as the USA, France and Italy.

Some of the therapists chose to be interviewed in their own homes (**E** and **I** in America; **M** and **W** in England and **DY** in her religious community home in England). Three chose to be interviewed in the Psychosynthesis Institutes where they worked: **T** in France and **M** and **A** in Italy. Familiarity with the setting and a sense of being on one's own territory were both likely to contribute to a sense of safety and security for those being interviewed on such a personal subject.

The researcher's credentials were felt to contribute to the willingness of the therapists to be interviewed by her. Since she herself had undertaken professional training as a counsellor within the same therapeutic model, she was more likely to be viewed as an 'insider' (Becker, 1963).

Furthermore, since she had already met all of the therapists either through professional training or through the international conferences, she had the advantage of prior contact, before approaching the therapists. Being part of a professional therapy network gave her an 'entrée' to this particular world, which may otherwise not have been possible. This standing also gave her greater 'trustworthiness'. The contents of the life-narrative interviews were of a very intimate nature in which trust was likely to be a significant factor. Her training in the same therapeutic model is likely to also have given her a particular awareness and sensitivity to the life narratives. As McLeod (1994) notes:

Different interviewers may produce different material on the same theme, depending on their sensitivity toward, and knowledge of the topic (McLeod, 1994, p.81).

3.7. Research Strategy

The research strategy employed was that of qualitative interviewing. According to Warren (2002) qualitative interviewing

is based on conversation with the researchers asking questions and listening, and respondents answering. This may sound similar to survey interviewing (and therefore structured interviews) but Warren (2002) suggests that:

Unlike the survey interview, the epistemology of the qualitative interview tends to be more constructivist than positivist. Interview participants are more likely to be viewed as meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers. The purpose of most qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondent talk (Warren, 2002, p.8).

To facilitate this, the researcher views the interview as a journey on which he or she:

... is content to follow the lead and pace of the respondent (Kvale, 1996, p.4).

A principle feature of the qualitative interview is its semi-structured nature, which Robson (1993) suggests is likely to include:

- *Introductory comments (probably a verbatim script)*
 - *A list of topic headings and possibly key questions to ask under these headings*
 - *A set of associated prompts*
 - *Closing comments*
- (Robson, 1993 p.238).*

3.7.1. Collecting the Data

Since the goal of phenomenological analysis is to analyse in detail, how participants perceive and make sense of their

experience, a flexible data collection instrument is necessary. There are a number of ways in which the data can be collected, including personal accounts and diaries, but semi-structured interviews are often used because this form of interviewing allows a dynamic interaction whereby initial questions can be modified in the light of the participant's responses and the researcher is free to probe interesting and important areas, which arise (Langdridge, 2004).

The researcher has a set of questions on an interview schedule but does not feel it necessary to follow it rigidly. There is flexibility to follow up unpredicted material and time to allow the participants to consider their responses at their own pace and in their own way. This more flexible approach to interviewing is in line with the basic concerns of thematic analysis and IPA (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

The researcher has a focus on a certain issue and some questions to pursue, but there is at the same time, an intention to try to enter, as far as possible, the psychological and social world of the participants. Consequently, the participant shares more closely in the direction the interview takes and may introduce an issue which the researcher had not anticipated. As Smith and Osborn (2008) note:

In this relationship, the respondents can be perceived as the experiential expert on the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell their own story (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p.59).

There are a number of instances in the interviews carried out in this research study, where the researcher followed up unanticipated 'leads'. For example, in the interview with **E**, there is a lengthy account of the links between Psychosynthesis and the esoteric literature of Alice Bailey. In the interview with **D** the researcher asked a number of follow-up questions to encourage the participant to expand on her experience of a Peak experience when first meeting Assagioli.

3.7.2. Life Narrative

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect life narrative data. Life narrative in this context is used as an overarching term to describe the data collected in this research study. Although the term "life history" was initially chosen as an appropriate term to describe the data, it was eventually rejected. This was because life history research is often conducted longitudinally over a period of time, using several interviews with a participant, together with various artefacts from their life, such as diaries, photographs, etc. (Chase, 2005). However, the method of collecting the data was informed by life history

research in that the participants were asked to reflect on critical moments and processes in their journey to becoming a psychosynthesis therapist.

3.8. Analysis of the Data

The issue of meaning is central to all phenomenological methodologies. The aim is to try to understand the content and complexity of those meanings rather than to measure their frequency. Therefore the researcher must engage in what Langdrige (2004) terms an “interpretive relationship with the transcript”. This involves a sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation. Qualitative analysis is inevitably a personal process, and the analysis itself is the interpretive work, which the researcher does at each of the stages.

A research project in IPA may take the form of a single case design or involve a number of participants. This research study involved interviews with twelve research participants. In both Thematic analysis, and in IPA, the first step is to look in detail at one transcript, before moving on to examine the others, case by case. This is in line with the idiographic approach to analysis, which begins with particular examples and slowly works up to a more general categorization or claims (Smith et al, 1995).

Langdrige (2004) identifies five stages of analysis in IPA, these are:

Reading for meaning

Identifying themes

Structuring themes

Producing a summary table

These five stages have similarities with the three levels of coding utilised in Thematic Analysis.

3.8.1. Reading for meaning/ First Order Coding

Both models stress the importance of reading and rereading the transcript, as the first stage of the analysis .The aim is to become as familiar as possible with the data. Each time the transcript is read, new insights may emerge. In this process the left-hand margin is used to annotate what is interesting or important about what the participant said. In IPA there are no rules about what is commented upon, and there is no requirement, for example, to divide the text into units of meaning and assign a comment to each unit. Some sections of the text are likely to be richer than other and this is likely to be reflected in the commentary.

In Thematic Analysis, this is the most basic level of coding, which is termed "First Order Coding". It involves giving a code or label, to a chunk of data. At this level the label is very descriptive, and there is minimal interpretation. Nevertheless, First Order Coding facilitates organisation and categorisation of the transcribed interview data.

In IPA, this stage of analysis is rather more complex. Some of the comments are attempts at summarizing or paraphrasing, some will be associations or connections that occur to the researcher, and others may be initial interpretations. As the researcher works through the transcript, they may comment on similarities and differences, echoes, amplifications and any contradictions in what the respondent has said.

The researcher in this study read the first interview transcript through many times so as to become intimate with the data. As she read through the transcript she highlighted any sentences or words, which seemed significant or meaningful to her. She wrote a descriptive summary of each point in the left hand margin of the transcript. This process is repeated with each of the transcribed interviews, so that the researcher achieves great familiarity with the textual data. This facilitates a shift in the level of analysis, since the researcher then has an overview of all

the transcribed interviews and the initial descriptive codes. In Thematic analysis the researcher may use either an inductive or a deductive method to generate themes. Boyatzis (1998) notes:

The themes may be initially generated inductively from the raw information or generated deductively from theory and prior research (Boyatzis, 1998, p.4).

In this research study the themes were almost entirely generated from the research data. The researcher did however; abstract one theme from the initial literature review. This was the theme of an unhappy childhood, which was prominent in the initial literature review.

3.8.2. Second Order Coding

This level of coding entails somewhat more interpretation than first order coding. The researcher is moving from the initial descriptive level of coding to a more interpretive framework, but still keeping close to the data. Langdrige (2004) notes that at this level there may be super-ordinate constructs that capture the meaning of some of the descriptive codes. This is similar to the second stage of IPA, "Identifying themes", where the researcher attempts to draw out patterns of meaning in the text and record these initial themes in the right-hand margin of the transcript.

At this stage the initial notes are transformed into concise phrases, which aim to capture the essential quality of what was found in the text. The goal is to move the response to a slightly higher level of abstraction. At the same time, there should still be an 'audit trail' apparent, whereby what the participant actually said and the researcher's initial response are clearly identified.

In this research study the researcher constructed a file with a page for each emergent theme. Any data that seemed relevant to that theme was noted according to the named participant and the line references for the data. The themes were ordered alphabetically rather than chronologically, as this facilitated easier access. Subsequently, a spreadsheet was compiled for each emergent theme and a column assigned to each research participant. Where chunks of data relating to that theme were located in an interview transcript for any of the participants, they were recorded in the column allocated to that participant. This system had a number of advantages. It became visibly apparent, for example, how many of the research participants the theme related to. Secondly, it was apparent how rich a 'seam' was in that transcript, by the amount of transcript (lines of transcript) there were, referring to the theme.

At this stage of the analysis, the skill required is:

...in finding expressions which are high level enough to allow theoretical connections within and across cases, but which are still grounded in the particularity of the thing said (Smith and Osborn, 2008,p.68).

Although the researcher is now moving from the initial descriptive level of coding to a more interpretive level, Langdrige (2004) cautions that the researcher needs to remain open-minded at this stage and does not try to impose meaning on the text.

3.8.3. Third Order Coding or Pattern Coding

The third major step in thematic analysis is that of interpreting the pattern through further development of the codes. Codes at this subsequent level will be superordinate constructs that capture the overall meaning of some of the descriptive and interpretive codes. In thematic analysis, this higher level of coding may blur into the next stage, which is in fact termed “thematic analysis”, and consequently, three distinct levels of coding are not always recognised. In IPA, this process is referred to as Structuring or Connecting the Themes. At this stage in IPA, emergent themes are listed on a sheet of paper, and the researcher looks for connections between them. In this initial list the themes are ordered chronologically, that is in the sequence in which they emerged. Subsequently, a more theoretical or

analytical ordering takes place, as the researcher tries to make sense of the connections between the themes. Miles and Huberman (1984) note that the researcher may be able to “cluster” perceived themes in order to move to higher levels of abstraction.

If some themes are perceived as clustering, hierarchies of meaning may emerge with certain themes appearing as superordinate concepts and others as subordinate. Clusters of themes need to be labelled in a way that captures the overall meaning of the clusters.

At this stage in thematic analysis, some themes will again disappear, either because they become subsumed under superordinate themes or because they are seen as redundant.

Langdrige (2004) suggests that this is the point in the analysis when the researcher may appropriately draw on psychological theories to aid their interpretation of the data, but that the analysis must still be grounded in the data.

3.8.4. Integrating cases

Having completed the first four steps of the analysis for each case, or participant, the researcher now needs to attempt to

integrate their findings and produce a table of master themes (and constituent themes) for the entire data set (Eatough & Smith, 2008). An alternative process is to complete the steps described above for their first case and then try to apply their summary table clusters and themes to their second case. They would then modify the clusters and themes accordingly and move on to the next case and so on, until all the cases were considered. Both of these two processes involve the researcher attempting to produce a summary table of master themes- or superordinate themes (with the subsidiary constituent themes) – that express the essence of the phenomenon for all the participants. Each of the master themes will contain one or more constituent themes (themes capturing lower levels of meaning) and will be supported by quotes from a number of participants.

3.9. The Moment of Choosing

As stated, the second aim of the research study was to explore the moment when the participants had chosen to commit to Psychosynthesis training.

At the end of each life narrative interview, the participant was invited to 'centre', to reconnect with the moment of choosing Psychosynthesis, to allow an image to come and to draw. The therapists were supplied with a drawing pad, and with coloured pencils and given free choice in the selection of colours. After they had finished drawing, they were invited to explain the significance of the images and symbols within the drawings and to comment upon the meaning of the drawing to themselves. This way of focusing on the event was resonant with the practices and principles of Psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1965; Ferrucci, 1983; Whitmore, 1991). It is quite common in Psychosynthesis therapy sessions for the therapist to invite the client to:

"Go inside, allow an image to come and draw."

None of the participants drew a literal picture of themselves at the moment of choosing. Each portrayed the moment of choice with the use of symbolism. Time was then spent exploring with each participant the meaning of the imagery and symbolism in

their drawing. This technique is based on the evidence that the unconscious mind often speaks to us through images and symbols (Ellenberger, 1970; Lancaster, 2004; Wilber, 2000).

The Psychosynthesis therapist will often utilize this technique to help a client bring into greater awareness, issues that are out of awareness or unclearly perceived. Discussion of images and symbols is not interpretative, as is likely to be the case in psychoanalytic therapy (Nelson-Jones, 1994). The therapist's role will be to help the client explore what such images and symbols might mean for them, not to offer an interpretation. Correspondingly, the researcher saw her role as facilitating the therapist's exploration of his or her own imagery and symbolism: it would have been inappropriate to offer an interpretation and an obvious confusing of the roles of researcher/therapist.

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3.10. Reliability of the Interviews

Robson (2002) notes that reliability in fixed design research is associated with the use of standardized research instruments, e.g. formal tests and scales. It is also associated with the use of observation, where the human observer is the standardized instrument. The concern is whether the tool or instrument produces consistent results. Thinking in such terms is problematic for most qualitative researchers (Mason, 1996). At a technical level, the general non-standardization of many

methods of generating qualitative data precludes formal reliability testing. Nevertheless, as Robson points out, there are common pitfalls in data collection, including equipment failure, environmental distractions, interruptions and transcription errors. Easterby-Smith et al (2004) suggest that from a social constructionist point of view, reliability is seen as the extent to which there is transparency in how sense was made from the raw data; and generalizability is seen as the extent to which the concepts and constructs derived from the study have relevance to other settings.

3.11. Validity / Trustworthiness of the Data

The construct of validity focuses on the degree to which an instrument of research truly tests or measures the phenomenon it purports to. The concept has its origins in the positivist's claim that there is an objective 'truth' out there, which can be captured, measured and demonstrated, and the power of this claim continues through Post positivism to the present day.

The researcher identifies her perspective with the Interpretivist position that:

There are no objective observations; only observations socially situated in the worlds of -and between- the observer and the observed (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.31).

Hence, a social researcher has to explore and understand the social world through the participants and their own perspectives;

and explanations can only be offered at the level of meaning rather than cause (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.23).

Positivists' see validation as a process by which the quality of the data is verified through a numerical or factual triangulation of data. Technical solutions such as the use of statistical and sampling techniques have contributed to this process (Hughes, 2003). The researcher argues that the positivist model of validation is an appropriate and valuable tool to use in research where data are quantifiable, e.g., phenomena in the physical environment. However, when investigating human behaviour, the situation is more complex and the usefulness of the positivist concept of validity has been strongly contested. For example, McLeod (2003) points out that although some aspects of human behaviour are open to quantification, other aspects are not. Research could, for example, quantify the proportion of time a couple spent together in a week, but this would not indicate the quality of their relationship, or interaction together. As Denzin and Lincoln (2003) note, qualitative researchers argue that:

...the empiricist emphasis on quantifiable behaviour left out the crucial ingredient of human understanding, namely, the private experiences of the agent. Both these views- that qualitative methods are more faithful to the social world than quantitative ones and that individual human experiences are important- remain robust in today's qualitative community, with diverse proponents of grounded theory research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990,1994), Phenomenology (Giorgi, 1994;Moustakas, 1994, and feminist researchers standpoint (Belenky, Clinchy,

Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Harding, 1986, 1991; Komesaroff, Rothfield & Daly, 1997; Miller & Stiver, 1997) among them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p.578).

Richardson (2000) proposes that, in researching the quality of human experience and when quantifiable data and clear reference points for numerical triangulation are not available, the positivist concept of validity is not appropriate and is in fact unusable. The difference in perspective is in fact stronger than this might suggest. As Denzin and Lincoln (2003) comment:

The positive science attack on qualitative research is regarded as an attempt to legislate one version of the truth over another (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p.8).

Lather (1993) describes the on-going debate as having led to a 'fertile obsession' with the issue of validity. Out of this conflict, qualitative researchers have attempted to construct an alternative measure of trustworthiness.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) locate the beginnings of this search for an alternative measure, within the fourth moment or 'crisis' of representation of the mid-1980s. They outline the debate, which continues to the present citing Denzin (1989a, 1989b); Fielding and Fielding (1986) and Flick (1992) as central contributors to the developing argument, which has its premise in an alternative definition of triangulation. Their suggestion is

that triangulation is an alternative to validation rather than a tool or strategy of validation (Flick, 2002).

The use of multiple methods (or triangulation) reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question...The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003,p.5).

In this research study, the researcher employed two different but complimentary approaches to gathering the data, which she argues, contribute effectively to triangulation. These are the exploration of the research question through two sources: interviewing and the participants' use of imagery and drawing to access a deeper level of understanding through images and symbolism. This is particularly pertinent to Wilber's (2000) third level of consciousness, the subtle level.

The researcher was also cognisant of Robson's (1993) guidelines regarding ways to avoid threats to validity. Firstly, the main threat to providing a valid description of what the researcher has seen or heard, lies in the inaccuracy or incompleteness of the data. In this research study audiotaping was used to ensure that all of the therapists' comments were recorded completely and

accurately. Silverman (2004) also notes that claims to validity are weakened when the original form of the materials is unavailable to scrutiny and only a few exemplary instances are reported. To guard against this, the researcher had intended to include the full texts of the transcribed interviews in the appendices of the thesis. Unfortunately this was not possible owing to the prescribed permitted length of the thesis. The transcribed interviews totalled over 70,000 words and their inclusion in the document would have taken the document far in excess of the permitted length.

Secondly, Robson (1993) suggests that the main threat to providing a valid interpretation is that of imposing a framework or meaning on what you learn during your involvement with the setting. Mason (1996) suggests that the researcher can ensure that meaning has not been imposed on the data by:

...including a demonstration of how that interpretation was reached. This means that you should be able to, and be prepared to, trace the route by which you came to your interpretation...The basic principle here is that you are never taking it as self-evident that a particular interpretation can be made of your data but instead you are continually and assiduously charting and justifying the steps through which your interpretations were made (Mason, 1996, p.150).

The researcher has endeavoured to make this process transparent in the presentation and discussion of her results.

From an Interpretivist perspective, the inquirer (researcher) becomes part of the interaction or communication with the participant (Fontana & Fay, 2005). Consequently, the findings are the result of the interaction between the researcher and the participant. Reality becomes a social construction. The fact that the researcher is interacting directly with the participant is likely to have an effect upon the dynamics of the process (Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Scheurich, 1995). The kind of questions the researcher chooses to follow up or leave, the number of probes the researcher uses in following one particular aspect of the study, are revealing in themselves. The very nature of life narrative interviews and semi-structured interviews means that the researcher cannot always be prepared for the material, which emerges in the course of the interview. Consequently, the researcher has to make 'on-the-spot' decisions as to whether or not to follow up particular responses. The researcher is aware reflexively, of the influence she had in the direction of the flow of answers and in the extent to which particular issues were explicated. She acknowledges her particular interest in the issue of Peak Experiences (Maslow, 1970), which became apparent in the interview with **D**. The researcher was aware, reflexively that she brought the focus of the interview back to this issue a number of times, because of her own interest in it.

A further example is in the interview with **E** when she disclosed her involvement with the esoteric literature of Alice Bailey. The researcher was aware of the so-called 'Wall of Silence' surrounding the connection between Assagioli and Alice Bailey and took the opportunity to discover more about the links. She encouraged **E** to speak at length about this topic, and a significant amount of the interview related to this material. The researcher was personally interested in this issue and was aware that as **E** was at that time already well into her eighties, there might never be another opportunity to learn first hand about the connection.

3.11.1. Self-Report Data

Another possible weakness in the validity of the data relates to the use of the self-report method in gathering the data via semi-structured interviews. Firstly, as Burn's (1979) notes, when using self-report methods in research, psychologists are dealing with what a person is willing to reveal about themselves, what Burn's refers to as:

...the vagaries of introspection (Burns, 1979, p.74).

Similarly, Combs and Super (1957) define self-report as what the individual is willing to say about himself to an outsider. They suggest that this can be affected by a number of factors:

- The clarity of the individual's awareness;
- The availability of adequate symbols for expression;
- The willingness of the individual to cooperate;
- Social expectancy;
- The individual's feeling of personal adequacy;
- His feelings of freedom from threat.

These researchers are talking specifically about the weaknesses of multiple-choice items and rating scales used to measure the self-concept. However, a number of these issues have relevance to the method of self-report used in semi-structured interviews.

In spite of these problems, Fontana (2006), writing about psychology, religion and spirituality, notes certain positives in the methodologies used to study introspection. Such methodologies, including semi-structured interviews, allow the researcher to:

... look for common factors between self-reports, for correlations between these reports and actual behaviour, for consistencies and inconsistencies between reports, for developmental patterns and age/sex variables, for the extent of commitment to expressed beliefs, for changes in beliefs and self-concepts consequent upon the use of practices such as meditation, prayer, contemplation, and confession, and for similarities between self-reports of the states of mind experienced during these practices (Fontana, 2006,p.26).

The researcher did identify common factors between the life narratives and these are identified and discussed in the discussion of the data analysis. Changes in behaviour as a result of such Psychosynthesis practices as the Identification exercise, and the practice of meditation were also evident from the self-reports.

The issue of self-awareness is very relevant to a participant's ability to think about crucial life choices in the context of their own life narrative. The researcher notes in relation to this that reflexivity and introspection play a crucial part of the training of Psychosynthesis therapists. For example, both the Psychosynthesis and Education Trust and the Institute of Psychosynthesis, require trainee therapists to undertake their own personal therapy as a condition of acceptance onto their training courses.

Another possible weakness with self-report studies is that what participants say may be influenced by what they expect the researcher wants to hear (Bradburn, 1983). This is the social expectancy effect. In this study, the researcher did not give any indications to suggest what she might want to hear from the respondents. This is supported by the fact that only five key questions were asked of the respondents and care was taken to use open questions to avoid leading the respondents in any way.

Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) make a further point, which is that the accuracy of self-report depends on the cooperation and motivation of the subject. In respect of this point, all of the participants freely agreed to take part in the research study, there were no covert procedures employed. Furthermore, the participants were given assurances about the confidentiality of the interviews. Also, the participants were likely to have a well-developed sense of self-awareness, due to their therapeutic training and experience of personal therapy. As a consequence, they were less likely than other people, to need to shield themselves from the gaze of the researcher.

Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) observe that the first thing to be noted when retrospective descriptions are obtained as the raw data is the possibility of error or deceit on the part of the participant. They argue that whilst honest errors can occur, they are not as crucial for the psychological analysis as might at first appear. This is because the psychological perspective implies that the descriptions obtained are subjectively dependent ones, not objective reports. If epistemological claims are based upon how situations were experienced or remembered by the participants, this is an 'acceptable obstacle'. Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) comment:

In phenomenological research, this step is heightened because of the use of the scientific phenomenological reduction. Strong epistemological claims are made only for how things presented themselves to the experiencer, not for how they actually were (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008,p.48).

They go on to argue that the possibility of deceit is stronger in brief contacts, but that this possibility is reduced in the case of longer interviews such as doctoral dissertations, or sustained research. They put this down to the researcher's intuitive sense that something is 'awry':

One may not know just why the narratives are stilted or 'off', but the fact that a participant is trying to control a description usually comes through (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008,p.48).

The researcher was aware in one interview in particular, Participant **I**, that the participant seemed uncomfortable during the first ten minutes or so of the interview. She felt the participant was controlling the depth of exploration so as not to disclose any information she did not wish to. The researcher felt the atmosphere gradually relax as the interview progressed and was confident from the life narrative shared, that the narrative was an honest, reflexive account.

Langdrige (2004) further notes the possibility of social desirability effects in self-report studies. Here the subject tries to be a 'model' subject by behaving in the way he thinks the experimenter wants him to behave, or give answers that portray

them in the best possible way. Whilst the intent is to cooperate, it is unlikely to increase the chance of the subject responding more honestly on self-report instruments for the subject's hunch as to what the experimenter is attempting to accomplish may bias his responses in unknown ways.

Lastly, researchers have observed a tendency of participants in self-report studies to attribute to themselves, traits or characteristics which social consensus would indicate are socially desirable, while rejecting those that are socially undesirable. Whilst this might be more likely and more obvious to detect in studies using questionnaires and rating scales, it is possible that the participants in this study also behaved in this way. However, Giorgi and Giorgi's (2008) comment is again relevant:

The use of phenomenological reduction is useful here since strong epistemological claims are made only for how things presented themselves to the experiencers, not for how they actually were (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008,p.48).

3.11.2. The Issue of Reconstructed Memory

A further possible weakness in the study relates to the fact that some of the respondents are reporting events from some time in the past. Fairhurst (1997) argues that in early life narrative studies (e.g. Thomas & Zaniecki, 1958) the usefulness of memories in the telling of a life had been viewed as unproblematic, since the life narrative method has called upon a

correspondence theory of reality. However, Humphrey (1993) points out a number of problems with this perspective. Firstly, the account's wholeness will rest upon the accuracy of the memory, as past experience can be repressed or merged with others. Secondly, its reliability will depend in part on the nature of the story the respondent desires to tell, which will in turn be influenced by his or her current situation and state of mind.

Fairhurst (1997) argues that a view of memory purely in terms of a storage and retrieval system is inadequate. In this respect, Bartlett's (1932) research into memory was pioneering; because he was the first person to suggest that memory was an active construction process rather than a simple process of retrieving data that had been stored by the mind. Later, Coulter's (1979) ideas on sociological approaches to the study of psychological phenomenon such as memory, suggested the socially organised character of recollection and forgetting. Thus, when asked to recall something our recall process is both selective and constructive. As Fairhurst suggests, when we are asked to recall something, we select from an array of knowledge which is conventionally seen as appropriate to the interests of the speaker and the hearer; a matter to which Sacks et al (1974) refer as 'recipient design'. Therefore, life narrative studies are

likely to be complicated by these various factors and cannot necessarily be seen as a straightforward account of past events.

Loftus has also shown how memories can become distorted. Her early research found that leading questions could affect the reported memories of subjects shown films of traffic accidents and then questioned about them (Loftus, 1975). Her research became important in court cases where witness accounts were given.

She went on to discover that leading questions were only one way to distort memory. Memory can also be distorted by exposure to misinformation i.e. 'false' information fed to an unsuspecting subject can lead them to incorrect memories of what happened in an event. Loftus went on to investigate whether one could create an entire memory for an event that never happened. She found that with family collaboration 25% of subjects could be led to believe, either wholly or partially, that at age five or six they had been lost in a shopping mall for an extended time, were highly upset, and were ultimately rescued by an elderly person and reunited with their family (Loftus & Pickrell, 1995). Subsequent research has demonstrated that between 31% and 50% of subjects can be induced to 'remember'

events that never happened (Lindsay et al 2003; Gary, Read & Lindsay 2002).

Loftus regards as particularly important, rich false memories, which are experiences about which a person can feel confident, provide details and even express emotion about made-up events, which never happened (Loftus & Bernstein, 2004).

This is seen as particularly important as sensory detail is, she argues, the basis on which we typically decide whether our memory is true or false. Loftus notes that nearly all false memory research stops when the affected individual accepts the scenario. She suggests that it would be relevant to go on to see if the false memory affects the subsequent thoughts and behaviours of the person i.e. does the false memory have consequences? (Loftus, 2003). More research is needed to explore this issue.

Whilst research can demonstrate a subject's susceptibility in manipulated situations, one could question the relevance of such findings to everyday life. Loftus does indeed argue that there *is* relevance to everyday life. For example, her view of the validity of autobiographical accounts is that they can exhibit 'selective' memory and contain vivid memories of things that never

happened. She cites the memoirs of the pioneering physicist, Edward Teller (2001) as an example of these traits. However, she comments that a more charitable analysis of Teller's work might involve appreciating it not as a deliberate untruth but as illustrative of normal memory distortion processes. Furthermore, an untruth is not necessarily a lie, since what starts as a lie becomes the person's 'truth'. The story can create a memory, rather than the other way round.

She concludes that:

People's memories are not only the sum of all that they have done...the memories are also the sum of what they have thought, what they have been told, what they believe. Who we are may be shaped by our memories, but our memories are shaped by who we are and what we have been led to believe. We seem to reinvent our memories, and in doing so, we become the person of our own imagination (Loftus, 2003, p.872).

To summarise, the issues around the problem of reconstructed memory are:

- The earlier views of memory as a straightforward process of retrieval of data from storage in the mind are seen as inadequate. The process is seen as a much more complicated one.
- Factors that might affect it include: selecting data that is perceived to be relevant to and of interest to, our audience.

- Furthermore, what is recalled can be influenced and even distorted by the manner in which questions are asked. False memories can be induced by suggestion, particularly if significant others such as family members, are part of that 'misinformation' as they are more powerful figures in our psyche.
- Lastly, just because a memory report is expressed with confidence, detail, and emotion does not necessarily mean the underlying event actually happened.

Conway's current, on-going research into memory (2007) may be useful in developing our understanding of how the 'self' develops. Conway, who is Professor of Psychology at Leeds University, is researching 10,000 eyewitness accounts of memories of the last century. The research study is being carried out in collaboration with the British Broadcasting Corporation (Radio Four). The research adds support to the contention that it is possible to remember events from as early as two years of age, though psychologists used to dismiss this possibility.

The research so far, suggests that the age span of fifteen to twenty-five is our 'peak' in terms of memory function. Consequently, memories from this period of our lives, are critical in defining us in the rest of our lives, i.e., these memories are

particularly strong and influential in how we see ourselves and how we define our identity. This is the time when many young adults make critical decisions about career choice. Recalled memories of the research participants in relation to this research study are therefore particularly significant in generating causal explanations of why one does certain things and makes certain choices.

3.11.3. The Problem of Unconsciousness in the Participant in Qualitative Research

In attempting to explore the motivation underlying choices, the researcher has to acknowledge that human beings are sometimes unaware of deeper reasons for their actions. We may construct 'rational' explanations for our choices, either at the time, or retrospectively in reflection. It may be the case that it is never wholly possible to understand or uncover the 'true' motives for our behaviour. Walsh (1996) notes that life is:

*Lived amidst a web of social and historical meanings
(Walsh, 1996 p.378).*

which complicate our ability to grasp the 'truth'.

Indeed, the concepts of 'consciousness' and the 'unconscious' are a minefield in themselves since, as Lancaster (2004) notes, the term 'consciousness' has been used to signify many different things.

Baruss (1987) carried out a meta-analysis of works employing the term 'consciousness' and identified three clusters of meaning. Firstly, consciousness as referring to the registering, processing and acting upon information which occurs in a:

...sufficiently human-like biological system (Lancaster, 2004,p.67).

Here consciousness is viewed as a process with functions.

Secondly, consciousness as being aware of something, in the sense of having explicit knowledge of one's situation, mental states and emotional states or actions. Brentano (1938-1917) termed this Consciousness 2, to indicate that consciousness is always about something, i.e. there is always an object of consciousness.

Thirdly, Baruss identified Consciousness 3, which is direct awareness, without any content. This could be termed as 'contentless consciousness', which can be termed a mystical experience, a Unitive state. Forman (1990) argues that such 'pure consciousness', that is, consciousness without content, is an experience associated with mystical states. Seen from this perspective, Consciousness 3 is a spiritual experience. Further

discussion of the concept of consciousness in relation to spirituality, is undertaken in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

However, in this chapter of the thesis, the researcher is using the term in its more familiar meaning of 'unavailable to introspection.' Lancaster qualifies this description however, by noting that it may be possible to access such 'unconscious' material, so that it becomes available for introspection at a particular time, through imagery and symbolism, for example, via dreams or in meditative states. The researcher suggests that this is relative to the second stage of this research study. The participants were invited to "reconnect with the moment of choosing, allow an image to come and then to draw". The meanings attributed to the imagery and symbolism in the drawings was explored with the participants and is presented as part of the data analysis.

3.11.4. The Problem of Unconsciousness in the Researcher in Qualitative Research

Walsh also draws our attention to the other side of the research experience. He suggests that not only do we need to explore the hidden or implicit meanings in what the participant reveals, but

that there is also a hidden aspect of the researcher. This is the unconscious in the researcher. Walsh states:

The researcher is presumed somehow to have access to his or her unconscious. Husserl's (1962) notion of bracketing, for example, has been interpreted as suggesting that one 'dispenses with all metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological assumptions and returns to 'the things themselves'(Walsh, 1996, p.381 quoting Sass, 1988, p.234).

Walsh challenges the possibility of doing this by a simple act of will and the possibility of retaining this perspective long-term even if it is achieved at a certain point. He asserts that some qualitative researchers have assumed this is possible and have therefore made assumptions about their own objectivity. Walsh asserts that in fact, bracketing is a complicated process, and one that has to be continually striven for. There is no room for complacency. He asserts that:

Bracketing entails a continual effort to look back upon one's actions and explore them for the assumptions they reveal. These assumptions can then be openly acknowledged, and can inform the process of interpretation (Walsh, 1996, p.381).

Bracketing assumes the possibility of putting our prior knowledge and assumptions on one side, but the researcher questions the extent to which this is possible and prefers to acknowledge the limitations of this concept. In this research study the researcher makes explicit her own assumptions about the underlying spiritual nature of human beings. The researcher starts from this

value basis and needs to explore perspectives that question those value-based beliefs.

Walsh goes on to consider the usefulness and limitations of language as the key research medium in qualitative research. This applies to both the participant and the researcher. He notes that:

...the scrutiny of words within a given narrative is presumed to reveal the structure of the subject's experience. Interpretive methods seek to explicate the structure that is built with and manifested through an individual's language (Walsh, 1996, p.381).

However, whilst the perspectival nature of the participant's language is usually acknowledged, this is not always the case in respect of the researcher. Walsh points out that a researcher's language can also illuminate his or her own particular frame of reference. He suggests that written results can help reveal the latent assumptions of the researcher. Applying this to the researcher in this study, it is important that her own assumptions are brought into awareness and acknowledged. The researcher acknowledges her own belief that human beings are not just body, mind and feelings. She acknowledges her belief in the Spiritual aspect of human beings, which has grown from her own experience, reading, and discussion. This personal perspective drew her into Psychosynthesis training and has fuelled her interest in the research topic.

Walsh argues that the medium of language as a research tool has its limits. The communication process is both verbal and non-verbal. He makes an interesting assertion linking the disregard of non-verbal aspects and the unconscious:

Human experience is embodied- a fact that much of psychology has ignored. Every psychological state occurs in and through a human body, yet most methods of research avoid this fact. This ignorance of embodiment may tell us something regarding the nature of unconsciousness. Rather than being structured solely by language, unconsciousness may to some degree remain distinct from language (Walsh, 1996, p.382).

He goes on to argue that the researcher should therefore pay attention to the participant's body language as well as to their words. The non-verbal content of a communication has long been acknowledged as a potent indicator of feelings and attitudes and research suggests that when non-verbal messages contradict the verbal, it is the former that is more likely to be believed (Burns, 1979). Walsh suggests that the use of videotaping may be a useful tool in this respect. This study did not use videotape, but did incorporate a broader range of research mediums than just language. At the end of each audio taped life narrative interview, the participants were invited to reconnect with the moment of choosing, to allow an image to come, and to draw. The drawings that emerged were not literal portraits of the therapists' moment of choosing, but rather

expressed the moment in symbolic form, using symbolism and imagery. This aspect of the research study is explored in depth in a further chapter of this dissertation. This method could be seen as particularly useful in view of Walsh's assertions about the importance of the unconscious in human experience. It has been argued by many researchers (Fagen, 1995; Braud & Anderson, 1998) that symbolism and imagery are valuable routes into the unconscious.

3.12. Ethical Issues

This section of the chapter will examine the ethical issues related to the study. McLeod (1996) suggests that there are three central principles of research ethics in counselling and psychotherapy. These are:

- Informed consent
- Confidentiality and
- Avoidance of harm

The researcher felt that these principles were relevant to the research study even though the subjects interviewed were not counselling clients, but practicing psychotherapists. The same respect was due to these participants who shared intimate details of their lives with the researcher. The researcher, herself a trained counsellor, felt these principles to be important and

indeed, congruent with her own values. The researcher addressed each of these principles.

Firstly, the participants were initially contacted either by telephone or e-mail and given an outline of the nature, purpose and aims of the research. An outline of the interview format was given and the verbal consent of the participants was obtained.

Secondly, the participants were assured of the total confidentiality of the interview material and that the only people who would have access to it would be the researcher, the transcriber and the researcher's supervisor. The interview data was kept locked in a filing cabinet. Assurances were also given that the identity of the participants would be concealed, as participants would be referred to by a coded letter system rather than by their actual names. However, the researcher concurs with McLeod's (1996) assertion that confidentiality is a much more difficult task in qualitative research compared to quantitative research:

In quantitative research, the transformation of personal experience into numbers, and the merging of individual 'scores' into group-based data, means that it is relatively easy to guarantee the anonymity of individual subjects in a research study. In qualitative research, by contrast, the stories told by informants are necessarily unique, saturated with identifying markers (McLeod, 1996, p.311).

The researcher acknowledges that even a coded letter system would be inadequate in concealing the identity of the

participants. This is because the professional world of Psychosynthesis is small and for the most part, the participants are well known within this world as they have attained professional and international recognition for their work and/or writing.

McLeod suggests that it is good practice in qualitative research to allow informants to read prepublication drafts of any reports that might contain material on them, to enable them not only to correct the researcher's account of their experience, but also to satisfy themselves that their identity has been effectively concealed.

In this research study, the participants were offered the opportunity to read the transcribed interview relevant to them. However, only one participant wished to do this. He was subsequently very interested in the interview transcript and surprised at how much he had disclosed. This would seem to confirm that the researcher had established the trust of the participants in the interviews. As McLeod states:

The frankness and honesty with which an informant discloses aspects of his or her story will depend, in part, on the extent to which the researcher is perceived as trustworthy and safe (McLeod, 1996, p.311).

Also, the fact that the majority of the therapists did not take up the offer to scrutinise the interview transcripts, suggests that a degree of trust had been established in the researcher's ethical position.

Participants were also assured that if the researcher wished to use any of the material for publication at a future date, their individual consent would be sought.

The third ethical principle asserted by McLeod is that of avoiding harm. The researcher suggests that there is likely to be a greater risk of harm occurring when the participants are clients, as in counselling research. This is because of their potential vulnerability and because of the relative degree of power possessed by the therapist in such situations (Etherington 1996). In this research study, the participants were all experienced and extremely competent professionals in the therapeutic field. Many of them were also accomplished academics, with many publications to their name. To some extent it was the researcher herself who felt 'exposed' as she did not have the same experience and professional status as they enjoyed.

It is true that the life narrative interviews included intimate details of the participants' lives, which in a client may well have

evoked deep feelings and perhaps distress. However, the researcher felt assured that the training of the therapists, which included undergoing their own personal therapy, would provide protection against any potential harm. In a very real sense, the participants could take care of themselves.

There were instances when the researcher had to make quick decisions as to whether or not to probe more deeply into issues divulged to her. An example of this was when **W** disclosed his history of sexual abuse in childhood. The researcher had no way of anticipating such a disclosure and was completely unprepared for it. She made a quick decision not to probe any further, but just to accept the level of disclosure. She felt it would have been an unnecessary and unethical intrusion to try to push the participant into disclosing more than he felt comfortable doing. She was conscious of the fact that it was a privilege to be allowed into the private and personal world of each participant and she wished to respect his or her boundaries.

4. CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

The researcher is aware that the more traditional approach is to firstly present the findings of a research study and then to discuss them. However, it seemed to her more appropriate to integrate the two. What follows, therefore, is an integration of the presentation and discussion of the findings. The initial discussion is intended to bestow 'transparency' on the process of the data analysis. The subsequent discussion explores the key and minor themes identified from the data in relation to the extant literature.

4.2. Inductive Generation of Themes

4.2.1. First Order Coding

Following a phenomenological approach to the generation of data, the researcher did not use the literature review to generate data deductively. The inductive method was used almost exclusively, to generate themes from the data. There was one exception to this. The initial literature review showed one theme so strongly that the researcher followed this up in her retrospective review of the literature. This was the theme of 'unhappy childhoods'.

The following table gives the full list of 28 themes, which were initially generated as First Order Coding in Thematic analysis.

TABLE 1 EXAMPLE OF FIRST ORDER CODING

First career	Other therapies were not complete enough	Further developments of Assagioli's Ideas
Religious and spiritual background	Own spirituality	Sense of life purpose found in Psychosynthesis
Unhappy experience in own family	Status of psychology/psychotherapy	Psychosynthesis gives a therapeutic framework in which to understand life
Influence of another person in choice	Own personality	Going 'Home' when found Psychosynthesis
Previous counselling training	Choice later in life	Internal problems within Psychosynthesis Community
Early negative view of Psychosynthesis	Contact with Esalen	Psychosynthesis has higher values
Been in own personal therapy for own needs	Needed to change own life	Doesn't like other therapies
Role as a child in family	Felt guided to Psychosynthesis	Psychosynthesis is experiential
Psychosynthesis worked	Later relationships as an adult	
Psychosynthesis as a scientific basis	Drawn to the esoteric	

Some of the initial themes seemed to relate to Internal influences upon the participants' choice of career such as personality characteristics or subjective feelings. Others appeared to be related to external factors such as the influence of significant people in their lives, or a feature of the Psychosynthesis model that was attractive to them. The researcher therefore grouped the initial themes into two categories: external and internal

factors influencing choice. This however, did not prove to be productive in further levels of analysis and so was subsequently discontinued.

4.2.2. Second Order Coding

At the next stage of the analysis, the skill required is:

...in finding expressions which are high level enough to allow theoretical connections within and across cases, but which are still grounded in the particularity of the thing said (Smith and Osborn, 2008,p.68).

Although the researcher is now moving from the initial descriptive level of coding to a more interpretive level, Langdrige (2004) cautions that the researcher needs to remain open-minded at this stage and does not try to impose meaning on the text.

The interpretive code of 'dysfunctional family background' encapsulated the essence of certain of the data chunks, which were perceived to connect to a number of related themes, which had emerged across six interview transcripts. These related themes included:

Parentification, projection, isolation, separation, lack of love, low self-esteem and over protection.

4.2.3. Third Order Coding or Pattern Coding

The third major step in thematic analysis is that of interpreting the pattern through further development of the codes. Codes at this subsequent level will be superordinate constructs that capture the overall meaning of some of the descriptive and interpretive codes. In Thematic Analysis, this higher level of coding may blur into the next stage, which is in fact termed "thematic analysis", and consequently, three distinct levels of coding are not always recognised. In IPA, this process is referred to as Structuring or Connecting the Themes.

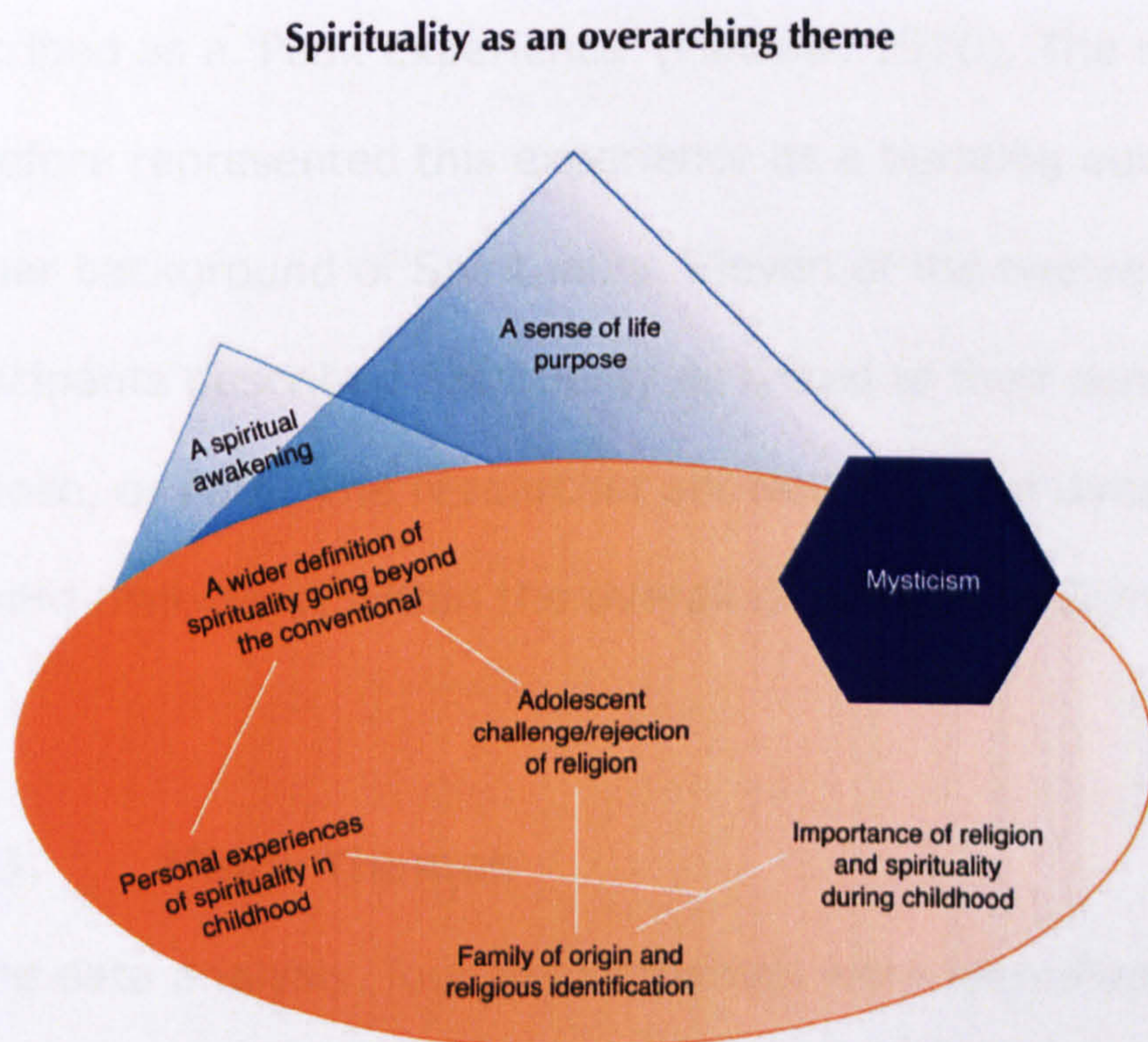
If some themes are perceived as clustering, hierarchies of meaning may emerge with certain themes appearing as superordinate concepts and others as subordinate. Clusters of themes need to be labelled in a way that captures the overall meaning of the clusters.

At this stage in thematic analysis, some themes will again disappear, either because they become subsumed under superordinate themes or because they are seen as redundant.

4.2.4. Superordinate Constructs

Two major themes were identified in the analysis, these were: Spirituality (with a distinct dimension related to Mysticism) and Inclusiveness. The following diagram illustrates the clustering of themes around the overarching major theme of Spirituality

FIGURE 4: SPIRITUALITY AS AN OVERARCHING THEME



personal experiences of a mystical nature. Visually, the researcher chose to represent Mysticism as a jewel and so it is drawn with a number of facets to show this. A jewel is a phenomenon, which is out of the ordinary and perceived as precious. This represents the special nature of the experiences recounted by those three participants. Three of the participants appeared to have a gradual awakening to Spirituality but one experienced a sudden and dramatic awakening, which she described as a 'Peak Experience' (Maslow, 1970). The researcher therefore represented this experience as a bursting out from the calmer background of Spirituality. Eleven of the twelve participants described Spirituality as linked to their sense of Life Purpose, or Path. The researcher showed this as a dynamic, forward trajectory, within the overall dimension of Spirituality.

4.3. Minor Themes

In the data analysis, four minor themes were identified in addition to the two major themes. The researcher never the less considered the minor themes to be significant in terms of the therapists' choice. These were: the Techniques of Psychosynthesis; the Experiential nature of Psychosynthesis; Heart and Mind and Marginality. All of these four themes were judged to be highly relevant to the choice made and

consequently they were retained. The following table illustrates this stage in the analysis.

TABLE 2: MAJOR AND MINOR THEMES

Major themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spirituality (and mysticism)• Inclusiveness
Minor themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Techniques of Psychosynthesis• Heart and Mind• Marginality• Experiential Nature of Psychosynthesis

Having described the process by which the themes were generated from the data, the researcher goes on to discuss the findings. Three issues were felt to require a retrospective exploration of the extant literature. These were, childhood dynamics, spirituality and mysticism. Although the theme of 'inclusiveness' had emerged as a major theme, it was judged to be too amorphous to facilitate a focused search of the literature in any productive sense. The first of these to be explored is that of childhood family dynamics.

4.3.1. Participants' Family Dynamics

The results of the data analysis in relation to the dynamics of the participants' early life will now be presented in the light of the extant literature.

Unlike much of the earlier research discussed as part of the initial literature review, this study did not ask detailed questions of the therapists about their childhood experiences within the family. This was because the point of the research was different to that of other studies. They proposed to explore the effect of family experiences upon the subsequent choice to become a psychotherapist. This research took a more particular focus, which was to investigate what they themselves considered relevant in their life narrative to their choice of psychotherapeutic model.

The researcher therefore asked the minimum number of questions (five key questions) as prompts and did not directly ask the participants about their relationship with their parents. Questions about family relationships were only posed if the therapist themselves introduced the issue as significant to their life narrative. Consequently, the amount of data gathered about the childhood family dynamics of the therapists, varied from therapist to therapist. Some offered no information at all about their relationship with one or other parent. Some spoke more about their relationship with one parent than another. The researcher interpreted this as indicative of the significance attributed by that person, to the family dynamic.

The findings in respect of childhood experience and family dynamics are presented in the following section.

4.3.2. Childhood experience and Family Dynamics

Earlier research had differentiated between the experiences of female and male therapists with their parents. This related to a perceived difference in dynamic based upon the gender of the parent and that of the child. Consequently, the researcher will report the childhood experiences of the participants in relation to both male and female parents in so far as information was volunteered.

4.3.3. Female therapists relationship with parents

D was born in America. She did not talk of her relationship with her parents. However, she did say that she came from 'a dysfunctional family' in which there was no love. Her parents were married to and divorced from each other four times! **D** was a Maid of Honour at two of the weddings. As a child she would often feel bewildered with her own life and with her family. She was one of three children. Both of her brothers had addiction problems, one with drink and the other with drugs.

DY spent a lot of her childhood away from her parents. Her father was a planter, in India and **DY** was sent back to England, to be educated in a Roman Catholic boarding school. She said she therefore had some understanding of the loss felt by people who have lost their families. Her Grandmother was an important figure to her and she spent quite a lot of time with her when she was in England. She was one of two children, having a brother who later lived in Rhodesia and was a pilot.

E was the third child in a family of nine children. She was born in a rural part of America and her family lived on a farm. She became her mother's helper and did many chores to help her look after the babies and with household tasks such as churning the milk and butter and running for water. Even as a child, other people came to talk to her about their problems, including her dentist when she went for treatment! She seemed to have a kind of wisdom, even when she was young. Her account of her childhood and family life seemed a happy one. She made no mention of her father.

Participant **I** was one of two sisters. She was born in America. Her parents had no interest in her or who she was. Her parents were only interested in money and appearances and her sister was the "perfect daughter" because she shared their values. She

felt really alone and unhappy in her family and had very low self-esteem.

MF was the eldest of six children, born into a middleclass family in America. Her father was a doctor. The family became overshadowed after her father was involved in a serious road accident and became addicted to the morphine he was given for his injuries. This was the family secret and **MF** became her mother's confidante as a teenager. She worried a lot about her father and prayed for him.

MK was one of three children, having two older brothers. She was brought up in South Africa. **MK** had a difficult relationship with her mother whose own mother had died when she was young. **MK** felt that her mother had unconsciously looked to her to replace the mother she had lost and whom she continued to idealise even into her eighties. **MK** only mentioned her father to say that he was the "classic absent father of the day". She felt unseen by her mother, whom, she felt, only saw her projections (which she put on to her daughter). **MK** coped with this as a young child by 'shutting down'. She was very quiet and withdrawn and until the age of seven, hardly spoke outside the home. She described herself as 'an elective mute'. Her family didn't provide her with much safety, but it was a place of relative

safety. From an early age she started to look for another family and from the age of four, she formed a very close friendship with two other girls and spent more time with their families than with her own.

N grew up in America in the Depression. Her mother had been married previously and **N** had a half-sister who was thirteen years older than her. When **N** was a toddler, she went with her sister to singing and dancing lessons. **N's** mother had been a musician in an all-girl band, before she married **N's** father. **N's** parents put her on the stage when she was just two years old, and from the age of two until seven, she spent most of the time travelling from one town to another, to perform. Her parents had plans for her to be another Shirley Temple. She did five shows a day, including one at night, when she had to be woken up from sleep, to perform. But 'luckily' she did not have to go to Hollywood, even though her parents had signed a contract, because when she was seven her father was involved in a serious accident.

Her childhood experience as a performer had a strong effect on her life. She learned subsequently to do things 'just well enough' so that she would not be required to perform. When she became

a mother herself, she had a terror of her son being able to sing, in case he went through the same experience.

4.3.4. Male therapists relationship with parents

A spoke very little about his family life as a child. He was born into a middleclass, cultured Italian family. His parents brought him up within a conventional Roman Catholic faith. They gave him a lot of freedom and modelled values such as respect for others, honesty and dignity.

M was born into a rich, bourgeois Italian family. He had an unhappy relationship with his father, who was very domineering, authoritarian and a 'threatening presence'. His father spent very little time with him. He was brought up as a Catholic. His father was a Catholic, but his mother was Jewish. He was much closer to his mother than his father and had a close relationship with his female relatives, especially his aunt (mother's sister) to whom he opened his heart, his cousins and his grandmother). He was very interested in the fairy stories his grandmother told him. **M** was sensitive, shy, introverted and easily hurt. His feelings were more important to him than action. He had a talent for drawing and writing. As a child, his feminine side was stronger than his masculine side. In late childhood he developed fears about death and wondered why some people die young.

P was born into a middleclass Italian family. His father had a pharmacy and had hopes that **P** would one day work in it. He had a conventional Roman Catholic upbringing and served as an altar boy. As a boy he was shy, nervous and awkward with other people, especially girls.

T was born into a French speaking, Vietnamese family, in Vietnam. He was the third of four children. Two brothers were born before him and a sister was born after him. His mother was eighteen when she married **T's** father. **T's** two younger brothers both died at an early age, within six months of each other. His mother was severely traumatised by their deaths and carried a huge guilt for it. She lost a great deal of weight and developed an obsessive/compulsive disorder. She became obsessed about hygiene and washed continually. She was terrified that **T** might also die and so she kept him away from any risk and they developed a very close relationship. When **T** was twelve, the family moved to Cannes in the South of France, where his father set up a small business. The business did not prosper however, and so, two years later, they moved back to Vietnam, but left **T** in France, at a boarding school where he remained until he was nineteen years old. **T** was a withdrawn boy and found it hard to

make friends in France, describing French society of that time as 'very closed'.

W was born into a Welsh family and he was an only child. His mother almost died giving birth to him and she was warned not to have any more children. **W** had a very unconventional family background. His parent's relationship was not a happy one. He felt that both parents abused him, in different ways. His mother and maternal grandmother were Celtic mystics and the secret knowledge, which they held, was meant to be passed down from mother to daughter through the generations. However, as she had only a son, he became the unwilling and disinterested recipient of the esoteric knowledge at the age of five. She manipulated the bones in his neck so that he 'forgot' the knowledge until he was an adult, when she reversed the process by another manipulation. **W** felt spiritually abused by his mother but he was sexually abused by his father from the age of eight or nine. The abuse stopped when he was twelve but **W** suffered from depression in his mid-teens and he attributed this to the earlier abuse.

4.3.5. Conclusions

Overall, the data analysis supported the findings of earlier research, which suggested that many therapists have a

dysfunctional family background. Two of the twelve participants in this research study seemed to fit the category of 'parentification' (Burton, 1994; DiCaccavo, 2002; Fussell and Bonney, 1990). **E** became her mothers little helper, and became very good at anticipating her needs. She also matched the 'self-efficacy' concept, coming to see herself as good at helping others from an early age. **T** because he was over-protected by his mother from an early age, following the deaths of his two older brothers. This reflects DiCaccavo's (2002) finding of gender differences in parentification dynamics.

Six of the twelve therapists had very unhappy childhoods within families that displayed a range of dysfunctional patterns. This included addictions, abuse, projections and separation. The classic Freudian concept of Projection as a defence mechanism (Freud, 1952) can also be framed in Psychosynthesis theory as being 'unseen'. This is an interpersonal dynamic explored by Firman and Gila in their book, "The Primal Wound". Firman &Gila assert that:

This primal wound is the result of a violation we all suffer in various ways. In this violation we are treated not as individual, unique human beings, but as objects. Our supportive milieu- whether early caregivers, peers, institutions, or society at large-does not see us as we truly are, and instead force us to become the objects of its own purposes. In Martin Buber's (1958) terms, we are treated as 'It's' rather than 'Thou's'. Here we are wrenched away from experiencing ourselves as feeling, thinking subjects

and thrust toward experiencing ourselves as soulless objects. Our intrinsic, authentic sense of self is plunged into the experience of annihilation and non-being. Child abuse and neglect, sexist and racist culture, and bonding to wounded caregivers are just some of the very many ways we receive the primal wounding (Firman & Gila, 1997, pp.1-2).

They continue:

In psychological terms, our connection to our deeper Self is wounded. In religious and philosophical terms, it is our connection to the Ultimate Reality, The Ground of Being, or the Divine that is broken. No matter how we elect to describe it, the fact remains that this wounding cuts us off from the deeper roots of our existence (Firman & Gila, 1997, p.2).

Only two of the twelve therapists seemed to have enjoyed a 'happy' childhood, these were **A** and **MF**.

However, what the researcher might interpret as a negative childhood experience was not always perceived this way by the subject. **E**, for example, became a 'parentified' child because her mother needed so much help with a family of nine children. However, in telling her life story, she did not talk about this as a negative experience in any way, except to acknowledge that she sometimes got very tired and used to seek refuge down by the creek, where she couldn't hear her mother's voice calling her. Undoubtedly, being needed can engender feelings of self-worth and self-validation that are positive experiences and which may contribute to a positive self-concept (Rogers, 1951).

Five of the twelve therapists had experienced severe emotional trauma as children, within their family of origin (**D, I, MK, W and T**). Of these five, two had experienced emotional rejection of the type described by Menninger (1956) in earlier research, these were **D** and Participant **I**.

MK had suffered emotional rejection in an indirect way as her mother had projected her own needs onto her, seeing her as the idealised mother she herself had lost at an early age.

T had been 'held' too tight emotionally following the family trauma of the deaths of his two young brothers within six months of each other.

W had been subjected to sexual abuse by his own father and to spiritual and emotional abuse by his mother. A further six of the therapists had experienced varying degrees of emotional distress in their lives, but not emotional rejection.

M described his childhood as unhappy, in part because his father was authoritarian.

N, on the surface, had a happy childhood, but was put on the stage as a child performer, before she was even two years old.

In her interview she recounted her panic when she heard her four-year-old son sing, because she equated that with being on the stage. As a consequence, she went into Freudian analysis at the age of thirty.

D did not describe her childhood as unhappy, but was sent home to England to boarding school at the age of seven. In her interview she commented that she could easily empathise with the loss of separation, because of her own childhood experience.

MF seemed to have had a happy childhood but family life was changed dramatically for the worse when her father, a doctor, became addicted to morphine following a serious road accident. She carried the family secret, becoming her mother's 'confidante'. When her father later committed suicide, she was distraught and entered therapy.

E appeared to have had a happy childhood but was severely traumatised at the age of seventeen by being the victim of an attempted rape. She entered therapy in an attempt to heal this trauma.

P had an authoritarian and dogmatic father and perhaps as a result, became painfully shy, awkward and withdrawn as a young

man. He had no intention of going into therapy, but got into meditation as a way of helping himself with his 'uneasiness'. He met Assagioli after spending time at Esalen where Assagioli's work was well known and respected. He got into therapy as a by-product of studying with Assagioli and working as his secretary.

Of all twelve therapists, **A** appeared to be the only one to have enjoyed a 'normal' 'happy' childhood. He did not go into therapy to resolve emotional issues as certain of the therapists did. He was drawn gradually into the practices of Psychosynthesis through his friendship with **P**, in the army, and his enjoyment of meditation and visualisation.

It can be seen therefore, that the therapists interviewed for this research study did not exhibit a uniform pattern of emotional rejection in their families, in the way that Menninger (1956) posited.

However, the researcher suggests that to relate unhappy childhood experiences within the family to a later choice of career as an adult is too attribute causation to those childhood experiences. The phenomenological perspective adopted in this research study focused on explanation/meaning, rather than on

causation. Further more, to make such an interpretive link would frame the participants' choice in pathological terms. The researcher suggests that an alternative, transpersonal perspective, can suggest a meaning, which frames the choice in a positive, rather than in a negative way. The literature on a career as a 'calling' (Hall and Chandler, 2005) discussed in Chapter one of this thesis supports such an interpretation and consequently challenges the pathologising of the career choice. The literature on 'subjective career' also supports the finding that the career choice had a deep level of meaning for these therapists in terms of a powerful sense of life purpose, rather than being judged as 'merely' an interesting and rewarding profession.

Consequently, the findings that emerged, related specifically to this exploration. These will now be reported.

4.4. Key Themes

Following the approach described in the methodology section, two major themes and four minor themes emerged from the interview data.

The major themes were:

- Spirituality (reported by 12 therapists)

- Inclusivity (reported by 10 therapists)

However, the theme of Spirituality subsumed the theme of Mysticism. This was reported by three therapists, who referred directly and explicitly to personal Mystical experiences. Others (4) referred to mysticism indirectly, describing their involvement with esoteric literature and the role it had played in their life. The major theme of Spirituality will therefore be explored first, both in relation to the data analysis and to the extant literature. The sub theme of Mysticism will be discussed subsequent to the exploration of the major overarching theme of Spirituality.

The minor themes were:

- The techniques of Psychosynthesis (reported by 4 therapists)
- Heart and Mind (reported by 2 therapists)
- Marginality (reported by 2 therapists)
- The Experiential nature of Psychosynthesis (reported by 2 therapists)

The major theme of Spirituality will be considered first.

4.4.1. Spirituality

Spirituality emerged as a key theme in the interviews. All 12 therapists referred to Spirituality as an important, if not central part of their identity.

4.4.2. Spirituality explored

Five aspects of their Spiritual experience emerged in the analysis, which were:

- Spirituality in their family of origin
- Awareness of Spirituality in their childhood
- A wider definition of Spirituality, going beyond the conventional
- A Spiritual Awakening
- Spirituality as linked to a sense of Life Purpose

4.4.3. Spirituality in Family of Origin

Eight of the therapists described Spirituality as being present in their family of origin. This was usually related to conventional religion. Six of these came from a Christian background and of these, four were brought up within a conventional Roman Catholic background, and two within a Protestant family. The eighth grew up within a matriarchal, unconventional, Celtic/Mystic tradition.

The remaining four therapists made no reference at all in the interviews to Spirituality or conventional religion when talking about their family of origin. This was interpreted as a lack of significance of this factor in their family of origin. However, for the most part, these therapists did not see this as something missing in their childhoods. The possible exception to this was Participant **I**, who described a sense of emptiness inside herself as a child, because her parents were only interested in material things. The life narratives showed a wider conception of spirituality developing as the participants grew into adulthood. This is discussed later in this chapter.

4.4.4. Experience of Spirituality as a Child

Five of the therapists reported experiences in childhood as the beginning of their spirituality. **A** said:

It was present in some moments of childhood, some kind of wonder, a moment of suspension in time...very intense, still, rich. I can still connect with this feeling (L.233-236).

MF remembered, at about the age of two, standing on the settee in the front room, looking out at the beautiful elm trees, looking out at the world, as it were, and wondering where it all came from, and what it was all about. This was one of her first memories. A few years later, when she was sent to Convent school:

...and I obviously had some kind of teaching about God and angels and all that kind of stuff...but, all I can remember is that I had some kind of deep connection with God, whatever that meant (L415-418).

M said:

Going to the roots of my childhood, there had always been my interest in Spirituality, so it was an open channel (there were some closing points, some breaks, but still the search was there (L.476-479).

E recalled her daily practice of going down to the orchard to pray as a child.

MK was not conscious of Spirituality as a child but, in reflecting on her childhood in the interview, definitely interpreted her marginalised position as an elective mute, as related to Spirituality. **MK** did not speak outside the home until she was about seven years old. She said:

I wouldn't speak because I was too frightened, so I think that I've always felt that more marginal living, living on the edges, is always more conducive to a Spiritual Awareness (L.87-89) ...I think it lays the ground for openness to a more transpersonal awareness (L.94-95).

This derived from a greater capacity to observe and to reflect because of the lack of engagement in the world, a tendency to "split off " and live in another realm, an inner world.

4.4.5. A Wider Definition of Spirituality, going beyond their own religious background

A number of the therapists had grown up within families that adhered to quite rigid religious frameworks. Some of them rejected this as adolescents and went on to develop their own personal spiritual beliefs.

A, for example, said he had dropped all interest in institutionalized religion at 15, and was more interested in sex and billiards.

P stated that by the time he was 17, he was through with religion and looking for other paths. He said:

I was a very dutiful follower; until I became an adolescent...I became a dutiful rebel. I started to rebel against all of it, without saying anything to my family...I just discarded within myself the Catholic religion as something that didn't make sense any more (L. 283-287).

M was strongly influenced by his religious background in his adolescence. He was particularly interested in the Jesuits, whom he described as the most intellectual in the Catholic field. However, at the end of his adolescence, he broke with Catholicism. He felt that it created too big a tension in his life. He wanted to enjoy life and be open, whereas Catholicism was:

...too narrow, too constricting (L.245).

All of the therapists, including those who had been brought up within what might be viewed as a rigid religious family setting, had gone on to develop their own, wider views of spirituality as distinct from religious dogma.

For example, **DY** had been educated at a convent school and in her thirties had entered a religious order. However, she was excited by the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, and was an avid reader of his work on the Evolution of Thought and The Omega Point. Teilhard was a Christian mystic and professional geologist whose many writings sought to bridge the gap between science and religion, but also challenged conventional Catholic thinking of the time.

MF had also been brought up within a very conventional Catholic tradition, attending a convent school and later choosing to go to a Roman Catholic college for women. Later, however, as an adult, she joined a Philosophy School, which she described as eclectic but linked with Hinduism and this was an important part of her life for 20 years. She studied Sanskrit for a year and was then able to chant in Sanskrit. **MF** described her sense of Spirituality as continuously expanding:

My sense of Spirituality became bigger than the family, it became a sense, you know, of social issues, world issues (L.526-528).

M was another who grew up as part of a conventional Catholic family though even as a child, his way was:

...never completely Orthodox, following rules (L.189).

Even as a child he questioned the inequalities in the world and struggled to make sense of this in terms of the Orthodox framework. As a young man, still searching for an answer in the Spiritual realm, he explored the ideas of the Existentialists, Marxism, and Social Theory. When he met Assagioli and gradually became interested in the model of Psychosynthesis, he:

...met the transpersonal dimension (and) felt he had come home (L.486-487).

P also was raised in a Catholic household but rebelled against it and disassociated himself from it as a teenager. As a young man

P was looking for a Spiritual path :

...that didn't have a church behind it, that wasn't rigid and didn't have a structure of dogma and of ritual that you had to go through (L.321-326).

He explained that he became drawn to Eastern religions more than Western traditions because they:

...show you the way to Transcendence and the means to do it, quite pragmatic without asking too much of you in terms of dogma (L.323-326).

E came from a conventional Protestant background in rural America. Whilst her childhood and adolescence reflected this in her devout daily prayer and meditation, as an adult she was introduced to the esoteric books of Alice Bailey. She judged them to be in harmony with and complementary to the Christian doctrine and felt she had been able to blend the two into a coherent philosophy. **E**, therefore, did not reject her Christian faith but went on to integrate the esoteric knowledge with the conventional Spiritual framework.

A grew up within a traditional Catholic family. His interest in religion just disappeared by the time he was 15. Although he read a lot as a young man:

...any interest in Spirituality was absent (L.346).

As a young man in the army he met **P** who was studying Psychosynthesis under Assagioli. Through **P** he was introduced to the practice of meditation and visualisation and so his Interest In Spirituality came about indirectly. It was awakened by his experiences of meditation and visualisation. These experiences opened the door to the transpersonal model of Psychosynthesis, which is not tied to a Christian framework of the Spiritual. It draws upon Eastern and Western philosophies and many of the great Spiritual traditions of both West and East.

N was brought up within a broad Protestant tradition. Her early life on the stage led to constant travel from one town to another. Wherever they were, the family attended whichever church took her father's fancy. But as well as their involvement in what **N** called 'classic religion' they were always fascinated by:

...the unknown, the unreal, the unseen (L.14-16).

N had a mixed ethnic heritage that included Native American Indian and for some reason she always felt that somehow gave credence to the fact that she had extra-sensory perception. So **N's** background was not entirely conventional in Spiritual terms. When **N** decided to train as a Psychosynthesis therapist she saw her decision in terms of the Hindu conception of the four stages of life. Hinduism teaches that there are four stages of life. The purpose of the first stage is to learn, the second is to produce, the third is to give back and the fourth is to prepare to die. **N** realised that she was in the third stage and needed to give back, and the best way to give back:

...because I am really one of God's very spoiled children, was to train as a therapist (L.378-382).

Participant **I's** early life did not include a Spiritual dimension. She described her parent's life views as totally materialistic. Spirituality was something that entered her life when she found Psychosynthesis, and then she knew that in a sense she had

gone home (L.124). Even then, her perception was that Psychosynthesis seemed like:

... a wonderful house but you could not live in it because there was no bed, there was no furniture, you couldn't really live in it (L.125-127).

When she was introduced to the esoteric books of Alice Bailey, she saw that she didn't have to move home; the two added together were complete.

W's situation was that he grew up in a totally unconventional family. This was particularly so in respect of the religious and Spiritual environment. His mother was descended from a matriarchal Celtic-Mystic tradition. As **W** was her only child, and a male, he became the recipient of the tradition and its lore. However, he had no interest in the tradition or in any other Spiritual tradition as a child or adolescent.

As a young man he became interested in Buddhism and recognised some parallels with the Mystic tradition of his mother, but he:

...wasn't a Buddhist in any real sense... but... a kind of pop, mid-sixties Buddhist (L.23-26).

By the time he was 20/21 he had become:

...more interested in Western Mystic traditions and Western Esotericism and Celtic things (L.27).

His view of Spirituality developed into something far removed from the traditional and conventional.

T made no mention of religion or Spirituality in discussing his childhood and adolescence. As a young adult he felt acutely lonely as a student in Paris. His family had returned to live in Vietnam. He took up the practice of yoga at the suggestion of one of his teachers, hoping that this might help him to 'open up'.

Later on, meditation became part of his personal practice. T became very involved with Tibetan Buddhism and helped to introduce some Tibetan Masters to France:

I organised the first ashram for Sogyal Rimoché and in 1990, I introduced Thich Nhat Hanh (L.359-360).

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, who went on to become famous in France, though he was not known there before T publicised his work in France. T therefore could not be described as someone who had gone beyond the conventional in his Spirituality but perhaps as one who returned to his cultural 'norm' as an adult in his involvement with Buddhism. However, the broader Spirituality of Psychosynthesis would be in harmony with Buddhist practices but go beyond its parameters in its theoretical model.

4.4.6. Spiritual Awakening

The interviews revealed a varied pattern of awakening Spirituality. Four of the therapists seemed always to have been in touch with their own Spirituality and did not talk of experiencing an awakening. **E**, for example, seemed to have been actively aware of her own Spirituality since childhood, she talked of going down to the orchard to pray and meditate as a young girl.

M traced the 'roots' of his Spirituality back to his childhood:

...it was always there, so it was an open channel (L.189-192).

MF said that:

...the thread (of Spirituality) was so powerfully present for me, from a kind of age two, right up through my university years, and it was continually expanding in terms of its expression (L.538-541).

N described 'Classic religion' as one of three themes that had always been present in her life, but she did not elaborate on what that might mean to her in terms of Spirituality. Her childhood experience was of a mix of conventional Christianity and the unorthodox, in the taken-for-granted acceptance of her extra-sensory powers. So, in some senses, Spirituality formed a backdrop in her life from her early years.

Others of the research participants experienced a gradual awakening to their own Spirituality. **A** experienced an expansion of consciousness when he was introduced to the techniques of meditation and Guided visualisation. Later, when he worked for Assagioli, he felt he was changing, not at the conscious but at the unconscious level, and that he was with a:

...great soul (L.204).

W's interest in Spirituality grew over the years. He firstly explored Buddhism:

... in a rather superficial way (L.27).

He later became interested in Western Mystery Traditions and Western and Eastern Esotericism. It was when he learned more about Psychosynthesis that he realised he needed to ground the Spirituality he was exploring in himself.

T did not describe his experience of Spirituality as an awakening. A sense of his groping towards it perhaps can be drawn from his adolescent experiments with Yoga, in as much as the practice involves stilling the mind from the stream of consciousness. Later on, his involvement in Buddhism and his practice of Meditation are more concrete examples of his growing Spirituality. By the time he is an adult Spirituality seems established as central tenet. He acknowledged that:

The Spiritual connotation that I found in Psychosynthesis resonates with a deep part of my identity, an essential part of my identity, a Spiritual part (L.558-559).

Participant **I** did not speak of Spirituality as a part of her early life. But, as an adult, she went into therapy with Robert Gerard who:

...had one foot in Psychosynthesis and then one foot in the Esoteric (L.284-285).

In the course of her therapy she came to understand not only the concept but also the experience of the Higher Self (L.322-323). In Psychosynthesis, the Higher Self is equated with the Soul. So for Participant **I**, her own Spirituality came as a discovery in the process of personal therapy. I developed her own personal understanding of the Higher Self by blending Psychosynthesis with the ideas of the esoteric teachings of Alice Bailey.

MK seemed uninterested in Spirituality for most of her young adult life. She had been depressed for some time as well as bored and unstimulated with her job as a physiotherapist. She:

...was dabbling in all kinds of Humanistic type therapies and starting to cast around for one to train in (L.15-17).

Her first encounter with Psychosynthesis was not at all positive:

I hated it...I just couldn't get, didn't understand what this transpersonal stuff was about (L. 25-26).

A year later she was persuaded by a friend to:

...have another go and I liked it and I guess I was more receptive, less emotionally identified, a little bit more open to the essence of what the model had. So I don't think I was originally drawn to it because of its Spiritual dimension. I think, after the Essentials, you know, I think that's what attracted me in the Essentials (L. 33-38).

Later on however, when she started to explore her own Spirituality, as distinct from Psychosynthesis, it initiated a process of Spiritual Awakening.

One of the therapists stood out in having experienced a dramatic moment of Spiritual awakening, which was subsequently followed by an extended period of Spiritual awakening. **D** made no mention of Spirituality in talking about her childhood and early life. She described her family as 'dysfunctional', and said that as a child she had had a very positive experience of therapy, which motivated her to want to be a therapist. She spent five years living at the Esalen community, which:

...in the sixties was the top place in America for Human Potential (L.11).

From an initial training in Gestalt therapy at Esalen, she went on to the MA in Confluent Education at the University of Santa Barbara. George Brown (1977) taught the course and he urged her to enrol on a graduate course in Psychosynthesis at Columbia University as:

...everything you are saying is more this Psychosynthesis stuff (L.26).

D said of that course:

And that was my first awakening, in Psychosynthesis, in a university environment (L.29).

She loved it and so went on to do the Essentials (which is the preliminary course required before undertaking training as a Psychosynthesis therapist).

Subsequently she came to meet Assagioli, almost serendipitously, as she accompanied her British husband on a trip to Europe. Whilst in Europe she decided it would be interesting to meet Assagioli, although at that point she still saw herself as a Gestalt therapist and was not overly impressed with Psychosynthesis, except for its techniques. She was about 24 years old when she met Assagioli and it was a 'peak experience' (Maslow 1970).

She said:

The room was full of light and I had a feeling, without even speaking to him yet, that I had come home in a big way...it was a big, big mystical experience (L.41-46).

She continued:

...that experience of Awakening, or of meeting him, I think it is a moment of Grace. I don't know many people that have had one experience that has been as strong six years later, as it was in that room (L.51-54).

D stayed with Assagioli for several months, studying Psychosynthesis, doing therapy with him and working for him:

I spent several months with Assagioli and that really came along side of, I don't know if it triggered it or if it greatly energised the Spiritual awakening, all this was happening in the same period and Assagioli helped me tremendously Spiritually (L.41-50).

4.4.7. Spirituality and Sense of Life Purpose

Eleven of the therapists spoke of Spirituality as featuring explicitly or implicitly in their own 'path' and in their sense of life purpose and direction. It was an influential factor in their choice of career as a Psychosynthesis therapist. **MK** was the only therapist not to speak of a life purpose or of a link between life purpose and Spirituality.

A saw his career choice as much more than a means to earn money. Not only was he helping others through his work but he was also redeeming himself. Whilst he:

...didn't have in (his) heart this propensity to work for others, I think that for me this work has been a protection for my soul, to avoid being ego-centric, a sort of obligation to take notice and care of the needs of others (L.502).

DY worked as a Physical Education teacher for many years but became increasingly aware that she wanted something deeper.

The idea of entering a convent:

...kept hammering at the back of my head and at the end of four years, after an horrendous struggle, I don't know how I did it, I decided to enter (L.197-199).

She continued:

Looking back, I just don't know how I did it and this is what I feel, that this power of knowing something is happening and yet every part of your psyche revolts against it to some extent, and yet there were some bits that were attracted (L.205-208).

She later 'somehow' met Louis Marteau, who was about to set up a counselling service for Religious who were troubled by the huge upheavals taking place within the Catholic Church after Vatican II. She undertook a two-year counselling course and did her placement at the Dympna Centre, which provided this counselling for Religious. There she met Miceal O'Reagan, a Dominican, psychologist and philosopher, who was training as a Psychosynthesis therapist:

He was quite unique in the sense that he was following quite a different line from his own congregation at the time (L.237-241).

She felt drawn to the model of Psychosynthesis and went on to undertake the three-year training as a Psychosynthesis therapist.

She said:

So that is how I started in Psychosynthesis and what I like about it is that it's got its Spiritual dimension which is inclusive and there is nothing rigid about it (L.77-79).

So **DY** felt she was:

...following something (L.244).

When she looked back she wondered:

God, however did I do it? And yet I knew at a deep level that this was my way (L.244-245).

P was drawn to the 'big' questions in life as a young man. His father had pushed him into studying Pharmacy at university, as he wanted **P** to follow in his footsteps and become involved in the family business of running a pharmacy. But **P** gave up his studies after a year and transferred to a Philosophy degree. He:

...wasn't interested in having a career, or making money but in philosophy, wisdom...in Spiritual things, in Enlightenment and so on (L.246-247).

but he didn't have any clear idea of what he wanted to do as a career.

Like **D** he spent some time (a month) at Esalen as a young adult and whilst there he heard the trainers talk about Assagioli and that they hoped to go to Italy to meet him. **P**'s interest was aroused and he wrote to Assagioli arranging to meet him.

When **P** finished his degree he went to stay with Assagioli for several months and was trained by him in exchange for being his assistant and secretary. As **P** got to know Assagioli better he:

...found him real and a person of very high Spiritual calibre (L.125).

P came to:

...buy Psychosynthesis, little by little, it was a gradual process, was on three levels. First, that it worked, that's the most important, and second, the Spiritual affinity with Psychosynthesis and especially with Assagioli and seeing that, you know, his own living testimonial, that it had certainly worked for him. And third, less important, but still important, it was convincing, but on all three levels I think I had to go deeper than the surface, because on the surface I was not that convinced at first (L.149-156).

As **P** worked with Assagioli he saw that:

I was changing, I was visibly changing in all the ways in which Esalen talked so much about I was happier, I was much less inhibited, I was much less rigid...I understood many more things about life, about human nature, about therapy and I saw, in a much clearer way a professional future for myself too (L.227-231).

Looking back over his career as a Psychosynthesis therapist, **P** observed that there have been times when he has doubted the whole journey:

...because I have doubts, I am a sceptic...(L.361)... but the message, both from my inner world and from whatever happens, say a session that goes well, or the acknowledgement from my student, or somebody writing to me and thanking me for the books I wrote, things like that, but its more the inner messages, but the message was always to persevere and keep going and to find again the connection that I had lost (367-368).

M linked his sense of Spirituality to an ideal of service to humanity. As a young man of 19, he saw the purpose of life as:

...to change something in the world, to do something not only for myself but on a larger scale (L.276-277).

He chose to study medicine at university rather than literature or philosophy:

...because medicine is more useful to people (L. 307).

For **MF**, Spirituality seemed to infuse her early involvement in issues of social justice. As a student at university she was elected as Student Representative for the National Federation of Catholic College Students. She said:

I was never ambitious, but I had a sense of having to do something (L.504-505).

The Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War with Russia were issues that particularly aroused her concern and she:

...ended up being quite a political person ...but driven really I think by this great...very much greater sense of Spirituality. My sense of Spirituality became bigger than the family, it became a sense of, and you know, social issues, world issues (L.525-528).

N had had a number of careers before she decided to train as a Psychosynthesis therapist. These included being on the stage and running a very successful business designing and making wall hangings and ribbon cushions. But later in life, her choice to train as a therapist was prompted by the awareness that she was at the 3rd stage of life, which she saw in terms of Hindu philosophy as a time to:

... give back, and the best way that I knew to give back...is to train (L.378-382).

This decision seems to share the value of Service, which was noted in relation to **M's** life decisions.

E was always deeply spiritual, even as a child, and running parallel to this was her 'natural' role in helping others:

People always came to me with problems from the time I was a teenager (L.156-157).

Even when she went to the dentist as a child, he would confide in her about his problems with his wife! **E** said:

I just seemed to have a certain kind of wisdom when I was young (L.179-180).

Later on, her own personal trauma as a young woman led her to seek therapeutic help to heal the psychological and emotional wounds. When she eventually found a therapy that healed them (Psychosynthesis) she wanted to:

...serve people in counselling and teaching (L.420).

So her life purpose always seemed to be that of service to others and this was intertwined with her deep spirituality.

Participant **I** worked as a junior school teacher for some years after graduating from university. But she only came to a sense of her own life purpose after she began the training in Psychosynthesis and was introduced to:

...what are really the Beatitudes, written in a more concrete, transpersonal approach (L.93).

It was then that:

I knew that my job as a human being was to live those attitudes of the Higher Self and to learn to understand what happened when I was not living them (L.96-97).

After her own lonely and unhappy family life, she understood the importance of 'good' parenting and she created a course for parents, children and professionals based upon both Psychosynthesis and the Esoteric works of Alice Bailey. Therefore, Participant **I**'s sense of her life purpose found expression in helping families to understand and improve their relationships and the basis of the model was a Spiritual understanding of human behaviour.

Although **T** originally planned a career teaching Business management, when he returned from Harvard to France the need for such teachers had been filled. But at Harvard he had stumbled across the Human Potential movement and spent a period of time at Esalen. Back in Paris he contacted others interested in setting up a centre for Human Potential and:

...we started the first Growth Centre in France, so we brought in American therapists...we introduced Humanistic Psychotherapy in France (L.192-194).

T felt strongly that his 'path' had been guided. The French government had paid his fees at Harvard and a merchant shipping company gave even his sea- crossing to America free:

I was guided to get there, and to go back and start all this work in France; it was more than my will (L.347-348).

W seemed to feel a sense of destiny in the path he had followed which led to training as a Psychosynthesis therapist. He identified parallels in the dynamics of his relationship with his mother and his later relationship with **D**, under whom he trained as a therapist. He said:

I'm saying this knowing what I'm saying, I think Psychosynthesis chose me, rather than I chose it (L.571-572).

W had initially trained as:

...an Educationalist (but)...it wasn't really me though...my interests were elsewhere, I was much more interested in Spiritual development, self-realisation... personal and Spiritual freedom were and still are, I think, the most important things (L.214-221).

4.4.8. Definition of Spirituality

Whilst Spirituality was a central feature in the lives of eleven of the therapists, they did not all articulate what they understood by it. Furthermore, the term 'transpersonal' was often used interchangeably with Spirituality. It is fair to assume that as the researcher herself had been trained in Psychosynthesis

counselling, a shared understanding was presumed and that the therapists felt no need to give an explanation. It is pertinent therefore, at this point, to articulate a Psychosynthesis perspective of both concepts so that these assumptions are made clear.

4.4.9. Spirituality and the Psychosynthesis Perspective

Assagioli used the term Spiritual:

...in its widest sense, to include not only specifically religious experiences, but all states of consciousness, and all those functions and activities which have to do with values above the norm: ethical, aesthetic, heroic, humanitarian and altruistic value (Assagioli, 1993, p.16).

Therefore, he was delineating three different aspects of the term. He felt that the term was often used in ways that created a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding. He suggested that a clearer grasp of the meaning could be achieved not by attempting to define it in words, but in what he saw as

... a more scientific approach: starting with facts and experience, and then interpreting what has been observed and discovered. ...The basic fact claiming our attention is experience and spiritual consciousness (Assagioli, 1993, p.19).

There are two aspects to this. Firstly,

... from the earliest times there have been human beings who have claimed to have experienced states of

consciousness which differed greatly -in quality, intensity and effect - from those that normally project their images of light and dark on the screen of human consciousness (Assagioli, 1993, p.19).

Secondly:

...they maintain that these states of consciousness are the result of coming or being brought involuntarily into contact with a plane or sphere of Reality which is 'above' or 'beyond' those which are normally regarded as 'real' (Assagioli, 1993,p.19).

Parallels could be drawn here with the experiences of many of the Christian mystics, e.g. Hildegard of Bingen, St Bonaventure and Julian of Norwich.

Assagioli argues that it is misleading to refer to this Reality, as is often done, as transcendent, because that implies something abstract and remote. On the contrary:

Those who have had fleeting glimpses of this reality testify that it is perceived as something more real, lasting and substantial than the everyday world in which we live, as the true source and essence of being, and as 'life in greater abundance (Assagioli, 1993, p.19).

Assagioli's use of the term 'transcendence' here is metaphorical. The experiences are not claimed to literally transport the individual to another spatial dimension in an external, objective sense, but rather in an internal and subjective sense.

Assagioli answers the criticism that there have been so many different, varied and even contradictory accounts of such experiences, as to defy any claim to objective credibility. He draws upon the earlier thoughts of William James (1901) that:

... each individual adds to the original experience a series of inexact personal structures, structures to which he is often firmly attached, both mentally and emotionally. It is this diversity that has caused the confusion, wrong ideas and doubts that surround the subject (Assagioli, 1993, p.21, quoting James, 1901).

Assagioli argues that these differences are not surprising and

...should not in any way invalidate the fundamental reality of the experiences themselves (Assagioli, 1993, pp.21-22).

He asserts that not only is it perfectly natural, it is also almost inevitable that such differences should occur. This is for two reasons. The first relates to his assertions about the nature of Reality being a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon:

It should not surprise us, therefore, when the many aspects of that Reality have produced such different perceptions of what has been seen (Assagioli, 1993, p.22).

One could also argue that the unique nature of the experience of each individual is in itself an authentication of that experience. It is a deeply personal encounter. In comparison, reports of 'sightings' of Unidentified Flying Objects share a common pattern that one could argue are almost stereotypical and therefore easy to fabricate.

The second factor relates to the subjective experience of each person involved. As Assagioli argues, there are:

...vast dissimilarities which exist in the psycho-physical make-up of the observers, as well as in their mental development and their historic and cultural preparation for the experiences they have had. One and the same aspect of Reality may therefore be perceived, interpreted and related in different ways (Assagioli, 1993, p.22).

This assertion is supported by Kelly's (Kelly, 1955) work on Personal Constructs. From this perspective one could argue that each individual construes his or her experience in a deeply personal way.

Assagioli (1993) preferred the term 'transpersonal' to Spiritual.

He acknowledged that the 'transpersonal' was a term:

...introduced above all by Maslow and by those of his school to refer to what is commonly called spiritual (Assagioli, 1993, p. 16).

Assagioli considered that:

Scientifically speaking, it is a better word; it is more precise and, in a certain sense, neutral in that it points to that which is beyond or above ordinary personality. Furthermore it avoids confusion with many things, which are now called Spiritual but are actually pseudo-spiritual or para-psychological (Assagioli, 1993, p.16).

Assagioli considered that an expansion of consciousness could be developed in three directions:

1. Downwards.

2. Horizontally.

3.Upwards.

He described a downward expansion of consciousness as occurring when the lower unconscious either wells-up into the conscious mind, or is deliberately explored in depth psychology.

Consciousness can also expand horizontally, through a process of:

... participation and identification with others, with nature and with things. It is the impulse to flee consciousness of oneself and to immerse oneself in the collective unconsciousness (Assagioli, 1993, p.43).

Assagioli goes on to assert:

We should remember that the collective unconsciousness preceded individual self-awareness. We see this in primitive people, in children and, to a lesser extent, in various other groups: the social, military and professional classes with which an individual readily identifies (Assagioli, 1993, pp.43-44).

The third direction is the ascendant direction, towards the levels of the Superconscious, i.e. the transpersonal levels.

Assagioli felt that the differences between these three directions for expansion of consciousness were often not recognised and that there was often confusion about the subject.

He described the ways in which the transpersonal can enter consciousness through the Superconscious. This can take place either through a process of descent or ascent.

- Descent can occur in two ways: spontaneously or by deliberate action.
 - Spontaneous descent may occur through inspiration or through intuition, whereby energies of the Superconscious burst through into the conscious mind.
 - Alternatively, deliberate action can be taken to encourage the descent of transpersonal influences into the waking consciousness. Such actions include free drawing, writing and the deliberate raising of the consciousness to higher levels using prayer, meditation and various special exercises such as those of Raja Yoga, where ascent is encouraged by the use of allegorical symbols, e.g. the symbol of inner mountaineering.
 - The third direction for the expansion of consciousness is that of ascent. This occurs when the 'I' or personal self is raised to the level of the transpersonal. In

Psychosynthesis the exercise of Identification/Disidentification is taught as a technique to achieve this. Another way of ascent is to open oneself up to the influence of energies coming down from those higher levels. The practices of guided visualisation and of meditation, including that of reflective/receptive meditation, are taught to facilitate such ascent.

Having elucidated a Psychosynthesis perspective of the terms Spiritual and Transpersonal, the extent to which the therapists defined their particular understanding of these terms will be explored.

4.4.10. Participant definitions of Spirituality

Only three therapists gave an explicit definition of the terms.

When **A** talked about the transpersonal he said:

I'm trying to avoid scholastic answers, students' answers. The sense of interconnection, stillness and acceptance and a creation of beauty as a result of all this (L.290-292).

He described his own experience of the transpersonal as very much Top-down work; that is to say, encouraging the descent of transpersonal energies through the use of Psychosynthesis techniques such as guided meditation.

P described Spirituality as having to do with an expansion of consciousness. As a young man he had spent some time at Esalen and experimented with psychedelic drugs, as was common in certain communities in the 1960s. These experiences:

...heighten the perception of the physical world and show it as a transfigured wonderland (L.223-224).

Through his work with Assagioli however, he learnt techniques of meditation, which opened up states of transcendence to him without the use of psychedelic drugs.

Trying to access the transpersonal by this short-cut route of mind-altering drugs is, in Psychosynthesis terms, an error. This can be extremely damaging at a psychological and emotional level, as well as putting ones physical health at risk.

A great deal of 'ground-work' at the personality level is often needed to strengthen the Personal self or 'I' so that Transcendent experiences can be integrated. A fragile personality with an undeveloped 'I' can be overwhelmed by transpersonal experiences induced by the 'short-cut' method of using drugs. Assagioli explains:

It is as though (one) had made a superb flight to the sun-lit mountain top, realized its glory and the beauty of the panorama spread below, but had been brought back reluctantly to his starting point with the rueful recognition

that the steep path leading to the heights must be climbed step by step (Assagioli, 1975, p.49).

At that time in **P's** life his Spirituality had a lot to do with sensuality:

I was for the unity of sexuality and Spirituality; I was for Tantra and for an imminent kind of Spirituality (L.225).

He described this time of the late 1960s as a:

...great celebration of sexuality and for me the sexual liberation was terribly important...all that period, I think, was unique from my generation (L.214-215).

Looking back to this time, he realised that he hadn't really understood then, that sexual energy could be expressed at its own level but at the same time it could be liberated, transformed rather than repressed. He had thought that the two energies were in conflict but they were not:

...because transformation of sexual energy doesn't mean condemning in any way (L.218-219).

Assagioli argued that:

...an objective attitude should be adopted towards sex, free from the traditional reactions of fear, prudishness, and condemnation, as well as from the lure and glamour-often artificially fostered -by which it is generally surrounded (Assagioli, 1993 p.270).

He described three principle aspects of sexuality:

1. A sensual aspect: physical pleasure
2. An emotional aspect: union with another person

3. A creative aspect: the birth of a new creature

He did not claim any scientific status for this classification but suggested it was a practical aid in the process of transmutation as:

Each of the aspects ...can be transmuted or sublimated in accordance with its own specific nature (Assagioli, 1993, p.271).

P later came to appreciate that Spiritual experiences can have many different shapes:

...the experience of Beauty or the experience of Devotion, or the experience of Scientific research ...there isn't just a one track of expansion of consciousness, but there are many different dimensions of it...the paths of Meditation, the path of the Will (L.135-143).

P's perception of Spirituality therefore expanded over time from a limited perception to a more inclusive one. Also, his views about ways to access higher states of consciousness changed.

D differentiated between religion and Spirituality. She said that for a long time she felt unclear about the difference between the two:

...and yet I knew there must be a difference (L.114-115).

She started to become aware of the nature of that difference when she began to learn about Psychosynthesis:

The Spiritual dimension involves a belief in something higher than myself...it is that dimension which gives us a sense not only of who we are but that there is meaning somewhere, it is a search for meaning (L.148-157).

She continued:

Also, the Spiritual dimension is the human one and the religious dimension is the form in which we work it out, and the form can get solidified (L.41-43).

By this she meant dogmatic, rigid and exclusive.

MF echoed this sentiment when she said that if a Spiritual model is viewed as the 'truth' and "this is it, this is the only way" it becomes exclusive and dangerous:

That's what I'm talking about when I'm talking about religion. I don't want to get caught in that one (L.623-625).

Her view of Spirituality was much more spacious and inclusive and Assagioli's saying about Psychosynthesis:

This is a map and not the territory, expresses this well (L.599).

4.5. A Retrospective Review of the Literature on Spirituality.

4.5.1. Introduction

Spirituality emerged as the most important theme in the data analysis. This theme had not been researched as part of the literature review, since the methodology did not presume to predict which themes might emerge before the analysis of the data took place. However, in the manner of phenomenological investigation, the researcher returned to the extant literature to explore the contribution it might make to an understanding of the participants choices.

The literature provided both psychological and sociological perspectives on the theme of spirituality, in relation to the data. Each of these will be briefly summarised and then discussed in more depth. The psychological perspectives will be discussed first.

4.5.2. Psychological Perspectives on Spirituality

- Firstly, the literature explored the concept of consciousness in relation to spirituality and the relationship between consciousness, mind and brain. (Lancaster 2004; Fontana

2006). This extends the discussion already conducted on the Psychosynthesis model of consciousness.

- Secondly, the issue of whether spirituality could be viewed as a process, which evolves through hierarchical stages or levels. Within this debate are strongly conflicting points of view, essentially as to whether the transpersonal is accessed by descent into the time of birth and even before that, (Washburn, 1988,1994;and Grof, 1985) or whether the opposite is the case: that the transpersonal can only be accessed through an ascent (Wilber (2000). The latter is the position adopted by Psychosynthesis, with the proviso that work with Subpersonalities located in the Lower Unconscious, may also facilitate access to the Transpersonal realm.
- Related to the debate about how psychospiritual growth evolves, is the issue of when the process of development might begin. The literature revealed a contentious argument about whether children could have experiences of spirituality or whether this was outside their developmental stage. (Wilber, 2000; Washburn, 1994,1995).

- Thirdly, whether stages or levels of psychospiritual development ought to be differentiated from states of consciousness (Wilber, 2000).
- Fourthly, where does Mysticism fit into the overall phenomenon of Spirituality? In particular, what is the significance and status of so called 'Peak Experiences'? (Maslow, 1970).
- Fifthly, the sociological literature offers perspectives relating to the 'privatisation' of spirituality in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The literature gives conflicting views on so-called 'New Age' spirituality. On the one hand, it is portrayed as a superficial and egocentric, consumerised product of Neo-Liberalism. (Carrette & King 2005; Heelas & Woodhead 2008). On the other hand, it is viewed as a positive emergence into a new, holistic form of spirituality, which is less concerned:

... with institutions, than with the discovery of a personal spiritual path and less with a priesthood than with inner experience and a synthesis of ideas from many sources (Fontana, 2006,p.31).

Each of these points will now be discussed in relation to the literature and the data.

4.5.3. Spirituality and Consciousness in Psychology

Support for the argument that spirituality is a dimension of consciousness as the data suggested, is found in the work of Lancaster (2004) and Wilber (2000).

Wilber (2000) notes that most psychologies limit their frame of reference to the preconscious, the subconscious and the self-conscious, and do not include spirituality in their model of the human psyche. However, transpersonal psychologies, including Psychosynthesis, extend the frame of reference to include the Superconscious, or Higher Unconscious, and spirituality. The perspective Assagioli took on the concept of consciousness fits within that of the spiritual traditions, which view consciousness as having a non-physical reality, which cannot be reduced to merely a function of the brain. Transpersonal psychology in general, locates spiritual experiences within the realm of the Superconscious (although Wilber differentiates between spiritual experiences at different levels of psychospiritual development, suggesting that not all spiritual experiences are within the realm of the Transpersonal.) As a generalisation, transpersonal psychology gives a map, which includes spiritual experiences as part of experiences of consciousness.

Lancaster (2004) suggests that amongst all the spiritual traditions (and Psychosynthesis is of course a Psychospiritual model):

Whatever consciousness is, it is not merely human and biological (Lancaster, 2004,p.4).

This perspective is in strong contrast with the 'scientific' quest to understand consciousness. For example, Searle (1992) assumes that consciousness is 'just' a function of the brain:

Consciousness ...is a biological feature of human and certain animal brains. It is caused by neurobiological processes and is as much a part of the natural biological order as any other biological features such as photosynthesis, digestion or mitosis (Searle 1992,p.90, quoted in Lancaster, 2004,p.4)

Quantum physics brings yet another perspective to an explanation of consciousness. Pioneers such as Nobel Prize winners Wigner (1972) and Bohm (1980) explain consciousness not so much as a biological phenomenon, as part of the physical properties of the universe.

Lancaster notes the clash of perspectives:

To those who hold consciousness to be a product of the brain alone, the notion that it is actually a spiritual property, having a non-physical reality, is simply unfounded from the evidence they deem acceptable. More than this, the spiritual perspective introduces a worldview fundamentally at odds with that of contemporary science. In the other direction, those professing belief in a spiritual view of consciousness will remain unshaken by claims that they are clinging to unsubstantiated ideas (Lancaster, 2004,p.4).

However, he asserts that the evidence available regarding the brain and consciousness does not necessarily contradict the view that consciousness derives from some form of higher realm. Furthermore, whilst the brain is clearly the organ of consciousness, in the sense that it is responsible for the forms in our minds at any given time, there is as yet no definitive evidence that the brain itself creates consciousness.

Assagioli's theory of Psychosynthesis, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, outlines a psychospiritual model of the psyche and the relationship between spirituality and consciousness. The data analysis supports this view of spirituality as a dimension of consciousness. The participants all talked of spirituality in terms of the dimensions of Assagioli's Egg diagram. This included work with Subpersonalities (which are seen as having at their heart, a Transpersonal Quality).

Furthermore, the literature confirms the usefulness of working at a transpersonal level, through the active imagination (Jung 1935; Watkins (1976); Assagioli (1973). The participants described the techniques of Psychosynthesis, working through imagery, symbols, and personification of Subpersonalities, as work at the level of the Transpersonal.

Participant **I**, for example, explained that:

When I started doing workshops and training in Psychosynthesis, there was a whole world of my insides that I began to understand, like I could draw pictures and I would understand and my mind is such that as soon as I have an image, I can easily transform it...so that anything symbolic became a change in my life within a week (L.170-175).

She stated that:

Most of my therapy was imagery sessions...it was really magical for me ...it was like I suddenly understood myself and I knew how to work with it (L.182-185).

Participant **I** had undertaken personal psychotherapy with Robert Gerard, who had assisted Assagioli in the writing of his first book 'Psychosynthesis'. She stated:

A lot of the book talks about Desoille and all the imagery he would do, all the archetypal kind of imagery, and that is what a lot of my therapy was about. We would go into a cave or we would meet some mythical figure and the power of that kind of therapy for me was unbelievable (L. 280-284).

Participant **I** also found imagery work to be highly effective in her work with clients. She commented:

*I don't know of any better techniques in therapy, the visualisation and the imagery...(L.47-48)
I have never seen clients change at the level they change doing imagery...and drawings and meditation (L.54-55).*

MF spoke animatedly about her first experience of guided visualisation. This was at a Psychosynthesis workshop as part of an education conference in New Hampshire, USA. She stated:

She did a rose visualisation...and there was movement and it was so alive and so incredible...it gave me an immediate access to a kind of inner world and a greater sense of myself and God...I was completely blown away by it (L.191-197).

Later on, when **MF** started on her own personal therapy with a Psychosynthesis therapist, she experienced what she described as:

This incredible piece of guided imagery (L.730-731).

Where:

I went under the sea to go into a cave, and I was supposed to be exploring my Lower Unconscious, it was very funny. I went in and there were these guards at the door...I went in there and I found a treasure box, in it was a chalice, and I took it out and looked at it and there were many, many jewels on this chalice, and there were little tiny doors, each jewel had a little door, and you could open each little door and there was something there. And I realised when I picked it up in this visualisation that there was a connection between everything that I'd studied, there was a figure from Platonic times...I was part of, and connecting with a great spiritual tradition, a tradition that went beyond my lifetime...maybe to the beginnings of time, and I saw, as I picked up this chalice, the connections. I knew them. I saw them. I didn't know exactly what they were but I got that I was part of a deep, deep connection of the exploration of the spiritual world that had probably gone on forever and ever (L. 700-717).

Assagioli died in 1974, but his pioneering ideas have been taken up and built upon by later writers on the Transpersonal.

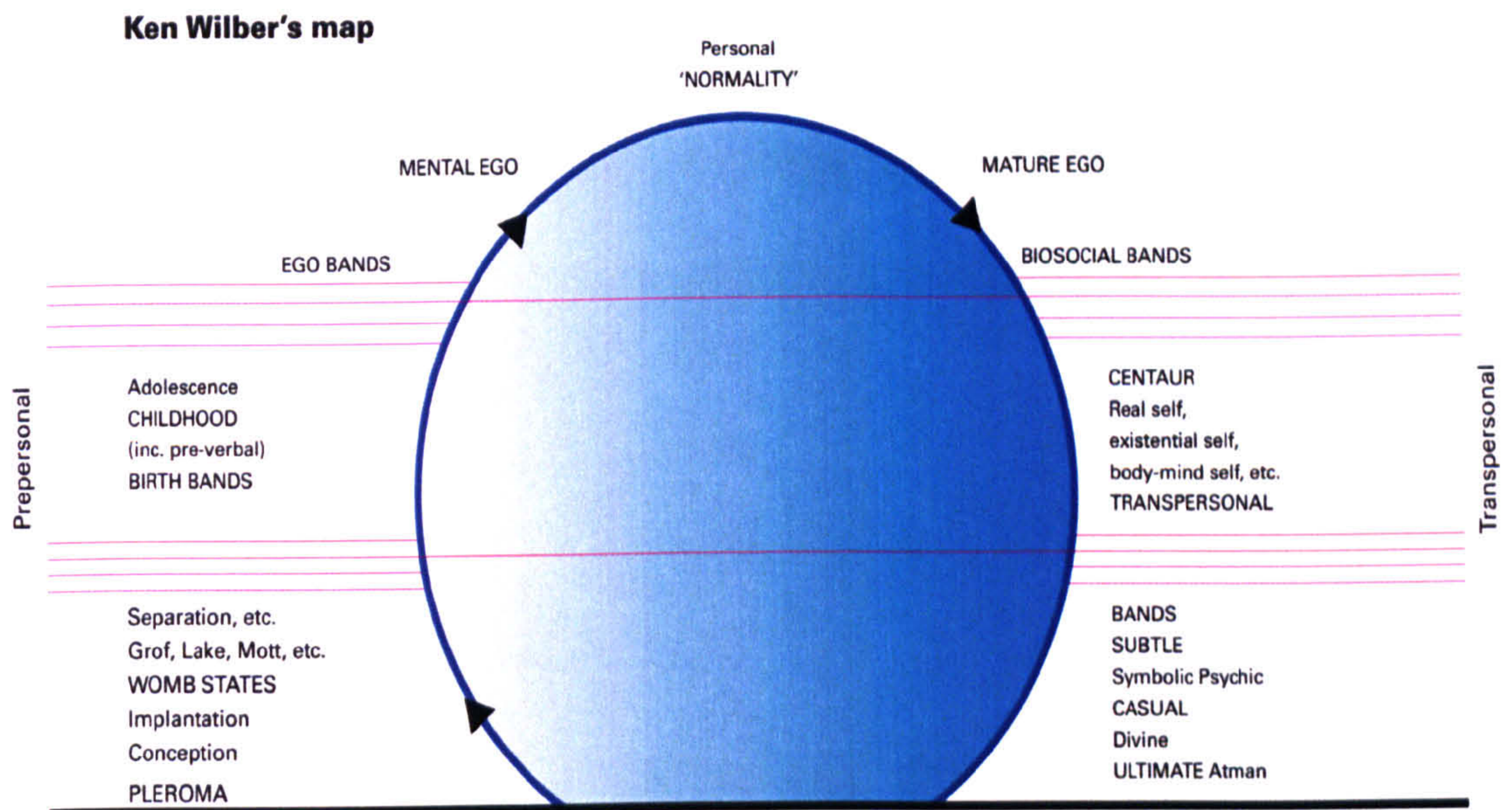
In particular, the work of Ken Wilber has lent more substance to earlier ideas about consciousness and its evolution at the individual and global level. Wilber (2000) has considered the levels models expounded by many other writers in this field and, as Rowan says:

Reconciled them, showing that they are really all talking about the same things...and when we include everything, we get a consistent and very consistent plan, with somewhere between 10 and 24 distinguishable levels, depending on how you count them (Rowan, 2008, p.57).

4.5.4. Wilber's Four Levels of Psychospiritual Development

Wilber suggests a map of consciousness that has three broad sections. These are the Prepersonal, the Personal and the Transpersonal. These relate to levels of consciousness, which are viewed as hierarchical in development.

FIGURE 5: KEN WILBER'S MAP / LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS



Source: Rowan (1998), p.156, Revised and consolidated by John Rowan in April 1982 and approved by Ken Wilber in May 1982.

Wilber argues that spirituality can be experienced at the lower levels of psychospiritual development (the Prepersonal and the Personal) but that such experiences are not Transpersonal. When the prepersonal or the Personal are confused with the Transpersonal, the Pre/Trans Fallacy is committed. (Wilber, 2001). Wilber suggests that transpersonal experience occurs

when the level of psychospiritual development has evolved at least to the Centaur level. Wilber's model differentiates between four different and hierarchically ordered levels of transpersonal experience: the Centaur, the Subtle, the Causal and the Ultimate. Some discussion of these levels is useful since they appear to confirm the experiences articulated by the research participants.

The Centaur Level

Wilber suggests that transpersonal experience begins at the Centaur level, which Rowan sees as Wilber's most important contribution since:

It represents at one time the end of the process of individual development within the confines, so to speak, of one's own skin; and the beginning of the process of transpersonal development, because it breaks the mould of the mental ego (Rowan, 2008,p.67).

Rowan suggests that it is difficult to reach this stage unless one has undertaken personal work in psychotherapy, since this stage requires one to work through the unfinished business of the past, and in Jungian terms, facing the Shadow. Only in this way can we achieve a genuine existential consciousness, which is so crucial at this stage:

We cannot have the authenticity, which is so crucial at this stage, unless there is a whole person there to be authentic (Rowan, 2002,p.67).

It is relevant to note that all of the participants in this research study had undergone personal psychotherapy within the Psychosynthesis model. Additionally, some had experienced other psychotherapeutic models in personal therapy before their training in Psychosynthesis (**E; D;I**).

The Subtle Level of Psychospiritual Development

The second and higher level of psychospiritual development is the Subtle. Wilber describes the Subtle level, as a stage of psychospiritual development, which lays great emphasis on images and symbols, and recognises that words can be inadequate to describe experiences of this kind. It is at this level that we let go of self-autonomy and are in touch with our Higher Self. The research participants recounted examples of their own personal work in psychosynthesis therapy where work with symbols and images had helped them access a deeper level of understanding of the issues troubling them.

For example, **D** recounted the relief she had felt from being able to disidentify from her powerful feelings. She said:

Having been a highly, highly emotionally identified person and then having been at Esalen where the whole ethos was emotional identification in those years, I was quite a victim to my emotions. I just bounced straight into my emotions and it was very soothing and relieving to be able to acknowledge and recognise and work with the fact that I am more than my feelings, so I did not have to be a victim

to my feelings...and that was a great liberation (L.127-134).

D is describing the identification exercise where the person firstly identifies with a subpersonality and then steps back to the place of the Personal self or the 'I' and thus is able to disidentify from a subpersonality.

E recounted how she had been traumatized by a sexual attack as a young woman and that psychotherapy had been unable to help her heal this trauma until she began to work with Robert Gerard, a Psychosynthesis therapist. She described her work with the Lower Unconscious using imagery:

Dr Gerard had me go down underground in imagination and visualise this big ape coming towards me. I was just scared to pieces and I shook, I was just so frightened and he asked me to go and touch him and to speak to him and so on, and it took me several times to do this but I finally did (L.108-111).

In addition to examples from their own personal therapy, the participants also gave examples of the importance of such work in helping their clients.

For example, **N** stated of the Higher Self:

Having had both Freudian and Jungian analysis, I was always very aware of what Assagioli said, "It's like having the earth without the sun, if you don't have the Self and if you're not aware of there being something more than the personality." And so that for me is what resonates most. When I work with people ...I always stay in touch with what's trying to emerge from the Transpersonal, so this

gives me a freedom that no other form would ever give me, because I can go into the Lower Unconscious and bring up what needs to be brought up into personality but always conscious of what's coming down from the Higher Self, you know, Top-Down, Bottom-Up work (L.448-462).

Participant **I** spoke of the importance of:

...teaching people of how to get to centre and how to strive for the Higher Self (L.49-50).

The Causal Level of Psychospiritual Development

At the level of Causal psychospiritual development, Wilber asserts that symbols disappear, because they become a drawback rather than an aid. At this stage people speak of formless consciousness and of being alone with the infinite divine. Rowan argues that it is at this level that:

*...the purest mystical experiences are to be found...
Nondual consciousness finds its natural home at this level
of development (Rowan, Undated).*

(The issue of mysticism as a spiritual experience is addressed separately within this chapter of the thesis.)

Vaughan, writing under her earlier name of Clark (1977) identifies three distinct stages in the process of awakening to one's transpersonal identity. These can be related both to Psychosynthesis and the Wilber's stages or levels of psychospiritual development.

The first two have an obvious link with the Psychosynthesis exercise of Identification since the first stage is the process of identification, characterised by the development of self-awareness (Wilber's Centaur stage). The second stage of transpersonal awakening, is that of disidentification, which is the second phase of the Identification exercise.

The third stage of transpersonal awakening (Wilber's Causal level) is one of self-transcendence. At this stage, the concept of the transpersonal self or witness may also be dropped, as may the use of symbols since they may be more of a hindrance than an aid:

People here speak of formless consciousness, boundless radiance. Final-God self dissolves into its own ground of formlessness (Rowan, 2002,p.76).

The data analysis did not furnish examples of such experiences.

The Ultimate Level of Psychospiritual Development

Wilber's final level of consciousness is the Ultimate, described as Unity-Emptiness, Nothing and All things. What Wilber now calls the Non-Dual. Again, the data analysis did not produce examples of these experiences.

4.6. The Issue of Ascent/ Descent to Access the Transpersonal

The data analysis showed, as one might anticipate when interviewing participants trained in Psychosynthesis, an overwhelming acceptance of the view that the Transpersonal is accessed via a process of ascent to the Higher Unconscious, or by a descent of Superconscious energies. This is the view espoused in Psychosynthesis, and in Wilber's hierarchical model of psychospiritual development. Both Assagioli and Wilber suggest that ascent to the Transpersonal may be achieved through advanced meditational and contemplative practices (Fontana, 2006).

For example, **P** described how he had often meditated with Assagioli:

We would meditate for instance on infinity, eternity, universality, and have silence and ...there was an inner transformation much more powerful than I had experienced before...(L.118-120).

A recounted how powerful the experience of learning to meditate had been for him:

Someone had to take drugs, to have the experience that I just met with meditation (L.238-239).

D studied with Assagioli and in return worked in his office. They also spent:

Personal time together and meditated together everyday (L.78-80).

Assagioli's views on accessing the Transpersonal via ascent have already been described. He also talks of a process of descent of Superconscious or Higher Unconscious energies into consciousness. This is not at all the same thing as the process of descent to access the Transpersonal as suggested by 'depth' psychologists such as Grof (1975,1983,1985) and Washburn (1988,1990). The literature indeed shows a major and contentious split in views of how the Transpersonal can be accessed. The two opposing perspectives are advanced by Depth psychology, (Washburn, 1988,1990; Grof 1975,1983,1985), on the one hand, and by Height psychology on the other (Wilber, 1997; Visser, 2003) Washburn (1988) has described the two rivalling positions as "the ladder model" (Wilber) and the "spiral model" (Washburn) respectively. As Visser (2003) states:

The ladder model is hierarchical, linear and stage like, whilst the spiral model has the shape of a U-turn, in the sense that around the middle point of human development, the process of development somehow returns to its point of departure again-although not in a literal fashion, as depth psychologists are keen to point out, but "at a higher level", hence the image of the spiral (Visser, 2003, p.7).

There is another fundamental difference between the two models. This is that Wilber sees development proceed as a more or less natural process of transcendence, whereas Washburn sees it as the result of a repression, which is undone in the later stages.

Both models suggest a three phasic sequence, but there is a critical difference in perspective in the way the transition from the second to the third phase is conceptualised. Wilber sees it as the next step forward in development (ladder), Washburn as a return to origins (Spiral). Visser (2003?) vehemently refutes Washburn's argument, asserting that:

In fact, physical birth is the last place to look for spirit, for it represents the lowest point or nadir of this cyclic process of incarnation and excarnation (Visser, 2003, p.9).

Visser seems to point to the crux of the matter when he asserts:

The Wilber/Washburn controversy ultimately is about the question whether transpersonal spirit exists as a separate structure of human consciousness (Visser, 2003, p.10).

So far, the issue of *how* psychospiritual development might occur has been considered in relation to the literature. A further related issue is that of *when* it might occur. The literature makes apparent a debate over whether or not it is possible for children to have experiences of a spiritual nature. Key figures in this

debate are Piechowski (2001); Washburn (1994,1995); and Wilbur (2000).

4.7. Childhood Experiences of Spirituality

Four of the therapists reported personal experiences of spirituality from their childhoods. These experiences have already been reported in some detail earlier in this chapter. The literature presents conflicting views as to what significance, if any, can be attached to such reports.

Some have questioned whether it is possible for children to have spiritual experiences. Amongst these are Washburn (1994,1995), an American philosopher and psychologist, who draws upon his knowledge of both Western and Eastern philosophy to formulate a psychological model of ego and spiritual development. The psychological model articulated by Washburn asserts the vital importance of the spiritual to human beings but disputes the possibility of young children being able to have spiritual experiences.

In his book, "The Ego and the Dynamic Ground" (1995) Washburn argues that who we think we are (the ego) is only a part of our experience. The vaster part he calls the Dynamic Ground, in which he unites what others call our unconscious, our

instincts, our libido, and the spiritual forces that inspire us. The model that Washburn presents is one in which the unborn child and the young infant are embedded in the Dynamic Ground. Ego has not yet developed; the child cannot distinguish between itself and its mother or main caregiver. A key developmental task for the infant is to achieve a degree of separation and independence.

Washburn draws upon psychoanalytic Object-Relations theory to explain the process by which the infant achieves this. According to Object-Relations theory, the infant cannot tolerate the ambivalence created by the mother behaving in both 'good ' and 'bad' ways towards him/her self. Consequently, the young child splits the two so that psychologically, there are two mothers, one good and the other bad.

Washburn argues that:

Because the relationship between the child and its primary caregiver is experienced at the same time internally as a relationship between the ego and the inner ground, this depth dimension of experience also splits dramatically into two sides, light and dark. Yet such a split becomes intolerable for the ego-so it ignores or represses its inner split core, perpetrating the first or "original" act of repression. This repression, on balance, plays a positive role for the future development of the child. The ego becomes viable. It's no longer caught in a Manichean world of good versus evil. It has firm ground now, and clear air; it can develop in the peaceful conditions of latency.

(On-Line Interview transcript between Michael Washburn and Paul Bernstein, 1998, p.7).

But this achievement has a serious cost, which involves:

... not just the loss of intimacy in relationships, but also the loss of contact with inner spiritual resources.

(On-Line Interview transcript between Michael Washburn and Paul Bernstein, 1998 p.7).

Washburn further argues that after repression, the Dynamic Ground loses most of its power to influence the ego during the course of childhood and even into adulthood for many people.

Washburn is asserting a psychological model that for the most part, rules out the possibility of childhood experiences of spirituality. He argues that as adolescents and adults, we begin to open up again to the possibilities of intimate relationships and that simultaneously; the defended boundaries to our spirituality start to be held less tightly.

Piechowski (2001) claims that Wilber's model of Integral Psychology (2000) also asserts that young children cannot have spiritual experiences because they are of an insufficient level of cognitive development for such experiences to be possible. He draws comparisons between this argument and the assertions of Piaget (1967) and Kohlberg (1981) regarding children's' conceptual abilities. Piechowski criticises the limited view of children's functioning propounded by Wilber and Washburn which, he suggests, are relying on the:

...received knowledge of developmental theories, in all of which the early stages of development are characterised by 'prepersonal' limitations and inadequacies of locomotion, thought, and emotion (Piechowski, 2001, p.11).

In a subsequent on-line commentary, Jefferson (2008) challenges Piechowski's article. He states that it is, in fact, a misrepresentation of Wilber's stance, which is that children have limited possibilities for spiritual experiences because of their earlier stage of cognitive development. Piechowski represents Wilber's position as being that at best, childhood spiritual experiences are momentary peak experiences (Maslow, 1970) representing lower levels of spiritual development.

Piechowski and Wilber however, do seem to agree that most childhood experiences of Spirituality are temporary, even if their effects might be lasting and powerful.

Jefferson adds to this assertion, the position of Integral Psychology, that as the child develops further, there is the possibility of the temporary state evolving into a permanent trait and that there can be a change at the qualitative level of Spiritual experiences. This is that they can then:

...give rise to dialogical or moral goals [worldcentric], as opposed to monological [(related to the self)] (Jefferson 2008).

The first issue therefore, is whether childhood experiences of Spirituality are possible, and if they are, is their nature different to those possible in adult experience?

Jefferson seems to be arguing that Integral Psychology does not refute their possibility, but does suggest that the interpretation put on them by a child is likely to be different, because they are at an earlier stage of development, except perhaps in the instances of gifted children.

Piechowski argues that childhood experiences of Spirituality are indeed possible and that there is now a formidable body of evidence to support this, but that by and large, within transpersonal Psychology, this has been unrecognised or devalued, not well researched, and not widely disseminated.

Exceptions to this are Armstrong's (1984) paper on empirical evidence for spiritual experiences in childhood, the research of Hay & Nye (1998) and Murdock's (1978) paper on meditation with young, gifted children.

Piechowski draws upon supporting examples from the research of Hoffman (1992) and Robinson (1977,1983). From these he asserts that at least three kinds of reported and researched

evidence of childhood spiritual experiences contradict Wilber's theoretical position:

- *The many instances in which, informed by their profound revelatory experience, children realised that they knew more than the adults around them, and were aware that the adults were ignorant of spiritual realities.*
- *The instances of children discovering or already knowing methods of entering deep states of nonordinary consciousness.*
- *The examples of children's "strong sense of identity beyond the physical self and beyond one lifetime". (Piechowski, 2001, p.11).*

Piechowski argues that according to Wilber, young children could not have mystical experiences, because they were incapable of taking the perspective of another.

Piechowski challenges this position by referring to the work of Borke (1975) who showed that young children only appeared incapable of taking the perspective of another because the situation they were presented with was outside their experience. When they were in familiar situations, they could make the shift. Further evidence comes from research with highly gifted children, which demonstrates that they have the ability to make sophisticated observations about the perspective of others and are able to act on these.

Jefferson argues that this again, misrepresents Wilber's position, which is that:

The Integral model...maintains that the four great states of consciousness—which are the basis of four major types of mysticism or spiritual experiences—can be experienced at virtually any stage of development, prenatal to adulthood to bardo (or the near-death and after-life states.). Thus a child can have an authentic experience of any of the great mystical states—gross, subtle, causal, or nondual (Jefferson, 2008, p.2).

Jefferson asserts that Piechowski:

...inexplicably claims that the model in Integral Psychology denies all four of those mystical experiences in children...whereas to date it is the only coherent model that fully accommodates them (Jefferson, 2008, p.3).

Piechowski also criticises Wilber's use of what he describes as:

...the highly speculative and fictitious concept of 'id' (Piechowski, 2001, p.12).

to justify his theoretical position. He states:

Both Washburn and Wilber rely on the notion of primal repression to account for the apparent loss of connection with spiritual reality... and primal repression is supposed to be the young child's defence against pressures from the id (Piechowski, 2001, p.12).

He goes on to assert that such instinctual pressures have to be biological and that consequently, the Id has to be something real. However, a biological organism cannot accommodate a reservoir of unbridled energy:

...seething with excitations (Piechowski, 2001, p.12).

This is because they are internally highly regulated and when the control breaks down there is cancer or death, neither of which can represent the id. Piechowski is therefore challenging the argument on grounds of logic.

He also challenges the concept in terms of research into human behaviour, drawing on the research of John Bowlby (1969) into attachment behaviour. He states that whilst:

.... the concept of the id assumes that from birth a child is driven by self-gratification and has to be tamed in order to function in a social context with others, humans are actually social from birth. We are designed for emotional attachment and for reciprocal interaction with others. This too, makes the id a fiction (Piechowski, 2001, p.12).

The researcher suggests that in this argument Piechowski is taking an unnecessarily polemic position. That is to say, he is arguing that there exists an egocentric, innate biological factor at work, or an innate biological drive to relationships and attachment. The researcher suggests an alternative perspective, which accommodates both positions. This is the possibility of both, coexisting, with a consequent tension between the two.

Having argued the case for authentic spiritual experiences in childhood, Piechowski lists the recurrent themes which occur in the description of childhood experiences, which have been illustrated by Robinson (1997/1983), Murdock (1978), Hoffman

(1992) and Piechowski (2000). The list makes impressive reading, it includes:

- Ecstasy, timelessness, oneness with nature
- Pulsating energy and life force,
- God, Eternal Presence, God in everything
- Identity; a sense of self beyond physical reality and beyond one lifetime
- Entelechy (a term used by Lovecky (1990), to describe moments felt as intensely real and profoundly meaningful)
- Techniques of achieving heightened awareness

Piechowski adds that the list can be extended even further to include dreams, near-death experiences, healing, and more. He goes on to illustrate this list with a few examples which give the reader a real sense of the authentic power and depth of such experiences and which support the view that these experiences are equal to those reported by adults (described by Hardy (1979), Maxwell and Tschudin (1990), and Waldron (1998). Murdock also reported meditation experiences in gifted five year olds that seem comparable to those of adults.

The view that children cannot have spiritual experiences or if this is possible, they will be limited to a lower level, places children's

spirituality within a framework of cognitive and moral development (Piaget, 1967); Kohlberg (1981). This framework suggests that spiritual development is dependent upon attainment of a certain level of cognitive and moral development. Spirituality is often equated with the 'higher' mental functions such as language and abstract thought. Because young children tend to have poorly developed higher-order linguistic and cognitive skills, it is assumed that they cannot experience a spiritual life until these higher functions develop, usually in later childhood and adolescence. This view strongly suggests that spirituality is primarily about thinking. Other writers challenge this perspective. Dillon (2000) for example, asserts:

I think we are missing something vitally important about spirituality with such an exclusive focus on thought and its development...Cognitive-developmental theories may actually poses a threat to our understanding of children's spirituality, in that these developmental sequences always seem to cast the stage of early childhood as 'primitive' and 'deficient' and present the child's thought processes in terms of what they lack, rather than in what they are in and of themselves (Dillon, 2000,p.9).

A further point is that spirituality is often equated with religion. As most young children have limited abilities to think and talk about such concepts as God, soul, spirituality etc., they are therefore often seen to exist in 'prespiritual wasteland' (Dillon, 2000,p.5). However, the fact that a person, whether child or adult, may find it hard to put their experience into words, does

not negate the possibility that they have had such an experience.

Dillon asserts:

Many who have spiritual experiences are unable to either understand or talk about them at the time they occur. The individual may take days, months, years, even a lifetime to develop suitable language and concepts that will enable him to begin to approach and understand the experience. The pairing of spirituality with the ability to talk about religious concepts, fails to recognise the true nature of spirituality (Dillon, 2000,p.10).

The belief that children do indeed have an inherent spirituality is evident in the work of a number of pioneers in the field of holistic education. Froebal, Pestalozzi, Montessori and Steiner, all viewed the young child as more than just a growing mind and body. Froebal (1782-1852) the founder of the Kindergarten movement, viewed the inherent nature of the child as deeply spiritual. Froebal considered that the end of education should not be reason, per se, but the unfolding of the divine essence within the child. The role of education is to build on the living core of the child's intrinsic spiritual capacities.

Pestalozzi (1746-1827) argued that the unique nature of every child should be treated with respect and that the purpose of education was to facilitate the holistic development of the students. The role of the teacher was to guide children to become the humans their natures' required them to be, including what was divine and sacred in their nature (Miller, 1997).

Montessori (1870-1952) wrote extensively about the child as a 'spiritual embryo'. This phrase implies both that the growing child is spiritual and that spirituality can be conceptualised as developing in an orderly way, given the right conditions (Bone, Cullen and Loveridge, 2007).

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) also saw human development as unfolding from within and his programme of child education was designed to facilitate the holistic development of the child, to which spirituality was central.

The researcher concludes that the examples of spiritual experiences recalled by four of the participants in this research study, parallel earlier research findings of childhood spiritual experiences as reported by Robinson (1997/1983), Murdock (1978), Hoffman (1992), Hay & Nye (1998) and Piechowski (2001) and contribute to that body of evidence.

4.7.1. The Recall of Childhood Experiences of Spirituality

Just as the capacity of children to have spiritual experiences has been questioned, so also has the trustworthiness of memories of such experiences recounted after a long period of time. This is

the argument that time may have led to distortions of the memorised event.

Robinson (1978) argues that experiences that are pre-verbal or that occur before a child has a good command of language, are, as a consequence, not capable of distortion in thought processes. This seems hard to substantiate. However, his further argument, that such experiences are not open to analysis by the child, because they are felt experiences rather than cognised and therefore by-pass language, seems more viable:

A child receives impressions but does not analyse them, thereby avoiding modifications of how the experience is recorded in memory (Robinson, 1978, p.128, quoted in Piechowski, 2001, p.3).

He illustrates this with an example from a well-educated, gifted man, aged fifty-seven. He had his first spiritual experience at the age of five or six. He commented that:

Because a spiritual experience is so different from any other experience, it cannot be distorted in memory, though it may be incapable of description. I remember vividly what I felt, but I may not be able to convey the memory to others. It was something 'out of this world'. It was a deep and abiding awareness, not intellectual, not emotional, but a deep perception of reality, of beauty, of truth and holiness. A child does not ask for 'meanings', it merely accepts experiences and rejoices in them. It lives for the moment...A spiritual experience is often sufficient in itself. It is the ultimate in happiness, trust and fulfilment, but a child does not of course think this, it merely accepts with gratitude (Robinson 1978, p.128, quoted in Piechowski, 2001 p.2).

A further argument that is made in support of the non-distortion of such recalled experiences is that they are ideographic, i.e., in the form of images. A forty-nine year old man who had his first spiritual experience at the age of six said:

Language tries to reproduce ideographs of a sort in the mind of the hearer; it fails because of the hearer's modifications en route to consciousness. In an experience like this, though, the ideographs are planted definitively and directly, before personal modifications can get at them and mutilate them (Robinson, 1978 p.98, quoted in Piechowski, 2001 p.4).

Lastly, Piechowski asserts that children's memories are in fact, very good and gives evidence to support this assertion. The evidence is drawn from the research of Sheingold & Tenney (1982) who carried out a study of three and four year olds, and found that they were able to recall a significant event (e.g. the birth of a sibling) quite accurately, a year later and just as well as eight year olds.

More recent research (Bauer 1997; Fivush 1997; Schneider & Priestly 1997) showed that children have a good recall of personally experienced events even as early as the end of the first year. Waldron (1998) cites a subject who saw again, at the age of twenty-one, the same '*celestial vibration of light*' that he had seen as an infant (Waldron, 1998 p.117, quoted in Piechowski, 2001 p.4).

The researcher concludes:

- That there is a good deal of research evidence to support the view that children can have authentic spiritual experiences as children, and
- That their recalled memories of these experiences can be seen as acceptable accounts, even after the passage of time.

The extant literature discussed so far has explored the evidence as to whether it is possible for children to have spiritual experiences. It has also highlighted the issue of whether experiences recalled from childhood can be accepted as valid, given the time gap between the recollections and the claimed experiences.

In addition, the literature explores a further aspect of spirituality, which is whether there might be a relationship between spiritual-seeking and certain personality characteristics. Research suggests that there may be a link between 'spiritual seeking' in adolescence and young adulthood and a personality characteristic of 'openness'. The researcher now goes on to

discuss this issue, referring to the extant literature and the data analysis.

4.7.2. Spirituality and Openness

Recent research into possible links between religiousness, spiritual-seeking and personality (Wink, Ciciolla, Dillon & Tracy, 2007) suggests that openness to new perspectives and new experiences that go beyond the confines of conventional religious up-bringing, correlates with a search for spirituality in adolescence and late-adulthood. Wink et al carried out a longitudinal study, using two studies established by the Institute of Human Development (IHD) at the University of California, Berkeley.

The Berkeley Guidance Study (GS) was initiated in 1928-1929, using a community sample of newborn children from Berkeley, California, with the original intent of investigating the role of guidance in the psychological development of children. The GS sample was split into two: a guidance group, whose parents received guidance about raising their children, and a control group, whose parents did not receive such advice.

A second group, The Oakley Growth Study (OGS) was designed to investigate adolescent development and consisted of a

community sample of preadolescents (aged 10-12) from Oakland, California, born in 1920-1921. The two studies were combined in the 1960s to form the IHD sample (Block 1971). The participants were studied intensively throughout their adolescence, using a combination of interviews, psychological testing, and medical examinations (Eichorn 1981). They were subsequently interviewed four times in adulthood. The last assessment was conducted between 1997-2000 when the younger participants were on average 69 years of age, and the older study members were on average 77 years old (Wink et al, 2007).

The findings of this longitudinal study suggest a link between personality characteristics in adolescence and spirituality in late-adulthood. Interestingly, the participants in Wink et al's longitudinal study experienced the same socio-cultural environment as many of the therapists interviewed by the researcher in this study. Wink et al define spirituality in terms of spiritual seeking, commenting that this:

... captures the post-1960s cultural shift in America toward a more individualised understanding of religion and religious authority (Roof 1999; Wuthnow 1998)- the freedom to define oneself as spiritual but not religious (e.g. Fuller 2001) and to negotiate a spiritual identity using non-church-centred practices or a diverse mix of church-based and nonchurched spiritual practices (Wink et al, 2007, p.1054-1055).

And furthermore that:

This definition leads to the expectation that, similar to the patterns found using other definitions of spirituality, spiritual seeking should positively correlate with Openness to Experience (Wink et al, 2007, p.1055).

Wink et al assert that their data is especially suited to tracing the links between personality and spiritual seeking because the early religious socialisation of the study participants occurred at a time in America when church-centred religion was paramount, but that their middle adulthood, a time of identity exploration, coincided with the expansion of new spiritual resources and practices in the 1970s.

This corresponds closely to the life experience of several of the therapists. The period in which they reached early adulthood (the 1960s) coincided with the sociocultural changes that swept through North America and Europe and which changed the conventional acceptance of 'taken for granted' ideas and ideologies.

For example, T left France to study in America in the late 1960s and through an initial accidental contact with the Human Potential movement at Harvard went on to spend time at Esalen, which was the centre of the Human Potential development in America at that time.

P, through his family contacts with the Huxleys, was introduced to the psychedelic drugs scene and the expansion of consciousness movement in California. He too spent periods of time at Esalen.

D was also a young adult in 1960s America. She spent two years at Esalen and was very involved in the Human Potential movement.

MF recalled her experience in the early 1960s in England, with Encounter Groups. She later became involved with a spiritual group, called the School of Philosophy, where the teaching was 'going within' and where meditation was important. She commented that there was a connection between a lot of their teachings and Hinduism.

W described himself at university in the late 1960s, as a:

very serious hippy...interested in spiritual development, self-realisation, those kind of things (L.216).

Wink et al (2007) found that:

Despite differences in how spirituality is defined and assessed, there is a moderate to strong positive relation between spirituality and the Big Five dimension of Openness to Experience. Individuals high in Openness tend to emphasise the importance of spirituality in their lives (Saroglou & Fiasse 2003) and the interconnectedness of life and the universality of human purpose (Piedmont

1999a; Leak & Fish 1999); to experience ineffable, peak or transcendental experiences (Hood, 1975; MacDonald 2000; Piedmont, 1999a) and to believe in the paranormal ([MacDonald, 2000] Wink et al, 2007, p.1054).

They concluded that their data could be used to identify whether adolescent religiousness and adolescent personality characteristics could predict who among the study participants became spiritual seekers later in life, and who committed to church-centred religiousness.

Their hypothesis, that there would be a positive relation between spiritual seeking and Openness to Experience in late adulthood was confirmed:

...it is adolescent boys and girls who have wide interests and unconventional thought processes who tend to gravitate toward non-church centred spiritual seeking, later in life (Wink et al, 2007, p.1066).

This study found that individuals who could be described as 'spiritual seekers', also perceived themselves as being open to new experiences and differing perspectives.

This finding was supported by the data analysis of this research study. Analysis of the data showed that all of the participants had spoken of their interest in an extended range of spiritual models, and often an interest in Eastern as well as Western

traditions. This had contributed to a wider view of spirituality than those of conventional religion. Examples of these findings are reported in the discussion later in this chapter.

This also relates to the emergent theme of 'inclusiveness' of the Psychosynthesis model. 'Inclusiveness' was a key theme that emerged from the data in respect of all twelve therapists. One of the main attractions of the Psychosynthesis model was that it had broadness without sacrificing integrity; this was often described as 'inclusivity'. Data related to this finding are discussed in later in this chapter.

So far, spirituality has been considered specifically in relation to the experiences of children, adolescents and young adults. The discussion now moves on to broader themes. The first of these is the debate around spirituality as an experience of consciousness and the relation between consciousness, mind and brain.

4.8. Spirituality and Consciousness: The Mind/Brain Issue

Wilber (2000) and Lancaster (2004) argue that an understanding of spirituality has to be set within a model of consciousness that addresses the mind/brain issue. Whilst some have argued that consciousness is merely a function of the brain (Searle, 1989)

others have argued that mind goes beyond brain (Fontana, 2006; Rowan, 2008). Rowan notes that there is evidence from therapists specializing in birth regression, that some people remember abortion attempts that failed at an early point in their mother's pregnancy. There is sometimes enough circumstantial evidence for this to be checked, and when it is checked, the details do seem to be correct. These reports appear to suggest that consciousness may be present even before there has been sufficient brain development to explain its existence. This suggests that consciousness uses the brain, but cannot be identical with the brain.

Furthermore, research into near death experiences supports the position that consciousness continues after the physical brain has ceased to function. (Sabom, 1982,1998;Ring 1984; Ring and Valorino, 1998; Ring and Cooper, 1999;Fenwick and Fenwick 1995). Fontana (1999) notes that reports of near death experiences often involve profound inner transformations including a loss of a formerly held fear of death. Ring's research suggests that those involved in such experiences have reached at least Underhill's first stage of Awakening (Underhill, 1942). This is an awakening to what Underhill calls the 'self' to a consciousness of Divine Reality-usually an abrupt experience accompanied by intense joy.

William Reich (1973) was perhaps the first Western thinker to suggest that memories could be held in muscle tissue, and that if the muscles were stimulated, the memories would return in the form of body movements and the associated affect.

More recently Joan King (2004) has suggested that many of the older ideas about the brain are quite inadequate. Wilber suggests that there seems to be an overall, but not unanimous agreement, that mind and brain are not the same thing. That is:

Neither mind nor brain can be reduced without remainder to the other (Wilber, 2000, p.145).

Wilber argues therefore, that to understand the nature of spirituality, we need a more integral theory of consciousness than has earlier been proposed.

4.8.1. Lancaster's Four Levels of Inquiry

Lancaster (2004) delineates four approaches to consciousness: the neurophysiological; the cognitive and neuropsychological; the spiritual and mystical and that of depth psychology. He explores the contribution that each can make to our understanding of consciousness. He argues that although there is no definitive evidence of the causation of consciousness, this need not prevent us from studying the properties of the

phenomenon. Lancaster suggests a series of levels of explanation for spiritual experiences, each of which involves a shared outlook by those advancing it, which is acceptable to those sharing that perspective, but perhaps not acceptable to those positioned outside that perspective. Table 3 illustrates these levels.

TABLE 3: LANCASTER'S FOUR LEVELS OF INQUIRY

Table 1.1 Four levels of inquiry into consciousness

Approach	Methods	Explanatory structures/processes	Experiential equivalents
Level 4: Spiritual/mystical	Access to revelation Contemplative and ritual practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditation • Prophecy • Analysis of sacred language 	Transcendent systems/ quantal systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher self/soul etc. • Ground of being • Pure consciousness • Emanated principles • Godhead 	Experience of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'emptiness' • God/'All-Self'/ observing self • pure consciousness • the numinous
Level 3: Depth-psychological	Hermeneutics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of syndromes associated with psychic damage • Etymology and other analyses of linguistic meaning • Analysis of myth 	Systems of psyche <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self/ego • Conscious vs unconscious processes • Dynamic structure of the unconscious: complexes, archetypes, symbols • Affective states • Meaning-making processes 	Experience of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the numinous • moments of significance • 'deep' selfhood/ archetypal self • 'therapeutic' meaning - the meaning behind overt images and words, etc.
Level 2: Cognitive and neuro-psychological	Scientific positivism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychophysics: experimental study of experience • Analysis of syndromes associated with brain damage • Computer modelling 	Cognitive systems/ informational systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self re <i>explicit</i> processing • Conscious vs nonconscious processes • Representations (schemata) • Affective states • Functional devices • IT metaphors 	Experience of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I' • everyday meaning in memories, perceptions, emotions and thoughts • selfhood
Level 1: Neuro-physiological	Scientific positivism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain imaging • Electrophysiological recording • Neurochemistry • High-energy physics 	Neural systems/quantal systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain centre(s) for consciousness • Patterns of neural communication • Re-entrant systems (efferent/afferent) • Timing of neural responses • Sub-neuronal activity 	

Source: Lancaster (2004) pp.22-23.

At the spiritual/mystical level (Level 4), the world's religious traditions draw upon an understanding of God and other transcendent concepts, such as levels of the soul. Lancaster acknowledges that the one exception to this is Buddhism, which rejects notions of an eternal soul, but has a central concept of nirvana, which depends on a concept of transcendence. Smart describes the concept of nirvana as:

An unutterable, indescribable transcendental state (Smart 2000,p.236 quoted in Lancaster, 2004,p.21).

Mystical experiences are explained to the satisfaction of those sharing the Level 4 outlook by suggesting that they arise through union with God, or with the 'Absolute'.

Depth psychology (Level 3) e.g. Freud and Jung, explains spiritual states as complexes of the unconscious. Freud termed the oneness associated with mystical experience as the 'oceanic feeling'. He viewed this in negative terms, seeing the experience as a result of a regression to an infantile, narcissistic state prior to the ego's detaching itself from the world around it (Freud, 1930/1961).

Jung held a different view of religious and mystical states but he too saw them in terms of psychodynamic complexes. He suggested that the psyche had a transcendent function, which underpins the urge to higher integration. The archetypal

complexes were viewed as central to this urge, as giving rise to the kinds of numinous feelings experienced in spiritual states.

Cognitive theories (Level 2) offer a particular perspective on mystical experiences (Blackmore, 1986; Brown, 1977; Claxton, 1996; Lancaster, 1997a, 1997b, 2000c). Cognitive explanations of mystical states focus upon a reduction of self-representation together with a concurrent shift towards processes that are normally preconscious.

Explanations from neurophysiology (Level 1) emphasise the role of neural systems. Lancaster (2004) for example, cites the argument of D'Aquila and Newberg (1993) that the practice of passive meditation:

... triggers intense stimulation of structures in the hypothalamus and medial forebrain bundle. At the same time there is a total deafferentation (that is, loss of functional input) to the left and right posterior-superior parietal lobes (Lancaster, 2004, p.26).

Lancaster suggests that these four approaches illustrate the difference between the idea of explanation and that of reductive causation. He criticises the polarization of these different views as incompatible and argues that there is a basis for dialogue between the four approaches to consciousness. He argues that there is a body of research, which has established that

interactive neural dynamics and re-entrant processing are central to consciousness.

Lancaster (2004) proposes an 'I'-tag theory to explain certain mystical states. He acknowledges that the terms of reference he has used in developing the theory have been physiological and psychological and that such explanations may appear reductive. However he argues that there is potential for psychological theories to contribute to non-reductive explanations.

Neurological and psychological details may provide us with a framework for understanding mystical states, without necessarily constituting a full explanation.

Furthermore, that when understood from the multi-levelled perspective that he has developed:

The organizational principle of re-entrance has currency beyond the specifically neurophysiological data themselves. Ultimately it is an expression of the interpenetration of levels in a unified hierarchy. The neural level feeds forwards to the cognitive level, where memory structures are activated. I conjecture that the cognitive level likewise feeds forward to activate complexes and archetypes at the level studied by depth psychology. From this level the feedforward system ascends a stage further to 'awaken the impulse' at the transcendent level (Lancaster, 2004,p.277).

Lancaster concludes that each investigative approach has its own area of strength to offer in an integrative theory of consciousness. He asserts that the various models generated, or

employed by mystics, for example, mandala images, temple plans, medicine wheels and the Kabbalistic tree of life, may offer a fruitful perspective to complement data generated through the scientific method (Lancaster, 2000). Lancaster's framework is useful in clarifying the level of inquiry into consciousness adopted in this thesis. It can be seen that Assagioli's Egg diagram incorporates the perspective of Depth approaches (Level 3) but goes beyond them to Level 4 (the Spiritual/Mystical level).

4.8.2. Consciousness as a Stage or as a State

A further aspect to the exploration of consciousness and spirituality relates to notions of states of consciousness as distinct from stages of consciousness. Wilber suggests that all spiritual experiences occur *outside of normal consciousness*, in that an individual is experiencing a non-ordinary or altered state of consciousness. The states of consciousness with which we are familiar and which we regard as being 'normal' or 'ordinary' are the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Other states he terms 'non-ordinary' or 'altered' states of consciousness. These include peak experiences, religious experiences and drug-induced states. He argues that any individual can experience an altered state of consciousness 'out of the blue' since the person does not have to have attained a higher level of consciousness. For example, peak experiences are defined as spiritual

experiences, and Wilber argues that any individual, regardless of their developmental level of consciousness, can experience them. (Peak Experiences are further discussed in the next section of this chapter) The effect of hallucinogenic drugs in producing altered states of consciousness is of course well documented in research, (Pahnke, 1971; Grof, 1975). The data analysis did provide one example of such an experience in the life narrative of **P**, which is also discussed in the next section of this thesis.

Wilber defined Peak experiences as a mystical state of consciousness, which is a non non-ordinary state, and not dependent upon a certain stage of consciousness.

The data analysis showed that four of the research participants referred to the experience of mysticism in their life narratives. These findings will be reported later in this chapter and then discussed in relation to the Psychosynthesis literature and the extant, wider literature.

4.9. The Sociological Perspective on Spirituality

The sociological literature offers an historical, contextualised perspective on the meanings attributed to the concept of spirituality at different points in history. There are clearly

conflicting views on the value of the so-called modern 'New Age' spirituality.

Carrette and King (2005) argue that:

We should not expect to be able to use terms such as 'spirituality' as if they have some fixed or definitive meaning free from contestation and debate (Carrette and King 2005,p.25).

They argue that spirituality and religion cannot be divorced from other spheres of human life, such as economics, culture and politics. Meaning, from this perspective, is always contextually based and socially constructed. There is:

...no view from nowhere- no Archimedean point outside of history-from which one could determine a fixed and universal meaning for the term 'spirituality' (Carrette and King 2005,p.3).

Similarly, Chambers (2005) suggests that spirituality cannot easily be reduced to the realm of privatised religion.

It is instructive therefore, to trace the genealogy of the term 'spirituality' since this:

... allows us to see the effects of power operating in the construction of ideas, in this case, the idea of spirituality (Carrette and King, 2005,p.33).

They argue that the question, "Who benefits from a particular construction of 'spirituality'?" needs to be posed in the context of the socio-political consequences of that particular definition.

Although the modern term, 'spirituality' only emerged in European culture in the seventeenth century, it carries with it a number of connotations from earlier historical periods. Principe (1983) gives an overview of the history of the term (although Carrette and King caution that the work is limited by the date in which the article was published [1983] and so necessarily ignores some of the more important developments in the 'business' incorporation of the word and its post-1980s market explosion. Furthermore, Principe is focusing on the Christian heritage of the term and does not consider the influence of Asian figures and traditions in the development of contemporary notions of 'the mystic and spiritual East'.

Based upon Principe's analysis, they identify four main phases in the usage of the term 'spirituality', each of which throws light upon the power base operating at that time. Firstly, there is the early biblical usage. This refers to a moral order or way of life, involving the disciplining of the flesh, which necessitates the controlling of unrestrained desires. For example, in the New

Testament letters of Paul, there is a call to moral life in the spirit (Galatians 3.3; 16-25; Corinthians 3.1; Romans 7-8).

A second use of the term also emerged under Christian Hellenistic influence: this usage polarised 'spirit' and 'matter'. It is useful to consider this distinction in some detail since it helps illustrate the process by which this occurred. In the early Christian period, the various Gnostic movements often distinguished the realm of 'the spiritual' (in Greek, *pneumatikos*) from the world of matter (*hyle*). The third century Christian writer, Origen, made a clear distinction between three levels of biblical interpretation. This in turn, related to the Pauline distinction between body, soul and spirit (Hardy, 1989). Firstly, there is the material level, which refers to the literal meaning of biblical words. Secondly, there is the level that speaks to the specific conditions and life of the soul (Greek *psyche*) of the Christian disciple. Thirdly, there is the level of allegorical meaning. This is where biblical teachings are said to express universal truths and are not to be interpreted as just referring to historical events. Origen believed that this third, allegorical level of meaning, corresponded to the 'spiritual' (Greek *pneumatikos*) meaning of the biblical message and is timeless in its significance. Carrette and King (2005) suggest that:

Whilst this ancient distinction is not the same as our modern distinction between 'literal' and 'allegorical', we can see the continuing resonance of this kind of theme when we find appeals made to the 'spirit' rather than the 'letter' of a document or law (Carrette and King, 2005,p.35).

A third way which the term was used, relates to ecclesiastical jurisdiction and property in the medieval period. The term indicated authority and ownership invested in the Church, rather than in the King. Thus there was a distinction drawn between the 'Lords spiritual' (Church) and the 'Lords temporal' (King). The power base in each of these usages of the term 'spirituality' relates to that of religion and its institutions.

The fourth meaning of the term, 'spirituality' is identified as having emerged in seventeenth century France, when the importance assigned to an interior faith, had created a climate within European Christianity, which Carrette and King argue:

Allowed the first steps towards the privatisation of religion to occur (Carrette and King, 2005,p.37).

Privatisation, in this sense, refers to a personal, individual and interior experience:

Against the dogmatic tyranny of the established churches and their demand for a conformist piety, and against the claims of reason in matters of faith, a new religious conscience emerged in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century. This new spirit understood religion in terms of individual conscience and lived experience for all people, rather than for only a few...For subscribers to this new religious spirit, the hierarchical Church ceased to be

conceived as a structure allowing a communication between Heaven and Earth, and collective adherence came to be replaced by individual conscience. The idea arose that religion could no longer be identified with a particular confession, whether Catholic or Protestant (Bruneau, 1998, pp 146-7, quoted in Carrette and King, 2005, p.37).

Furthermore, interest grew in the practice of stilling the mind and the abandonment of self in order to experience the divine within. This was promoted in the writings of Madame Guyon, (1648-1717), but her ideas were attacked by the Catholic Church because it took the individual away from reliance upon the Church as mediator between the individual and the Divine.

The term 'spirituality' enjoyed a new lease of life in the nineteenth century, under Romanticism. Schleimacher's 'Discourses', for example:

Proclaimed... the 'spiritual' idea of a direct revelation of religious feeling ... (Troeltsch, 1931, p.793 quoted in Woodhead and Heelas, 2000, p.118).

However, it was not until the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the term 'spiritualite' came into common parlance. Carrette and King associate this with the huge changes that were taking place in European and North American societies at this time. Explicitly, the tensions between:

Romanticism and the Enlightenment, between the truth claims of traditional religions and those of the emerging sciences, the conflict between allegiance to traditional, institutionalised religions and the new social freedoms that allowed for the exploration of various lifestyle alternatives

and options. At the same time, European colonialism had precipitated an unprecedented (if unequal) encounter with various Asian civilisations. The result was a great deal of popular interest in 'the Orient' (Carrette and King, 2005,p.39).

The elements contributing to the popular perceptions of 'spirituality' in this period included a new interest in Eastern philosophies and religions, and in 'spiritualism', which involved attempted contact with the deceased. Also, the interest in Theosophy, which, through the socialist and theosophist, Annie Besant, allied itself to ideas of social reform, political activism and the pursuit of economic and social justice.

However, Carrette and King (2005) argue that the overwhelming trend over time has been:

To emphasise the association of 'spirituality' with the interior life of the individual (Carrette and King, 2005,p.41).

This is associated with economic and social changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which facilitated a move away from group identification and from the controlling influence of established religion. The initial process of individualisation (linked to the privatisation of religion in modern liberal democracies) was, they argue, followed by a second form of privatisation, namely, corporatisation.

In this second privatisation, they argue that 'spirituality' has become a commercial commodity, separated from notions of social justice and a compassionate society where responsibility for the well being of others as well as one's self is felt. Carrette and King argue that a mish-mash of ideas taken at a superficial level from the religious traditions of East and West, has replaced the positive aspects of the world religions. What has emerged is a 'Capitalist spirituality' based on the tenets of Neo-Liberalism, as the dominant ideology of the time:

The market driven economy of corporate capitalism has embraced the concept of 'spirituality' (and) exploits the transformative power of traditional 'spiritual' disciplines by reorienting their fundamental goals. Instead of the more traditional emphasis upon self-sacrifice, the disciplining of desire and a recognition of community, we find productivity, work-efficiency and the accumulation of profit put forward as new goals (Carrette and King, 2005,p.22-23).

It is clear that the perspective taken by Carrette and King places a negative view upon modern spirituality. This view is however, challenged by other writers (Luckmann, 1967,1990; Campbell, 1999).

Heelas and Woodhead (2008) argue that indeed, a major cultural development- the massive subjective turn of modern culture- has taken place, which has fuelled the growth of subjective-life

spirituality and undermined life-as religion. They describe this as:

...a turn away from life lived in terms of external or 'objective' roles, duties and obligations, and a turn towards life lived by reference to one's own subjective experiences [(relational as much as individualistic)](Heelas and Woodhead, 2008,p.2).

However, unlike Carrette and King, they argue that overall, this is a positive change. They acknowledge that 'life-as' formations are always required for the organisation and regulation of social life: the point stressed by Carrette and King (2005). However, they argue that the subjective life deserves valuing too. This is not the same thing as commending a self-centred life, and:

...this need not imply that (the individual) will be atomistic, discrete or selfish (Heelas and Woodhead, 2008,p.11).

They go on to argue that:

Above all else, subjective life is 'holistic', involving self-in-relation rather than a self-in-isolation (Heelas and Woodhead, 2008,p.11).

Heelas and Woodhead (2005) suggest that there have been exaggerated claims about the extent of a so-called 'spiritual revolution' in Great Britain since the 1950s and 1960s. However, they consider that a few 'mini-revolutions' have occurred. If the claim of a spiritual revolution is taken to include the cultures of education, healthcare and wellbeing, its validity is considerably enhanced. For instance, Holmes (2007) describes the rise of

interest in spirituality in the health sciences as dramatic, both in the United States (Miller, 1999) and in the UK (Orchard, 2001). The rise in interest has been particularly noticeable in nursing. Holmes (2007) suggests that this is not surprising since:

Nurses need a practical spiritual context for illness, suffering, death and healing (Holmes, 2007,p.29).

Within the nursing profession there has been a call for an awakening of spirit in clinical practice (Burkhardt and Nagai-Jacobson, 1994) and issues of spiritual distress and ways to work with it have been explored (Burnard, 1987). Holmes suggests that increasingly, spirituality is coming to be seen as an important contributor to health (Koenig, 1999). This is viewed as a move to a holistic view of the person and it has correspondingly, invoked changes in the provision of spiritual care. In the past, in hospitals and other medical settings, spiritual care was perceived to be the exclusive remit of the hospital chaplain (Carr, 2001). Nowadays, a range of professionals working within healthcare settings may perceive the importance of being alert to and responsive to spiritual needs as an important part of patient care (Flanagan et al, 2007).

4.10. Mysticism

4.10.1. Mysticism and the Data

Whilst all twelve therapists referred to Spirituality as an important part of their identity, just three referred directly and explicitly to personal mystical experiences. These three were **MF**, **W** and **M**. A fourth participant (**P**) described his attraction to Psychosynthesis on the basis that it was:

...a marriage of Mysticism and Psychology (L.146-147).

M said that from childhood he had had a:

...deep mystical connection with the design, with God, with nature (L.189).

W said:

...until I discovered Psychosynthesis, I'd been going more and more... becoming more and more, you know, my mystic subpersonality. My mystic subpersonality had become so strong and kind of pushing me in that direction (L.396-399).

In Psychosynthesis theory, a subpersonality is a way of thinking, feeling and behaving that has crystallised into an automatic pattern. It is believed that many subpersonalities have formed from childhood and were the best way that the child knew to survive their family or other environment.

W offered this interpretation:

I mean, I think now it was largely a compensation for dealing with the pain of the abuse and actually my

mother's abuse of me in a Spiritual sense as well (L.400-401).

W was describing mysticism as a way of escaping from the painful reality of his childhood experiences. He went on to describe this as unhelpful to him because it was a method of avoidance when what he really needed, and discovered in Psychosynthesis, was a way of:

...being with this energy (Spirituality) in a grounded way rather than being with this energy as a way of putting your head in the clouds (L.394-396).

When **MF** did the Essentials in Psychosynthesis course she could immediately relate to the Psychosynthesis map of the two *dimensions of growth, horizontal and vertical. She said:*

It was like when these maps started coming on the board...and I can remember the two dimensions of growth, I mean, that just blew my mind, it was like, that was me! I was on that model. I was part of those two dimensions. I knew exactly what it was all about because I was definitely a Transcendent Mystic, you know, and there I was being my Transcendent Mystic, while everything around me was falling apart. I didn't know how to ground. I was being given the opportunity of bringing up two kids on my own, big time, it was like having to get my feet on the ground, sort out the bills, blah, blah, blah. It was like, 'Oh my God! (L.301-309).

P did not describe himself as being a mystic but did say that he was drawn to Psychosynthesis because he saw it as:

...a marriage of Mysticism with Psychology (L.146-147).

He was:

... drawn to Eastern religions more than Western traditions, because they... show you the way to Transcendence and the means to do it, quite pragmatic, without asking too much of you in the way of dogma. ...(but) from the psychological point of view, they were not quite satisfactory (L.325-328).

Each of these four therapists was using the terms, Mystic, Mysticism and Mystic Subpersonality, in relation to the Psychosynthesis perspective. It would be useful therefore, to articulate this view.

4.10.2. Mysticism and Psychosynthesis

Mystical experiences are often thought of as belonging solely to the religious sphere and many world religions recognise and value mystical experiences e.g. Sufism in Islam and the Tabbulah in Judaism. Within Christianity there have been many examples of mystics such as Julian of Norwich, St Bonaventura and St Teresa of Avila.

In Psychosynthesis there is no identification with any particular religious model, rather, there is a broad template of Spirituality, which is able to accommodate a spectrum of diverse views. As P explained, he told Assagioli that he:

...wanted to be part of Psychosynthesis so long as I didn't have to give up or deny any scientific finding, any Spiritual tradition or Spiritual technique.... but then I found that

Psychosynthesis was so inclusive that it was compatible with all that (L.132-138).

In Psychosynthesis theory, Mysticism relates to the experiences of the Superconscious, which do not necessarily equate with religious experiences. However, Assagioli recommended that in working with clients who do have a religious belief, it is fruitful, as a general rule:

...to use the client's own terminology in relation to the whole setting of his beliefs and preferences (Assagioli, 1993, p.206).

He suggested that transpersonal work could be undertaken with those who have no beliefs of a formal religious nature by using:

...abstract, geometrical, or nature symbols or that of the inner teacher without going into the laborious discussion as to the existence or non-existence of a deity (Assagioli, 1993, p.206).

Maslow (1969) used the term 'being' for the overall range of experiences, which Psychosynthesis calls Superconscious:

...because one of their characteristics is to give a sense of 'fullness of being', or a sense of intensity in existing and living (Assagioli, 1993, p.26).

So, mystical experiences are seen as experiences of the Superconscious but they do not necessarily have a religious character. Assagioli is suggesting that Spirituality is not the same thing as religiosity and that religion is not a prerequisite for mystical experience.

Assagioli asserted that mystical experiences could be achieved by the sublimation or transmutation of sexual energies. He described two directions in which transmutation could take place. The first of these is the 'vertical' or inward direction; the second is the horizontal direction. In the second, sublimated sexual energies can be transmuted out into the world. The result can be in a high ideal of platonic love or a radiating out in concentric circles of love for others, culminating in love for the whole of creation. Great philanthropic work has been achieved through such sublimation, for example one might cite the work of Mother Theresa.

It is the first direction of transmutation of sexual energies however, which relates to mystical experiences. Assagioli cites examples of the lives and writings of the mystics of all times, places and religions:

Their autobiographies furnish most interesting evidence of the nature of this process, its crises and vicissitudes, the sufferings it entails as well as the joys, which rewards its stress and strain. All of them speak of the 'bliss' they experience-, which, however, they regard as a possible hindrance if one becomes attached to it. One can also observe the different steps leading from human love to love for a higher Being, such as the Christ, or for God himself; this is the sublimation of the emotional aspect. They aspire to union with the Christ within, and some speak of it as the 'mystical marriage' (Assagioli, 1993, p.271).

A key characteristic of a mystical experience is therefore, that of a Spiritual union of the Self with the Divine. When sexual drives

are blocked through conscious choice, the love-energy can be redirected into love of God. This is the emotional aspect of the sexual drive being transmuted into a Spiritual path. This is one way in which Mysticism can be achieved.

Assagioli asserts however, that one cannot infer that all Spiritual love is 'merely' the outcome of sublimated sex, that it is possible to 'explain away' a higher psychological or Spiritual manifestation, by attributing its origin to biological sources or drives:

The true nature of mysticism cannot be considered, as some investigators have maintained, to be merely a product or by-product of sex. On the one hand, one finds many people whose normal sexual life is inhibited yet who show no signs of mysticism; on the other hand there are instances of people leading a normal sexual life, raising a family, etc., and having at the same time genuine mystical experiences (Assagioli, 1993, p.272).

One cannot therefore explain away, as Freud did, mystical experiences as merely sublimated sexual energies:

The Spiritual life and consciousness belongs to a definite psychological level and has a quality, which is specific and not derived. The transmuted energies reach up to it from below, as it were, and give it added vitality and 'heat', but they neither create nor explain that higher life (Assagioli, 1993, p.272.)

Therefore, Mysticism may be achieved through a conscious renunciation of sexual life, but this is not a necessary prerequisite for those seeking mystical experience. Neither does

it necessarily follow that those who renounce their sexual life will experience Mysticism.

4.10.3. The Mystic/Pragmatist Dichotomy

D articulated a further aspect of mysticism, which is described in Psychosynthesis theory as the Mystic/Pragmatist Dichotomy or The Crisis of Duality. That is:

... like having a vision of what is possible and sitting in the reality of what is and having that gap between what is possible and what is (L.99-100).

This was something she had experienced her whole life without having a name for it or a way to work with it, until she met Psychosynthesis. She came from a dysfunctional family:

...when I was a child I would often feel bewildered with my own life and my family and my experience of the world and I used to say to myself as a little girl, 'There is no love here' and I somehow knew, without being a conscious person, just being a child, that there was something fundamentally wrong (L.90-94).

Whitmore says:

With the crisis of duality the client has a broad vision of inherent meaning, of how life 'could' be and of the immense potential of human existence. The problem is often that she has insufficient psychological integration to cope with this vision, and consequently feels frustrated by her inability fully to express it in her life (Whitmore, 1993, p.132).

4.10.4. Mysticism and Peak Experiences

The research also found that mystical experiences could sometimes be framed as Peak Experiences (Maslow, 1970). This was how **D** described her first meeting with Assagioli:

When I met Assagioli I had a peak experience when I walked into his room and met him for the first time...the room was full of light and I had a feeling, without even speaking to him yet, that I had come home in a big way and that this would be my major life work (L.41-45).

She went on to describe this Peak Experience as a Mystical experience:

...this was just a big, big Mystical experience and my life purpose, and it turned out to be true (L.45-46).

She elaborated:

In that peak experience it was not rockets and perfume and holiness, it was just an unutterable knowing that I had come home to where I was meant to come to (L.80. -82).

D is elucidating a sense of absolute 'rightness', an Inner knowing or profound intuition in that moment of first contact with Assagioli. The experience was so powerful that its sense of intensity did not diminish with the passing of time. She said:

I don't know many people that have had one experience that has been as strong six years later, as it was in that room (L.52-54).

Having considered the findings about mysticism in the data analysis and their relation to the Psychosynthesis perspective, the researcher returned to the extant literature to explore the significance of the data analysis in relation to it.

4.10.5 Consciousness, Mysticism and Peak Experiences

Underhill's classic work on mysticism (1961) describes it as:

One of the most abused words in the English language, it has been used in different and often mutually exclusive senses by religion, poetry and philosophy...(Underhill 1961,p.xiv).

Fontana (2006) suggests that mysticism is by its nature hard to define and that it:

...appears to operate at different levels, from the ecstatic experiences of various of the saints, to the quiet moments experienced by ordinary men and women, some of which arise suddenly and unexpectedly, and yet have life-changing power (Fontana, 2006,p.110).

Cox (1983) explored a wide range of definitions of Western mysticism, and considered that all contain the concept of a direct experience with God. Eastern mystics, particularly in Buddhism, would replace the term God with terms such as "absolute reality", "emptiness" or "essential nature", but whatever the terms used, the concepts remain the same. In a moment of sudden insight, the mystic sees into the real nature of things, the

essential reality behind the world of appearances, and typically is fundamentally changed as a consequence.

4.10.5. Transcendent /Immanent Mysticism

The literature makes evident a number of different attempts to classify types of mystical experience. Perhaps the most distinctive of these is the division into transcendent and immanent mysticism (Hood, 1975,1995). In the first, the individual has a sense of being in contact with the divine and/or creative energies outside himself or herself. In the second, the individual experience is one of the divine presence pervading and unifying all things. There is an experience of the divine within all of creation, including oneself and of the unity of all creation. Not of the divine as merely outside oneself. For example, this division is seen in Schjelderup and Schjelderup's (1932) writings about 'union mysticism' and 'self-mysticism'. Hinduism speaks of savikalpa samadhi and nirvikalpa samadhi. Wilber (1993) argues that savikalpa samadhi is the blissful experience which allows an understanding of saguna Brahman, the mythological or personified image of the divine, while nirvikalpa samadhi is direct experience of nirguna Brahman, the ground of all being. In nirvikalpa samadhi:

One no longer contemplates reality, one becomes reality! All dualities and images are totally and clearly removed. So (savikalpa samadhi) is the truest image of reality, while (nirvikalpa samadhi) is reality itself (Wilber, 1993,p.87).

Fontana (2006) suggests that the distinction between these two types of mysticism is essential to any understanding of the psychology of mysticism. However, he asserts that culture may have a bearing upon the prevalence of one type of mystical experience over the other. He argues that the greater prevalence of transcendental mysticism in the West and of immanence mysticism in the East may relate to:

... the emphasis that the West places upon individuality, upon defining, developing, and defending individuality-than does the East, which recognises more commonality between human beings and between human beings and the rest of creation (Fontana, 2006,p.113).

The literature offered a major conceptual division between two types of mysticism, transcendent and immanent. The data analysis provided examples of transcendent mysticism, but not of immanent mysticism. Both **W** and **MF** termed their experiences as those of Transcendent mysticism. **MF** said:

I was definitely a transcendent mystic (L. 305).

W spoke at length of his:

Mystic subpersonality (L.398).

W described his mother as a Celtic Mystic and described how she had forcibly passed on her knowledge to him in what he

considered an abuse of his own spirituality. The practices and experiences he described from this earlier period in his life, seemed more related to the esoteric and the occult, than to mainstream perspectives of mysticism. Rowan (2008) describes such aspects of spirituality as 'extrapersonal' as distinct from 'transpersonal'. The childhood experiences of **N** with her personal accounts of extrasensory perception would also seem to belong to this category.

Whilst the wider literature speaks mainly of the positive experiences of mysticism, Psychosynthesis also provides a picture of the negative impact that transcendent mystical experiences can have upon a person's life.

MF's life narrative illustrated this negative impact at a critical period in her life:

While everything around me was falling apart, I didn't know how to ground (L. 306-307).

What **MF** was articulating, and **W** expressed this too, was that experiences of transcendent mysticism take one away from everyday reality, and wonderful though that experience might be, everyday life still has to be managed, especially one's responsibilities to others, in her case, dependent children.

W first became very interested in mysticism in his early twenties, when he discovered the Qabalah. He stated:

As I got into my early twenties I discovered the Qabalah, the Qabalistic Tree of Life, and that, up to Psychosynthesis, up to when I started Psychosynthesis, had been the model that seemed to work best for me. It kind of made sense of my experience, my experience in relation to the universe, but there was a kind of link missing out of it that I didn't get and it felt to me like, when I first discovered Psychosynthesis, or first experienced Psychosynthesis, it supplied that link, and that link was about body and ground, and actually about being with this energy in a grounded way rather than being with this energy as a way of putting your head in the clouds (L.387-396).

The researcher frames this as Psychosynthesis offering a way to live with mysticism, in that it gives concrete ways to ground one's mystical experiences in everyday life, so that soul becomes embodied in one's lived life rather than shut away from life in a precious compartment. As **D** said:

It is not enough to just contact the spiritual world, or the Self... it is equally and vitally important to express that in your daily life, so that your daily life becomes more of an embodiment of your soul (L.135-138).

4.10.7. Introvert/Extrovert Mysticism: Causal /Serious Mysticism

The literature also suggests two other types of distinctions in relation to mysticism. Firstly, between introvert and extrovert mysticism and secondly, between causal and serious mysticism (Horne, 1978). In introverted mysticism, the person has an experience of transformation of the self; in extroverted mysticism the person has the experience of the transformation of the world. In causal mysticism the experience comes unexpectedly and with little or no preparation, in serious mysticism the experience comes as a result of intention and commitment.

Rowan (2008) suggests from this basis that most Peak Experiences can be viewed as an experience of causal, extroverted mysticism. The data did have one example, which corresponded to this description. This was in the interview with **D**. She said of her first meeting with Assagioli:

When I walked into his room and met him for the first time...the room was full of light and I had a feeling, without even speaking to him yet, that I had come home in a big way and that this would be my major life work. This was just a big, big mystical experience and my life purpose and it turned out to be true (L.43-46).

Furthermore, the extant literature offers support to Assagioli's distinction between different types of mystical experiences (which Rowan suggests Jung was unable to do because he placed all things spiritual into one framework, the Collective Unconscious). Assagioli distinguished between transpersonal experiences involving symbols and images, and those that go beyond this to direct experiences of the Universal Mind. Wilber (2000) makes the same distinction in his levels of psychospiritual development, when he distinguishes between the Subtle and the Causal levels.

4.10.8. Features of a Mystical Experience

Rowan (2008) suggests that the evidence largely supports the view that mystical experience takes two forms, one a realization of the unity of all things, the other of the divine presence.

He comments that:

Both forms of experience can be accompanied by an awareness of light, which can have the effect of appearing to transform the surroundings. Both forms can lead to feelings of bliss, of knowledge/enlightenment, and of release from the fear of death. Both forms of experience bring with them a conviction of the importance of universal love (Rowan, 2008, p.124).

The description of mystical experiences as involving an extraordinary experience of light and of a sudden and powerful

transformation can be noted in **D's** experience on first meeting Assagioli. She stated that:

The room was full of light (L.45)...in that Peak experience, it was not rockets and perfume and holiness, it was just an unutterable knowing that I had come to where I was meant to come (L.80-82).

4.10.9. Modes of Entry to Mystical Experiences

The data analysis can be seen to provide examples of different modes of entry to mystical experiences. These are recognised in the extant literature as well as in the Psychosynthesis literature. One involves a sudden and unexpected break through into ordinary consciousness, with little or no preparation. As noted earlier, this matches the experience **D** had on first meeting Assagioli.

Next, the short cut and potentially psychologically harmful entry, via the use of hallucinogenic drugs. This was illustrated by **P's** experience at Esalen, when he, like others, took LSD. The research of Stanislav Grof (1975,1979) documents accounts of such experiences.

Thirdly, the deliberate attempt to ascend to the Transpersonal, which was the route taken by **P** after he met Assagioli and began to work with him, through the practice of meditation. Rowan (2008) gives a comprehensive overview of the many models and

types of meditation. Hardy's (1979) research documented prayer and meditation as the second most frequent trigger of mystical experiences.

W's experience of mysticism also provides an illustration of the Psychosynthesis hypotheses that subpersonalities can exist in any area of the unconscious. He stated:

Until I discovered Psychosynthesis, ...my mystic subpersonality had become so strong and kind of pushing me in that direction [living with his head in the clouds]. (L.398-399).

This link was only made in the Psychosynthesis literature: the wider literature did not consider mysticism in relation to subpersonalities.

4.10.10. Stages of Mystical Experiences

Lastly, the researcher suggests that the experiences of mysticism as reported by the three research participants may be illustrative of the earliest of Underhill's (1961) five stages of mystical experience. Fontana (2006) suggests that reported experiences of mysticism at the higher levels described in Underhill's work, are relatively rare. Underhill identified through the writings of mystics and from her own experience, five stages through which all mystics seem to pass as they move from lower

to higher levels of reality to attune to what she called the 'independent spiritual world'.

The researcher suggests that the experiences of mysticism reported by three of the research participants might usefully be viewed as relating to the first of Underhill's five stages, that of 'The Stage of Awakening'. It is possible though, that the Mystic/Pragmatist Dichotomy might be seen in terms of Underhill's second stage, the Stage of Purgation. At this stage, the Awakening is followed by recognition of one's own finiteness and imperfection in comparison with the Divine, and of the immense distance between the two. However, this is seen as a cause of profound anguish, which arouses an intense desire to eliminate, by discipline and self-mortification all that creates this distance. D did not report this and consequently the researcher rejected this comparison.

The theme of Mysticism, as an aspect of the overarching theme of Spirituality, has now been explored both in relation to the data, the Psychosynthesis literature and the extant literature. The researcher now moves on to present the findings in relation to the other major theme, which emerged from the literature, which was Inclusiveness.

4.11. Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness was the second major theme to emerge from the interview data. Ten of the therapists spoke of the inclusive nature of the Psychosynthesis model as an important reason for their choice of training. The interview data revealed a number of different but related dimensions to the theme of inclusiveness.

Firstly, Psychosynthesis was felt to present **a holistic model** of what it is to be a human being. This is because it differs from many other major therapeutic models in that it goes beyond the assumption that human beings are physical, mental and emotional beings. It asserts that human beings are also deeply spiritual (though at any one time this may only exist as potential rather than as an experienced reality).

West asserts that whilst:

Most humanistic therapists operate from a holistic model which sees people as physical, emotional, mental and Spiritual beings (and) consequently Spirituality and Spiritual experiences will tend to be tolerated and perhaps even welcomed as phenomena to be explored...the traditional humanistic therapist is less likely to be experienced in working with such phenomena than the transpersonal therapist (West, 2000, p.28).

He goes on to argue that this is because:

Whilst the training programmes of humanistic therapists may touch on the spiritual and the Transpersonal, this will not tend to be in any systematic, worked-out way. Consequently the response to the client's Spirituality will usually depend on the individual practitioner (West, 2000, p.28).

This perspective of Psychosynthesis as a holistic psychotherapy was expressed by **DY** who said:

It could deal with the whole human being-body, feelings, mind, soul and spirit (L.274-275).

MK said:

It's a very inclusive model and its not only say, at the level of personality where all personality aspects are included, but it is also, if you think of the whole Egg model, its infinitely broader than so many other psychological models. So the inclusiveness is there as well, in terms of including both the Higher and Lower Unconscious and the inclusion of the transpersonal and transcendent dimension there (L.75-83).

Participant **I** recounted how she:

...had searched other approaches, all of which felt fine but not complete, it always felt like something really important was missing...but when I first met Psychosynthesis it was the closest to anything that felt comfortable to me (L.25-30).

She went on to add that:

I used to question all the time what approach to use and it did not seem fair for my clients to be guinea pigs and get the latest style of therapy...and then I was introduced to Psychosynthesis and I just knew that I had found

something that would be part of my life for the rest of my life and that was it. It was like I had fallen in love and I was perfectly satisfied (L.56-67).

What participant **I** had found was a psychological model, which included the Spiritual dimension. The model gave her a perspective to understand 'bad' behaviour in a new light, as manifestations of subpersonalities. She explained:

If I did not have Psychosynthesis I would not have had a theoretical base to understand why we do these things that we feel awful about doing (L.102-104).

The model gave a framework by which to understand not just behaviour that was problematic but also ways in which to work towards living more in the Higher Self. This was:

... more inclusive and more expansive and it was always the far reaches of what is possible (L.292-293).

However, Psychosynthesis, on its own, was not complete for Participant **I**. She said that it threw up as many questions as answers for her. She wanted a deeper understanding of the Higher Self:

My frustration with Psychosynthesis was that they talked about the Higher Self but they didn't really explain what it really was (L.68-70).

Participant **I** came to a deeper understanding when she was introduced to the esoteric works of Alice Bailey. She realised that Psychosynthesis was:

...based on the esoteric material and so that combination became completely satisfying for me (L.35-37).

She explained:

Once I began to study the esoteric books, they, in fact, really outlined the world of the Higher Self so that it is really concrete, and how to go there and how to get there (L.42-45).

The inclusion of the spiritual dimension was a powerful draw for all twelve therapists, as has already been discussed in relation to the key themes of Spirituality and Mysticism.

A further feature of this inclusivity was that it encompassed a broad range of spiritual traditions. Assagioli had studied the major spiritual and philosophical traditions of both the East and the West. As Whitmore states:

Assagioli studied the major world religions and was touched especially by the Hindu, Buddhist and Christian traditions. He was a friend of Martin Buber and was knowledgeable in Judaism. He practised Hatha and Raja yoga, the yoga of the body and of the mind. His contacts included the Russian esotericist P.D.Ouspensky, the German philosopher Hermann Keyserling, the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, the Sufi mystic Inayat Khan, the Zen scholar D.T.Suzuki, psychologist Viktor Frankl, the

founder of Logotherapy, and Robert Desoille, the creator of the guided day-dream (Whitmore, 1991, p.6).

Psychosynthesis draws upon these both in its psychological theory and in its therapeutic techniques. So, Psychosynthesis was described as inclusive in the sense that it draws upon many rich streams and combines them in its own unique way.

Furthermore, as Parfitt states:

...while it explores these areas, which we would call Spiritual, it in no way imposes any form of doctrine or belief system upon the person using it. Psychosynthesis is not a religion, nor would it ever want to be... one of its greatest qualities is that it allows you to be and do whatever you want. So it is equally suitable for Christians, Buddhists, Pagans, Moslems, atheists, agnostics-indeed, anyone at all (Parfitt, 1990, p.2).

P said:

...since I was so suspicious in the beginning, so resistant, I told Assagioli that I wanted to be part of Psychosynthesis so long as I didn't have to give up or deny any scientific finding, any Spiritual tradition or Spiritual technique, and any form of art, or work of art. If I found that it denied them, separated me from those valuable contributions, then I would not want to be part of Psychosynthesis, but then I found that Psychosynthesis was so inclusive that it was compatible with all of that (L.332-338).

Assagioli explains the nature of this inclusivity as 'neutrality'. This is because he differentiates between the direct experience of Spirituality and the institutions, formalities, methods, forms and rites of religion. He states:

Psychosynthesis definitely affirms the reality of Spiritual experience, the existence of the higher values and of the

noetic or noological dimension (as Frankl aptly calls it). Its neutrality refers only to the second phase; that of the formulations and the institutions. It appreciates, respects and even recognises the necessity of such formulations and institutions; but its purpose is to help to attain the direct experience (Assagioli, 1975, p.195).

Psychosynthesis is able to work therefore both with clients:

...who do not believe in religion nor have any clear philosophical conception (as it) offers methods and techniques towards Spiritual realisation"...and with "those who have a living faith, those who belong to a Church or are followers of a philosophical school (Assagioli, 1975, p.195).

This second group:

...have no reason to be afraid of Psychosynthesis (as) It does not attempt to interfere with or change their position; on the contrary, it can help them to make a better use of the methods and teachings of their own religion. Moreover, Psychosynthesis can help them to understand formulations dissimilar to their own and to be broadminded towards them (Assagioli, 1975, p.195).

This inclusivity has implications, both in its attractiveness to potential therapists looking for a 'fit' and for the spectrum of clients it can work with.

As **W** stated, from the therapist's view:

It enables you to bring your own beliefs and values into it and then have a framework that not only enables you to understand your own beliefs and values more, but understand them in relation to other people and their beliefs and values (L.433).

As **N** stated:

When I go back to my childhood, why I chose Psychosynthesis was because it includes rather than excludes, what my childhood included, a range of religions (L.26-28).

If one considers the implications for clients, Psychosynthesis could be said to offer a psychological framework to work holistically, i.e. to explore Spiritual issues as well as emotional, cognitive and behavioural issues. If one accepts the premise that human beings have a Spiritual dimension it follows that a therapist who rejects this premise is not able to work with the whole person and can only offer a reduced therapeutic perspective and a limited range of therapeutic work.

West (2000) remarks:

Therapists who are dismissive of Spirituality when challenged have been known to reply ' Well, my clients never discuss their Spirituality with me'. However, it is commonly accepted that clients will avoid exploring topics that their therapists are 'deaf to' and will somehow pick this up without being told (West, 2000, p.17).

This aspect of inclusiveness in Psychosynthesis could be said therefore to give opportunities for truly holistic work. **MK** expressed this as:

It makes absolute sense to me that if we're going to work with another human being, the bigger the picture we have of that human being, the more we'll be able to meet them (L.83-84).

DY offered a further aspect to inclusiveness. She felt that because Psychosynthesis was a model rather than a technique, this enabled the therapist to draw upon a wide range of techniques in therapeutic work:

What I really liked about it was that it was a model rather than a technique, which means it can use any techniques, so it leaves you free to explore the techniques (L.180).

One could argue that all psychological therapies are models rather than mere techniques. What might be conceded is that some psychological therapies are more rigid and controlling in the type of therapeutic techniques seen as compatible with and accepted by the theoretical model.

For example, **DY** cited Transactional Analysis and Gestalt therapies as not offering a way to work with the Spirit because:

They didn't emphasise the power of the spirit, you don't go there, the spirit wasn't real. It was focusing on the Existential, emphasising the mind, body, and feelings. The mind being the rational mostly, I suppose (L.281-282).

In contrast, Psychosynthesis offered ways to work with Spirituality through such techniques as Guided Visualisation, work with symbols, Imagery work etc.

Participant **I** said:

I don't know of any better techniques (than Psychosynthesis)...the visualisation, the imagery and just

the understanding of teaching people how to get to centre and how to strive for the Higher Self (L.47-50).

She added:

I have never seen clients change at the level they change doing imagery and Psychosynthesis and drawings and meditation (L.54-55).

Hardy (1987) notes that Psychosynthesis:

...is well known for its flexible use of a large number of techniques: these include Gestalt, guided fantasy, meditation, group psychotherapy, use of art, music, and writing work on meaning and purpose as well as on problems (Hardy, 1987, p.2).

In Psychosynthesis, techniques could be utilised to work on Spirituality from either of two perspectives (i.e. Top-Down work or Bottom-Up work) or both.

Bottom-up work involves focusing on historical factors in the client's developmental process. It might be used to identify the source of subpersonalities and bring them into conscious awareness.

Top-down work might focus on transpersonal qualities such as joy, exploring and facilitating ways in which the client might be able to realise the quality more in their life.

It might also be used to work with a crisis of meaning in a client's life. Psychosynthesis theory posits that every human being needs a sense of purpose in their life and that each person's life has meaning. It is when we are lacking such a sense that our lives can seem empty and unsatisfying; regardless of the material wealth and attributes we may have accumulated.

Whitmore states that:

The resolution of the existential crisis occurs when the client is able to expand the meaning of her existence beyond the boundaries of her personality. The existentialist crisis is an opportune time to seek or renew contact with the transpersonal dimension, and indeed can be seen as a progressive impulse to include it (Whitmore, 1991, p.131).

The freedom that was afforded to therapists to work in their own ways and to be creative was noted by T who said:

Psychosynthesis is very wide-spaced so you can get inspiration to create exercises, to create concepts, and for me it is very good, I feel very free to create exercises...so I think the positive aspect of Psychosynthesis for me as a therapist is the freedom, the creativity (L.424-429).

Whitmore points to this fact when she says:

No one model or technique is appropriate for every client all the time. For some, dialogue is most effective, while for others a more active dynamic mode works best. For example, the depth and subtlety of working with the unconscious using the technique of mental imagery facilitates some clients well but not others (Whitmore, 1991, p.3).

E illustrated this factor well. She explained that she had been subjected to an attempted rape as a young woman. Although she had been in Jungian therapy for three years she was not able to heal the trauma of the experience:

We talked about it but that did not take the pain away (L.572).

She went on to say:

Psychosynthesis is the only thing I know that gets right to the point (L.572-573).

What enabled **E** to really get to grips with the trauma was using the technique of guided visualisation. As Whitmore asserts:

With its wide array of techniques, Psychosynthesis provides the practitioner with flexibility and variety while maintaining structural coherency (Whitmore, 1991, p.3).

One might criticise such a broad canvas as mere eclecticism but **D** strongly disputed such an interpretation:

I don't like it when I hear that Psychosynthesis is eclectic because I don't really see that (L.170).

Whitmore (1991) asserts that this would be a mistake as:

...the context of any psychology remains implicit except to those who have studied it in depth (and therefore) it is easy to miss the substantial theoretical framework that forms the operating principles of Psychosynthesis (Whitmore, 1991, p.3).

The assertion that Psychosynthesis has a substantial theoretical framework is affirmed by Schatz, who states:

Psychosynthesis is a comprehensive approach to human development. It's not eclectic in the usual sense. In other words, it's not mishmash. The difference is that we're

borrowing from many sources for techniques and orientation within a very definite framework, and that framework is what makes Psychosynthesis. It distinguishes it from any other school of psychology or human development (Schatz, 1988, quoted in Schuller, 1988, p.388).

Another dimension of inclusivity which emerged from the interview data was that the model did not just focus on the individual but that it extended out from the individual in what could be described as concentric circles. As Whitmore states:

Psychosynthesis is really a broad vision and context of personal, interpersonal, social, global and universal evolution (Whitmore, 1991, p.ix).

M described Psychosynthesis as having three dimensions:

- The focus on the individual as a person
- The focus on Spirituality
- The social dimension

He said:

It struck me also, that this synthesis principle could be applied to human relations, to the social aspects of life, so I found Psychosynthesis to be a development in that area which did have big social consequences (L.495-499).

W said:

Personally, I think one of the most brilliant things about Psychosynthesis, is how it can be applied in so many different areas (L.604-613).

He commented that the emphasis in Europe in Psychosynthesis was in training people to be therapists and whilst:

...that's fine in itself, ...Psychosynthesis is much bigger than that for me...its not just a form of counselling and psychotherapy (L.735-736).

It is because Psychosynthesis sits within transpersonal psychology that it goes beyond the personal.

As Whitmore (1991) states:

Working transpersonally goes beyond the boundaries of a client's individuality (Whitmore, 1991, p.16).

Therefore, **MF** commented that as her own consciousness expanded, she was aware that the model still fitted:

There's a fluidity in the model that allows for that to be, so as our consciousness expands it's possible to see that the model still fits in a way (L.610) ...when I actually saw the Egg diagram, I was so excited, because I saw this expansion, you know, this inclusion, it was all kind of there (L.576).

Inclusiveness was also seen to relate to valuing every aspect of the individual and their experience. In Psychosynthesis theory every part of the individual contributes to the whole and has a value. This includes past experiences, which may have been

judged as 'bad'. No part of the individual (or subpersonality in Psychosynthesis terminology) is 'bad'. No matter how dysfunctional a pattern of behaviour might seem, it is seen as having served a purpose, it was the best way the child knew how to survive at that time. Therapeutic work is likely to focus on bringing the pattern into conscious awareness so that its history can be traced and the ways in which it has both served and limited the person can be appreciated. As **MK** explained:

I immediately think of Assagioli, the basic model of say, subpersonality theory, that every aspect of us, whether its, you know, body, feelings, mind, spirit, any identification has something intrinsically and essentially of value to contribute to the whole, however distorted or however difficult the outer behaviour might be, or problematic. However much it needs working on or refining, but I like that idea that there is something of value to contribute and it's always possible to reframe and to look at something from different perspectives and to see the worth in it (L.66-73).

A further aspect of inclusivity related to Assagioli's assertion that his ideas and his model of Psychosynthesis was open to further development, it was not a finished product in a final sense. Therefore, others could feel free to contribute their ideas and to take his work further.

As Whitmore (1991) states:

Roberto Assagioli...purposely refrained from handing down a finished product to his students. He created its basic vision and principles while encouraging practitioners to

explore and devise a large number of avenues and methods, and to integrate his empirical model with traditional psychology (Whitmore, 1991, p.3).

N commented:

At the end of almost every paper he says, 'and more work should be done on this'. He does it on every sort of thing that he has ever written and so he himself was constantly adding and wanting additions to and this is what draws me and keeps me with Psychosynthesis (L.502-507).

M also valued the openness to further development of the basic model, which Assagioli had always encouraged. **M** had personally developed his interest in bodywork, as part of Psychosynthesis.

He said:

The other aspect which I developed later in the years of Psychosynthesis was very rewarding. It was this integration of the body, mind, the psyche and spirit, the synthesis of all these, and that was a later development, which in Assagioli, the seeds were already in Assagioli's time. I did not practice so much the body with Assagioli directly; I did it later, that was my own development (L.504-508).

Participant **I** explained how she had drawn on her own experiences of being parented (badly) and of being a parent (difficult). Drawing upon the Psychosynthesis model she had developed her own model of 'Total Quality Parenting' to help parents and children in their relationship with each other. She commented that Psychosynthesis:

...does not stop you from going the distance you want to go. It does not say it is wrong, whereas other theories

would say, this does not exist, or, this is not important (L.330-332).

The other side to seeing Psychosynthesis as an inclusive model is the implication that other models have something missing. This was specifically mentioned by four of the therapists. Two highlighted the lack of a Spiritual dimension in other models.

T said:

I did not choose to keep going with Gestalt and Bioenergetics because they, at that time, in 1980-85, they did not have this Spiritual connotation that I found in Psychosynthesis (L.485-487).

T related this to his distaste for Neuro-Linguistic Programming because of what he saw as its opportunistic and moneymaking practices. For example, its exploitation and claimed 'ownership' of the Enneagram when it first became fashionable in Europe.

W identified not just a lack of Spirituality in other models but more specifically that other models did not provide a framework to ground Spirituality. He said:

As I got into my early twenties I discovered the Qabalah, the Qabalistic Tree of Life, and that, up to Psychosynthesis, up to when I started Psychosynthesis, had been the model that seemed to work best for me. It kind of made sense of my experience, my experience in relation to the universe... but there was a kind of link missing out of it that I didn't get and it felt to me like when I first discovered Psychosynthesis, or first experienced Psychosynthesis, it supplied that link and that link was about body and ground and actually, you know, being with this energy in a

grounded way, rather than being with this energy as a way of putting your head in the clouds kind of stuff, which I think I was doing until I discovered Psychosynthesis. I'd been going more and more into that, I guess you know, becoming more and more my, you know, my mystic subpersonality had become so strong and pushing me in that direction (L.387-399).

What **W** was expressing was the Psychosynthesis assertion that merely being in touch with ones Spirituality is not enough, what is necessary is putting ones Spirituality into concrete expression in ones everyday life. Whitmore expresses this clearly when she states that:

Addressing the transpersonal domain in Psychosynthesis counselling is not a mystical avoidance of reality, nor does it promote transcendence of, or withdrawal from, everyday life. It aims to clear the way for and encourage transpersonal experience, to enable a person to use their resources in an ordered way for growth. A rich Spiritual life, peak experiences, an honest vision of one's potential and a sense of unity may lead only to despair unless the client is capable of translating them into everyday life. Hence, at the core of Psychosynthesis is both the experience and the expression of the transpersonal dimension (Whitmore, 1991, p.18).

D articulated this as:

The other thing is the emphasis on Self, you know that it is not enough to just contact the Spiritual world or the transpersonal or the Self, but that it is equally and vitally important to express that in your daily life, so that your daily life becomes more of an embodiment of your soul (L.136-140).

4.12. Techniques of Psychosynthesis in the Data Analysis

Four of the therapists stressed the powerful nature of the techniques used in Psychosynthesis, as influential in their choice of training. This arose from the success they had experienced in their use as part of their own personal therapy and subsequently in utilising these techniques in their work as therapists.

4.12.1. Identification/Disidentification Exercise

Three emphasised the power of the technique of Identification/Disidentification which is taught to clients to help them identify with the 'I' or Personal self.

Assagioli asserted that in our everyday lives we can feel overwhelmed by strong feelings, consumed by our thoughts, completely absorbed in the roles we occupy or totally identified with our physical bodies. When this happens we can lose touch with the deeper essence that we are. To the extent that we are identified with a strong emotion such as anger, for example, we may feel that "I am anger" rather than, part of me is angry. It is as if the anger is all that we are and we cannot think about or feel anything else.

A further example might be Identification as a mother, in which:

...they consider themselves, function and live only as the mother (Assagioli, 1975, p.112).

Assagioli asserted that such identifications could be limiting and even harmful to the individual. But:

Whilst we are dominated by everything with which our self is identified. We can dominate and control everything from which we dis-identify (Assagioli, 1975, p.22).

The technique of Dis-identification enables a person to step back from strong emotions, step back from thoughts which occupy their minds, separate out from roles that they occupy and differentiate between bodily sensations experienced and the 'I' or Personal self. The theory posits that, the more a person is able to do this the more they will feel in control of their lives. In Psychosynthesis theory a person is more than their body, mind, feelings and roles. The Dis-identification exercise leads the person through an initial process of identifying with and then dis-identifying from them each of these parts in turn. Assagioli describes this as:

...eliminating all the partial self-identifications (Assagioli, 1975, p.114).

The question is then posed "If I am not my mind, body, feelings or roles, who am I?" The exercise then offers the answer:

I am a Centre of pure Self-consciousness. I am a Centre of Will, capable of mastering, directing and using all my psychological processes and my physical body (Assagioli, 1975, p.119).

D stated that she had been a:

...highly, highly emotionally identified person ...quite a victim to my emotions (L.127).

In her therapy sessions at Esalen, where Gestalt techniques were used, she had been encouraged to focus on her powerful feelings:

...at Esalen ...the whole ethos was emotional identification (L.133).

The Psychosynthesis model taught her that she did not have to be dominated by her feelings:

...and that was a great liberation...it was very soothing and relieving to be able to acknowledge and recognise and work with the fact that I am more than my feelings (L.134).

Similarly, **MF** found the Psychosynthesis concept of Dis-identification very helpful and new. She described it as like finding a missing piece of a jigsaw puzzle. Psychosynthesis gave her a map to locate the pieces of the jigsaw she already had and a way to make sense of the pieces. She realised that the work she'd done in Encounter groups was work with the Lower Unconscious and that they'd:

...got only one piece of the puzzle here. They were going well, feelings need to be experienced. But when they weren't going well, then you can Dis-identify from them, that part wasn't there. I cannot tell you, I was so excited! (L.297-298).

Participant **I** felt that:

...teaching people how to get to the centre (L.46)

was one of the most useful techniques that a therapist could teach a client. This identification with the 'I' or Personal self, is central to the Dis-identification technique.

E seemed to already be using this technique even before she began the Psychosynthesis training. At a multi-professional seminar, where she presented a case study of the ways in which she had worked with a client, she included visualisation and meditation and:

...not getting upset when somebody calls you something (L.85-86).

This process of being able to step back to the place of the Observer (the 'I') is part of the technique of Dis-identification.

4.12.2. Imagery work

Two therapists spoke of the powerful work that could take place using the Psychosynthesis techniques of visualisation and imagery. They felt that these techniques were particularly helpful to them at a personal level and for certain clients who had a natural propensity for such work.

Participant **I** came to recognise that she had grown to adulthood without any interior world. She had gone into therapy whilst at college because she did not feel good about herself and cried all the time:

I used to cry all the time, I really did not know why I was so sad...I felt nobody understood me, I did not understand myself (L.165-167).

The first therapist she saw:

...made me feel worse about myself, so I felt depleted instead of strengthened (L.178-180).

What helped her to achieve dramatic growth and understanding of herself was imagery work. Participant **I** recalled going to someone's house:

...and on their refrigerator or somewhere, they had all these little pictures they had drawn...these were pictures of their inner world and I remember thinking, 'I don't know anything about what this person is talking about, all I, know is, I want to follow' (L.235-240).

When Participant **I** started to do Psychosynthesis workshops and went into therapy with Robert Gerard (who had collaborated with Assagioli in writing the book 'Psychosynthesis') she found that:

...there was a whole world of my insides that I began to understand. Like, I could draw pictures and I would understand (L.171).

She soon realised that the symbolism of imagery was a powerful way of working for her:

My mind is such that as soon as I have an image, I can easily transform it, or, as soon as I have a principle I can easily ground it, so that anything symbolic became a change in my life within a week. It was transformational, the speed at which, it was like somebody gave me the right food and I would digest it and I would grow in a remarkable way from it (L.171-177).

As a consequence:

Most of my therapy was imagery sessions. I had two-hour sessions and most of it was talking, doing imagery and then catapulting into a new world and then coming back in two weeks and doing the same kind of stuff. It was like I suddenly understood myself and I knew how to work with it (L.181-185).

She commented that imagery:

...was so powerful because I really felt empty, and I knew nothing of any importance other than that I was in terrible pain because of the emptiness, there was nothing inside...like a shell (L.245).

But when she began to have Psychosynthesis sessions with a therapist, she realised that there was an inner world that nobody had ever told her anything about. She went on to add:

Probably that has always been my greatest strength, to know how to manoeuvre in my inner world, if anyone gave me any clues that it even existed (L.245-248).

When Participant **I** began to have therapy sessions with Robert Gerard she:

...began to have this incredibly rich inner world (L.252).

A lot of the imagery work that Participant **I** did with her therapist, Robert Gerard, was around archetypes:

We would go into a cave or we would meet some mythical figure and the power of that kind of therapy for me was unbelievable! (L.283-284).

Participant **I** later found that Psychosynthesis techniques could bring rapid and powerful changes in her clients. She said:

I have never seen clients change at the level they change doing imagery and drawings and meditation (L.47).

These techniques were more helpful than others she had utilised before. She said:

I don't know of any better techniques, the visualisation and the imagery and just the understanding of teaching people how to get to the centre (L.46).

She is referring to the -identification exercise.

E found that the Psychosynthesis technique of working with visualisation fitted her, 'perfectly' because it was something she had always used:

I do visualise and using visualisation to create things, and I did that before, maybe I started Psychosynthesis in another life, I don't know, but it is just right for me (L.550-553).

Before she started to learn about Psychosynthesis, Robert Gerard told her that many of the techniques she was already using, such as visualisation and meditation, were part of the Psychosynthesis 'tool-kit'.

4.12.3. Meditation

Meditation was another technique used in Psychosynthesis therapy, which drew three of the therapists into Psychosynthesis.

A's interest in Psychosynthesis grew from his experience in using the techniques of meditation and visualisation. He was introduced to meditation whilst in the army, as a contemporary of **P**. **P** talked to him about ways of opening to different levels of consciousness and introduced him to the practice of meditation. Later, **A** became interested in the model of Psychosynthesis but it was the powerful experiences he had had in meditation that drew him in. He commented that these experiences were comparable in intensity to those that others might achieve through the use of psychedelic drugs.

P's interest in meditation grew initially because, as a young man who was painfully shy and nervous he saw meditation:

...at first, as a way, as a liberation from the uneasiness that I was feeling with myself (L.298).

At that stage:

I was not interested in therapy, I was not interested in that. I wanted to do something, anything that I could do by myself. So meditation appealed to me in that respect (L.299).

Later, when he spent some time at Esalen, he experienced the more theatrical and energetic cathartic techniques of 1970's Gestalt therapy. This was an intense and transformative time for him. On his return to Italy, he sought out a meeting with Assagioli because so many of the key figures in the Human Potential movement at Esalen, had spoken highly of him and **P** was intrigued. He was at first sceptical of and resistant to the gentler techniques of Psychosynthesis, but he came to realise that the techniques, such as reflective meditation, were effecting changes in him:

... at a much deeper level (L.97).

P meditated with Assagioli:

...for instance, on infinity, eternity, universality... and there was an inner transformation, much more powerful than I had experienced before... I felt happier and more at home with myself, more conscious of being on a path (L.118-121).

Later in his professional career, **P** wrote a Psychosynthesis text, exploring the many different dimensions of Spirituality and the expansion of consciousness, one of these paths was that of meditation.

T was practising meditation and teaching it in his workshops before he came across Psychosynthesis. However, he felt that this was somehow an add-on; it did not seem to have coherence

with the therapeutic models he was working with, such as Bioenergetics and Gestalt. When he explored Psychosynthesis he found the coherence that had been missing for him.

4.13. Heart and Mind Theme

Two therapists stressed the importance of the heart in Psychosynthesis. This was linked to its importance in their own lives.

M stated that the heart had always been very important to him:

I always needed to follow my heart (L.463).

In the final stages of his training as a doctor **M** was experiencing a tension between enjoying his life and still needing a sense of purpose in his life. His medical studies had drawn on his intellectual abilities and by the end of his medical training he was finding his study:

...very heavy (L. 376).

As a medical student he had also been very much a social and political activist, fighting to challenge social injustice. He described this period of his life as one of extrovert social and political activism. It was a time of going out to meet life's challenges. He reflected that at this point in his life he had reached a stage when he was ready and needed to:

...go more inside (L.377).

He was searching for something/someone that could touch his heart and not just his intellect.

Retrospectively, **M** recognised that he was:

...looking for something that could touch me, touch my heart (L.348-349).

Assagioli had the ability to do that because both the mind and the heart were:

...very developed in him, so he was quite able to call this in others (L.466).

The timing of the meeting between **M** and Assagioli seemed absolutely fortuitous. In Psychosynthesis theory there are two key principles or Archetypes, which are: Love and Will. Assagioli brought both into **M's** life at a critical time. He was able to work with **M** to explore why he was so unhappy with his current life and on ways to choose and move forward, using techniques of the Will. **M** developed a deep emotional attachment to Assagioli:

I remember with me it was a big emotional involvement. This man changed my life (L.473).

Also, in **M's** political and social activism, fighting against social injustice, he had experienced powerful emotions such as anger, which had driven his social activism. In meeting Assagioli, he

was able to see not only his personal issues from a different perspective, but also the wider, socio-political issues. They were:

...redefined in a different way and through my heart, the whole heart of life and not only the fighting, the becoming angry or of going against (L.500-502).

So the theme of Heart offers a different perspective, that of Love. Love was important to **M** in both his personal relationships and in providing a different perspective to frame his socio-political activities. **M** said:

...there was this great opening into my heart also, and not only the intellect (L.381).

At this time, **M** met S, his future wife, and fell in love. This deepened the opening of his heart:

... so there was this immersion in the intimate relationship, stepping out of all these social issues and going into Psychosynthesis personally. So there was this great opening into my heart (L.381).

Assagioli stressed the importance of mind and heart in Psychosynthesis theory and in its therapeutic techniques. It seems that he had the personal ability to reach both levels in others. **M** said:

Assagioli opened my heart and my mind. I feel that the first person, Assagioli was really the first master, his ability to hold both the mind and the heart, with me, in that sense, he was a master (L.464-466).

M is pointing to a key factor in Psychosynthesis that seems to distinguish it from other models. This is, that it puts a central focus on both the intellect and the heart and works to harmonise the two energies together. Assagioli described these as the archetypes of Love and Will. He stated:

Human love is not simply a matter of feeling, an affective condition or disposition. To love well calls for all that is demanded by the practice of any art, namely, an adequate measure of discipline, patience, and persistence. All these we have seen to be qualities of the Will (Assagioli, 1975, p.96).

The human task is the harmonisation and unification of love and will:

...culminating in their final fusion in the integrated human being (Assagioli, 1975, p.100).

D was the second therapist to identify the importance of Heart in her choice of Therapeutic training. She stated:

I sometimes think that my choice to work with Psychosynthesis is because I saw Psychosynthesis as being a very heartfelt, loving psychology, even with all its emphasis on Will (L.92-95).

She had grown up in a:

...dysfunctional family (L.6) without love. ...When I was a child I would often feel bewildered with my own life and my family and my experience of the world and I used to say to myself as a little girl, 'there is no love here' (L.90-92).

So love was painfully missing in her early life. It is understandable therefore, that a therapeutic model, which gave prominence to love, was particularly attractive to her.

Furthermore, the Psychosynthesis model provided a way to reframe her life experience in a manner that transformed her understanding and gave her tools to change her life.

D had become very critical of herself as a result of her family experience and was tormented by a drive to extreme perfectionism. She had tried to work on this for many years through Gestalt therapy. Gestalt theory had framed this obsessive perfectionism as a Super-Ego issue and **D**:

... had blasted and fought with (her) critic in Gestalt sessions for years and nothing had shifted (L.112-114).

At Esalen she had had working sessions that were:

... so violent and rageful that I would be literally debilitated for days afterwards and at the end of those sessions and the debilitation I would always scratch my head and go, 'Well, what was all that about, where did all that rage come from?' And I never understood it (L.114-119).

D described Gestalt in the early 1970s, as:

...very confrontative, challenging 'work on your anger' form of therapy (L.160-161).

What transformed her understanding and enabled her to work successfully on the issue was the new perspective brought to it

by Psychosynthesis theory. Psychosynthesis reframed her dilemma as that of the:

...mystic/pragmatist dichotomy, the crisis of Duality...Having a vision of what is possible and sitting in the reality of what is and having that gap between what is possible and what is (L.99-103).

She said:

*Assagioli helped me to make sense, to make meaning out of those experiences, which transformed it...Gestalt gave me a potent **experience** of that duality and of self-loathing, but Psychosynthesis gave me the **understanding** and it was only then that it became transformed...(L.122-124).*

Sub-personality work, in Psychosynthesis, helps the client to understand the history of a sub-personality (in this instance, the inner critic). The ways in which that part has both served and limited them is brought into awareness. This helps the client to see the part through more accepting, compassionate and loving eyes.

What **D** was articulating was a theoretical model that places Love and Will as centre stage. It goes on to facilitate greater self-understanding and self-compassion and to help the client develop the tools to live their lives more fully and more joyfully.

4.14. Psychosynthesis Techniques in Relation to the Literature

Four of the therapists identified the particular techniques used in Psychosynthesis therapy as influential in their choice of therapeutic training (**E, I, MF, D**). These transpersonal techniques include the use of guided visualisation, imagery work; work with symbols, meditation, drawing, bodywork and the technique of dis-identification. The therapists themselves attested to their effectiveness both in their own personal experience of being in therapy and in their work as therapists and there is further support to affirm the validity of such ways of working.

Rowan (2002) argues that not only is it possible to work in a transpersonal way in psychotherapy, but there are, in fact, *only* three ways of relating to clients in therapy. These are, the instrumental way, the authentic way and the transpersonal way.

In the instrumental way, the client is regarded as something like a machine to be fixed. The therapist is seen as a machine too. The emphasis is on techniques. Rowan suggests that this is the preferred mode in a number of therapeutic models, specifically: Rational Emotive therapy, Neuro-linguistic Programming, many Cognitive-Behavioural approaches and even in some Psychoanalytic circles.

This is the view taken by all treatment approaches under Managed Care and Employee Assistance Programmes, and all the manualized systems take this view. From this perspective the client (or usually the 'patient', a significant term in itself) is there to be cured, and applying the correct techniques will achieve this in a high percentage of cases. The search is for more and better techniques, which are to be tested empirically in research.

This approach may utilise work with the unconscious. Rowan asserts that such a relationship is essentially an 'I-IT' relationship. (The underlying inference here of course is to Martin Buber's concept of the I-Thou relationship) and key words are: contract, assessment, treatment, goals, empirically validated treatments, questionnaires, boundaries, goals etc.

In the authentic way of working, Rowan asserts, the therapist stays separate from the client, but holds the notion of a 'cure' much more loosely. The therapist does not see the client as hugely different from her/himself, since all human beings experience and struggle with the same existential issues.

The notion of the 'wounded healer' is accepted, personal involvement is much more acceptable and the idea of personal

growth is prominent. Humanistic therapists favour this approach. For example, Person-Centred, Gestalt, Psychodrama, Bodywork, Focussing, Experiential and Existential approaches. This attitude is also accepted by some Psychoanalysts, e.g., Searles, Winnicott, Lomas, etc and many Jungians, including Clarkson (1995) who describes this way of working as based upon a Person-to Person relationship. He asserts that it is possible to work in this way whether or not one accepts the concept of the unconscious, but it is necessary to have had what Wilber (2000) calls the Centaur level of psychospiritual development. The key words here are: authenticity, person-hood, healing through meeting, being in the world, intimacy, openness, etc.

In the Transpersonal way, the boundaries between the therapist and the client may, at times, fall away in the sense that:

...both may occupy the same space at the same time, at the level of the soul (Rowan, 2000, p.101).

Rowan notes that some therapists use the terms 'heart' or 'essence' rather than 'soul' but they all share a willingness to let go of all assumptions and attachment to outcomes. He asserts that Clarkson (1995) is clear that this is one of the five Important relationships in therapy, but what she does not make clear is that to adopt this way of working, it is essential to have had

some experience of what Wilber (2000) terms, the Subtle level of psychospiritual development. Key words here are: Interbeing, linking, transcendental empathy, resonance, dual unity, communion, the four-dimensional state, etc.

Therefore, Rowan is arguing that the transpersonal way of working in psychotherapy is one of the *only* three possible ways to work. Furthermore, not every therapist has achieved the personal psychospiritual levels and qualities necessary to work in this way. A certain level of development is a prerequisite. This would seem to support the argument, still being waged within the BACP, as to whether therapists in training, or even before starting their training, should be required to undergo personal therapy (Daw & Joseph, 2007).

Rowan asserts that one cannot work Transpersonally as a psychotherapist, unless one has developed ones own consciousness. This would seem self-evident. Crucially, one must have access to the Subtle level of consciousness, which allows openness to intuitive understanding. As he asserts, therapy is about Being, Doing and Knowing.

It is the level of consciousness, which provides the Being. Doing emerges naturally and creatively if one has reached access to

Being states. The unaware are often stuck, perhaps compulsively, in Doing mode. In Psychosynthesis the concept of "letting go of attachment to outcome" is an important theme. The therapist learns that sometimes it is important to wait and see what emerges at critical moments, to trust in the process.

Assagioli named 'Intuition' as one of the key facilities available in the psyche of every human being, but which may be underdeveloped in a particular individual (Assagioli, 1975). Rowan argues that it is only at the level of the Surrendered Self, that intuition comes from a source other than one's own, isolated self. In Psychosynthesis this would be described as the Transpersonal Will (Assagioli, 1975).

Rowan argues that access to this level of intuition is a prerequisite for transpersonal therapists and that this subtle state of consciousness can be cultivated and developed consciously and deliberately. Psychosynthesis training seeks to foster this in the training programme for its therapists and gives therapists ways of working to encourage the development of this same faculty in their clients.

A Psychosynthesis therapist might, for example, use the technique of Guided Visualisation to help a client contact their

inner Wise Person, or guide them in a journey up a mountain, where they might find a treasure. These are symbols for the Self. Rowan therefore offers support for the use of visualisation and symbols, as effective and conceptually sound ways of working with the Transpersonal. He suggests that work with symbols is both appropriate and effective in helping a client to deal with the things that are just on the borders of consciousness.

Rowan further suggests that the ambiguous nature of symbols has both positive and negative implications for therapeutic work. This point is considered in more depth in another part of this thesis. Psychosynthesis therapists, as a consequence of this ambiguity, do not 'interpret' symbols that appear in work with clients. Rather, they invite the client to reflect on what a symbol might mean to them, personally.

Imagery is another frequently used tool in Psychosynthesis work. Rowan describes imagery work as:

One of the most useful entries into the world of the Transpersonal, because it is so flexible, e.g., in working with resistance (Rowan, 2002, p.109).

He gives an example of how he might work with imagery, and the process he describes is a classic Psychosynthesis one:

To personify the resistance, dialogue with it, and then sometimes ask the client to visualise transforming it in some way (Rowan, 2002, p.109).

This involves inviting the client to allow an image to come for the resistance (which may not be overtly named as such). Then to identify with it, that is, to speak as this image, to describe how the image feels and what it thinks. Next, to step back to another part (a sub-personality in Psychosynthesis theory) and express the thoughts and feelings of that sub-personality and fourthly perhaps, to step back the 'I' or the observer, and report on what the 'I' observes.

The last stage described by Rowan might typically, in Psychosynthesis therapy, involve inviting the client to see the image become transfused with light (again, a symbol of the Transpersonal). Ferrucci (1982) supports the use of working with imagery as a valuable tool in spiritual work. Rowan however, also suggests that there can be dangers for the unaware therapist, in this way of working as Jung (1966) has emphasised.

He gives an example from his personal experience working as a therapist. He had invited his client to identify with the image, to become it, so to speak, and to speak as the image (a beautiful flower). This resulted in what she later described as a Mystical

experience. It was as if the flower were divine, and she herself became something divine.

This is what Wilber (2000) would describe as a Subtle level experience- the level at which the divine takes on a concrete, visionary form. Assagioli was well aware of such potential dangers and warned when such work might be contra-indicated (Assagioli, 1975). Rowan terms the main danger 'psychic inflation'. In Psychosynthesis theory this is often referred to as the phenomena of 'space cadets.'

Rowan states:

The person may feel so special, so favoured, so large, that they lose touch with the reality of the situation (Rowan, 2002, p.103).

He qualifies this with the observation that:

These feelings are not necessarily harmful or permanent. They may be genuinely helpful, even if they contain large measures of illusion. They may give glimpses of something, which can later become more genuine (Rowan, 2002, p.103.)

Ecker et al (1987) have argued that glimpses of mystical states or other Spiritual experiences can be very important in a person's spiritual development. Rowan confirms this from his own experience and that of many of his clients, group members and colleagues.

Rowan also advocates the use of *meditation* or prayer in transpersonal therapy. He suggests that:

Prayers of openness are generally more useful than other kinds of prayer and they are very similar to meditation in the Eastern traditions, and contemplation in the Western. They can be compatible with the work of psychotherapy, because they have no ego-laden content (Rowan, 2002, p.108).

The researcher interprets this to mean openness to what comes, not directive in the sense of "This is what must happen to meet my needs". In Psychosynthesis this might involve allowing an image to arise and then exploring what that might symbolise or represent, or working with Reflective/Receptive meditation .In this process the client would firstly spend some time in a session allowing thoughts to arise around an issue or quality. And then hold those thoughts up to be transfused by golden light, and just watching what, if anything, changes.

Rowan raises the issue of the Shadow, in transpersonal work. This term was originally part of Jung's (1933) conceptual model of the psyche. Rowan describes the Shadow as including:

All the negative, hateful and frightening characteristics of the psyche (Rowan, 2002, p.109).

He takes a different perspective to Psychosynthesis theory, as he asserts:

One of the characteristics of the Transpersonal, which distinguishes it from the Prepersonal, is that it believes

that evil can always be destroyed or banished (Rowan, 2002, p.109.)

Whitmore (1991) does not speak of banishing but of integrating aspects of the Shadow, which is a fundamentally different process:

The Shadow (our darker side which contains unredeemed aspects) is integral to the human condition and needs to be integrated in the client's experience of well-being (Whitmore, 1991, p.21).

Rowan also reminds us that the therapist may not have dealt with all of his/her shadow material. This is a further reason to require trainee therapists to undergo their own personal therapy in order to facilitate conscious awareness of his/her shadow. This way, projection and identification are more likely to be recognised and owned as part of the therapist's own process, should they come into operation in the therapeutic dynamic.

4.15. Marginal Theme

Two of the therapists described the marginal place occupied by Psychosynthesis, as a significant factor in their choice of training. Its marginality echoed their own perception of themselves in society and consequently their (unconscious) identification with Psychosynthesis.

MK had been an 'elective mute' during most of her early childhood. She had felt herself to be 'on the margins' of society because of this. Her choice of therapeutic training followed this pattern in some ways. She explained:

When I made those decisions, I was making them from a place of needing to choose something that was a little bit on the edges of things, to continue that pattern of being a bit marginal, you know (L.97).

She continued:

I couldn't have chosen something that was conventional, it had to be unconventional because of this issue of being on the edge of things (L.109).

In terms of Psychosynthesis theory, this could not be called a 'real' choice, made from the centre, or personal self or 'I'. Such a choice can only be made from a position of awareness and deliberation. These are described as the stages of the Willed Act (Assagioli, 1974). Psychosynthesis theory would describe the process, which **MK** experienced, as a 'driven' act, which comes from the place of a sub-personality and not from the 'I'. She stated:

In terms of my own personal pathology, it was still safer to be in a system, which is more marginal, on the edge of things (L.116).

Reflecting on her decision, **MK** recognised that she had:

...rationalised it, ... reframed it, and with a degree of validity because I think there are, as I said before, things that are profoundly valuable in Psychosynthesis (L.102 - 105).

T described his personal history and life position as in some ways “*neurotic*” (L.409). Originating from Vietnam, he had felt lonely and socially isolated living in France during his childhood. Later, when his parents returned to Vietnam and he had stayed in France at boarding school and then gone to university in Paris, his feelings of being outside mainstream society had continued.

He described French society in the 1960s as being very closed and he had found it hard to make friends. His marrying a French Algerian woman, who, likewise, had no roots in French society, compounded this. His personal history had resulted in a feeling of rootlessness, which he recognised in Psychosynthesis. He saw more established therapies, such as Psychoanalysis, as having gained a greater degree of acceptance and recognition. Psychoanalysis had a profile of frequent publications and was taught in university departments of psychology and philosophy:

...so it has roots in society (L.416).

Psychosynthesis in comparison:

...has no roots, no strong roots (L.411-412).

This he attributed to the lack of cooperation between the different training institutions and the lack of trust between them at an institutional level.

Whilst their idealism and their attraction to 'higher' values drew individuals to Psychosynthesis, their lack of trust in the:

...expansion of the other (L.454)

blocked the growth of Psychosynthesis from becoming a more widely acclaimed and established therapeutic model.

The researcher notes that there was indeed a major split in the Psychosynthesis world in California, in the late 1970s. Steven Schatz, the founder and director of the Synthesis and Education Foundation in Winchester, USA, gives an interesting interpretation of what went wrong, framed in Psychosynthesis terms:

In Psychosynthesis, our work with the Spiritual is meant to be the outgrowth of a well-defined and balanced personality...I think one of the reasons we got so far off base in the late 1970s is because we started over-emphasising the Spiritual. Most of us aren't ready for that. We need to first work on our personalities and create good strong vehicles that can contain the Spiritual element of our Higher Unconscious. If you had a vacuum cleaner which was ready for 110 volts, and you plugged it into a 220 volt socket that's meant for the stove, you're going to blow the circuits to bits (Schatz, 1988, quoted in Schuller, 1988 pp.387-388).

Schatz was suggesting that those working within the Psychosynthesis organisation in North America in the late 1970s had not sufficiently established their own development at the

level of the personality. Without this, ordinary human jealousies and insecurities can sabotage ideals of the Higher Self.

T understood such insecurities because he saw how insecurity, based on fear, had affected his own life experience. His own mother had 'kept him small' by her over-protective attitude towards him. This was after the sudden deaths of his two brothers, within six months of each other.

T recognised the influence this had had on his own attitudes to life and he felt that the war in Vietnam had further damaged his own trust in cooperation. Consequently, he felt that he understood the dynamics of the neuroticism, which he saw in Psychosynthesis at the organisational level. He said:

It is the higher values that often attract people to Psychosynthesis, such as innocence and idealism and they share these values in potential, but they don't communicate well at an interpersonal level. There's not a sharing of joy, affirmation, positive ness, cooperation together. These values are there, but in suspension, as potential. They need to grow, and if this grows, then Psychosynthesis would have roots (L.437-447).

Another facet of this rootless ness was the lack of strong organisation, or the ability to consolidate and build upon initial foundations. T saw this in his own life and in Psychosynthesis. For example, he had worked hard to organise a European

Summer School in Psychosynthesis, which would take place that year. Whilst he felt confident that it would be a success, he hoped **others** would go on to take it forward as a regular event. He laughingly said:

I have always been resistant to the...to being in society, to do institution, resistant to it... and similarly... Psychosynthesis has this quality of being out of the world (L.493-495).

T felt that neuroticism had both a dark and a light side, or a positive and a negative. The fact of his rootless ness gave him an insecurity that limited his willingness to take risks and to grow. On the other hand, it enabled him to see things from an outsider's perspective, with different eyes, and to be creative. He said:

The positive aspects of Psychosynthesis, the creative, fits also with me, because, since I am from nowhere, I can look at reality from a very different viewpoint. I can synthesise different things because I am looking from a multi-cultural background, so that's a positive side of being from nowhere, as not being rooted here (L.425-429).

4.16. Experiential Theme

Two of the therapists explicitly mentioned the experiential nature of Psychosynthesis work and training as a powerful attraction for them.

MK explained that she was deterred from taking on what she saw as:

...a huge academic training (L.17-18)

such as Psychoanalytic or Jungian, at that point in her life. This was a negative reason to choose Psychosynthesis. However, a positive thing that drew her towards Psychosynthesis was:

...the experiential component...I liked that very much. I guess I could work with it very well (L.18-20).

MF was even more enthusiastic about this aspect of Psychosynthesis. Her first experience of this was at an educational conference in Devon. She joined in a Psychosynthesis workshop run by a fellow American, who, like herself, had a background in theatre and dance. The focus of the workshop was The Rose, which is a guided visualisation, a classic exercise in Psychosynthesis. **MF** remembered that she was enthralled by the experience. She said:

It was like, Wappo, this brings everything together, right here, right now. I don't think she did the Egg model even. It was just the experience of the beauty, the Spirituality and the creativity, and it was all together, mixed together, and like the immediate experience. It was the fact it was experiential that was exciting for me. It was right there, there was the immediate experience (L.207-213).

She continued:

It was practical, it was fun and it was creative. It linked up my theatre, my drama stuff and the Spirituality (L.199-200).

What was evident to her was that the experiential way of working gave her:

...an immediate access to an inner world and a greater sense of myself and God (L.196-197).

MF was so enthused that she decided immediately that she wanted to train in Psychosynthesis:

I remember rushing after her and saying, 'Where can I learn to do this?' (L.192-201). I remember thinking, I'll go anywhere if I can train in this, I knew immediately! (L.205-206).

5. CHAPTER 5: THE DRAWINGS

5.1. Introduction

An additional source of data, apart from the transcribed interviews, was the drawings produced by the participants. The discussion has already outlined the techniques used in Psychosynthesis as including work with drawing, imagery and symbols. There is evidence that these are fruitful and valuable tools in therapeutic work (Hall & Hall, 2006).

In Psychosynthesis, and in other depth therapies such as Jungian and psychoanalytic therapy, work with symbols is seen as a route into the unconscious mind. As such, this type of work offers opportunities of achieving a deeper level of understanding than that of everyday awareness. The researcher had trained as a Psychosynthesis counsellor and therefore this research tool was both familiar to her and congruent with her beliefs and values (Etherington, 1996).

The drawings produced by the participants were not literal representations of the moment of choosing, as a photograph might be a recording of an important occasion. They 'spoke' in symbolic terms of the meaning imbued in that moment of choice. As the researcher invited each participant to explain the contents

of their drawing, it became apparent that the language of communication was symbolic.

It is therefore pertinent to consider the understanding of symbolism in a general sense and also specifically in relation to Psychosynthesis theory.

5.2. Symbolism in General

Carl Gustaf Jung, (1971) described symbols as images or signs of psychological realities of many kinds. He believed that the unconscious mind normally operates by way of symbols. Fromm (1957), in his classic book, "The Forgotten Language" distinguishes between three types of symbols:

The Conventional, the Accidental and the Universal.

The first two types are not directly relevant to symbolism in relation to this research study. It suffices to say that the Conventional symbol is the one most familiar to us, since we use it in everyday language. In the Conventional symbol there is no inherent relationship between the symbol and the thing it stands for, but a convention has grown up of referring to the thing in such a manner.

However, Fromm recognises that some pictorial symbols are not entirely conventional, e.g. the cross may be more than the conventional symbol of the Christian church because it signifies the death of Christ and the resurrection beyond the physical dimension.

The second category of symbols, the Accidental, is, Fromm argues, the very opposite to the conventional symbol, although they do have something in common. That is, that there is no intrinsic relationship between the symbol and that which it represents. An accidental association has developed between the thing and that which has come to be connected with it. For example, if I have a happy time in the city of Bologna, in later years, when I hear the name of the city, I will easily connect the name with the happy experience. There is nothing in the nature of the city that is either happy or sad; it is my experience as an individual in the city that makes it a symbol of a mood, or emotion for me. The city 'stands for' the mood or emotion, once experienced in it. The connection between the symbol and the experience symbolised is entirely accidental.

Furthermore, whilst the conventional symbol has a shared meaning, the accidental symbol is one that has a special significance only to the individual who has had the experience,

which has then become attached to the symbol. As a consequence, accidental symbols are rarely used in myths, fairy tales or works of art, written in symbolic language, because their meaning would not be understood at a shared level. In dreams, however, accidental symbols are commonplace, as the meaning is directly relevant (though it may not be understood) to the person experiencing the dream.

It is Fromm's third category of symbols, the Universal, that lead us directly into a consideration of symbolism in Psychosynthesis. The Universal symbol is the only one in which there is an intrinsic relationship between the symbol, and that which it represents. Fromm argues that they are universal because they are rooted in the experiences of every human being.

He argues that the Universal symbol is the only one in which the relationship between the symbol and that which it represents is not coincidental but intrinsic. There is a real and meaningful connection between the symbol and the inner experience of the human being and what represents that experience. He gives the example of fire.

Fire has many qualities, amongst these is its aliveness, it changes continuously and moves all the time, yet there is

constancy in it. It remains the same without being the same. It gives the impression of power, of energy, of grace and lightness. It is as if it was dancing and had an inexhaustible source of energy. When we use fire as a symbol, Fromm suggests, we are relating our inner experience to an outer thing, which speaks to us of our own inner experience. Fromm argues that such phenomenon of the physical world can effectively express our inner experience.

Fromm goes on to argue that the language of the universal experience is a shared language, which does not have to be learned and is not restricted to any segment of the human race. He offers two sources of evidence to support this assertion:

Firstly, that symbolic language is found in myths and dreams in all cultures, from so-called 'primitive' to the highly developed cultures of Egypt and Greece.

Secondly, that the symbols used in these various cultures *are* strikingly similar since they all go back to the basic sensory as well as emotional experiences shared by people of all cultures.

From a Psychosynthesis perspective, Assagioli (1975) asserted the huge potency of symbols in the dynamics of the

psychological life. He described the relationship between the symbol and the reality, which it represents, as being based mainly, if not exclusively, on analogy, the analogy being an important psychological link or connection, between outer and inner realities. This is similar to the view taken by Jung (1971).

Assagioli viewed symbols as being evocative and as leading to direct intuitive understanding. However, since a symbol may express only one side of reality, there is room for ambiguity. Consequently, caution might need to be exercised lest misunderstanding arises. He suggested that this problem could be surmounted by using various symbols to describe the same truth.

Assagioli considered that literature often uses symbolism to convey meanings on more than the literal level. For example, he saw powerful symbolism in the work of Dante (1980). In 'The Divine Comedy' for example, Assagioli sees the pilgrimage through Hell as a metaphor for the analytic exploration of the Lower Unconscious. Assagioli sees the second part, the Ascent of the Mountain of Purgatory, as a metaphor for the process of moral purification and gradual raising of the level of consciousness through the active use of techniques. The third part, the visit to Paradise or Heaven, he described as depicting

the various stages of Superconscious realization, up to the final vision of the Universal Spirit, of God Himself, in which Love and Will are fused.

However, in Psychosynthesis, whilst symbols are a source of illumination and deeper understanding, and whilst there are many shared symbols e.g. centrally, the Sword and the Chalice, symbols of Love and Will, respectively, therapeutic work does not adhere to a rigid or fixed schemata, whereby a fixed meaning is attached to a particular symbol, as might be the case in psychoanalytic therapy.

Assagioli felt strongly that:

...symbols cannot and should not have a uniform interpretation (Assagioli, 1975, p. 216).

since the same symbols can mean very different and even opposite things to different individuals, and that this particularly applied to clients with psychological disturbances.

This is relevant in meditation as well as in more directly therapeutic situations. In discussing meditative techniques, Assagioli draws on the work of Happich (1932) to explore the different ways in which a person can experience a symbol, for example, the familiar symbol of the Meadow. In every day life, a meadow is a feature of the natural world; it has familiar properties and features. But, in the meadow meditation, (where

the mediator has previously, on several occasions, carried out preparatory exercises) Assagioli suggests that the meditation becomes a way of experiencing the primordial content of the symbol of the meadow. In his words, the meadow is a symbol of:

...the youthful Mother Nature in her serene and beneficent aspect) and represents " the blossoming of life which the meditator seek (Assagioli, 1975, p.306).

In using the meadow meditation, the therapist can gain an understanding of the mediator's state of psychic health. Whereas the healthy person will have a satisfying experience of a meadow in the flush of Spring, and will populate the meadow for instance with children and may pick flowers, Assagioli asserted that it was impossible for the psychically ill to visualise a fresh meadow, and that during meditation they will be unable to find one.

If they do, then the meadow may be seen as:

...wilting, or composed of a single stump. All sorts of disturbing, negative symbols may be scattered around (Assagioli, 1975, p.307).

From such manifestations of illness, Assagioli suggested, a diagnosis can be made and therapeutic work undertaken. So, whilst on the one hand, there is an archetypal character to certain symbols, the individual will still infuse it with their own state of psychical health or dis-ease.

Wilber (2000) has written extensively on the importance of symbolism in transpersonal experiences. He suggests that symbolism is particularly important at the Subtle level of consciousness and may involve symbolic representation of the Divine. This is the stage, as Rowan (2008) suggests, of being in touch with the Higher Self. Francis Vaughan, under her earlier name of Clark (1977), has linked this to the stages of identification and disidentification, which are well recognised in Psychosynthesis therapy.

5.3. Symbolism in the Drawings

5.3.1. Introduction

The subjects easily and readily centred themselves in preparation for the visualisation, each one choosing to close their eyes without the researcher suggesting it. Images emerged spontaneously without any waiting or prompting and the subjects proceeded to draw immediately they opened their eyes. The subjects chose particular colours for their drawing, at times searching for just the right colour from the collection, seeming to be absorbed in their drawing.

The researcher had no pre-conceived ideas of what might emerge in the drawings. What became apparent was that one symbol appeared consistently, appearing in eight of the twelve drawings. This was the symbol of Light. A second symbol, a Path or journey, appeared in three of the drawings, three of the drawings included both symbols. A third symbol, a Rose, appeared in two of the drawings. A fourth symbol, a Chalice, appeared in two of the drawings. A sixth symbol, birth, appeared in just one drawing. Each of these symbols will now be discussed in the light of the meanings attributed to them by the therapists.

5.3.2. Light

This imagery is dominant in eight of the twelve drawings. It presents in a variety of forms although five of the subjects speak of 'golden light'.

DRAWING 1: Participant D



D drew the curved surface of the planet earth. The image filled the lower third of the paper. The earth was lightly crayoned in green. Just rising over the horizon she drew a huge emerging sun, with a halo of flames. She selected a golden yellow pencil and edged the outline of the sun and its flames with orange. She described this as:

...an early morning sunrise. Indeed there is still one...bright star in the sky and this is significant, as she goes on to relate this to an *...integration of day and night, of darkness and light*. This holds a symbolic significance indicative of *...The wonderful wholeness that is possible in Psychosynthesis. Nothing has to die, it is so inclusive.*

She describes the quality of the light as *... bright, hopeful, liberating, opening joy*. She is aware of a feeling of new beginning.

DRAWING 2: Participant M



M first imagines *a pool of yellow and white light, which comes up from the earth like a fountain*. He chooses a strong yellow colour to draw this vertical trajectory of yellow and white light, which

divides in two directions after erupting from the earth. The golden trajectories of light extend to the edges of the page. He explains that the light has roots; it connects to the bottom of the earth. Although he goes on to add other images to his drawing such as a small sun in the left side of the sky, a small moon in the right side of the sky and a little yellow star, he emphasises that the dominant image is this great force, coming up.

DRAWING 3: Participant I



Participant **I** started to draw a dark path. Initially she thought she had selected a black pencil but then realised with enjoyment that she had picked up a green pencil... *as the green was much more truthful than the black*. The path, which had initially seemed dark, was in reality a growth path. She added some strokes of yellow to the green path and then widened the green path out into the shape of a fan whose edges reached the limits

of the page. This she coloured deep yellow. Within this she drew a round light bulb at the end of the path.

She commented:

...the light bulb was just exactly that, there was just light. I knew I had found something that was going to satisfy me
She went on to explain how, through Psychosynthesis, she could shed light on her understanding of all human beings.

DRAWING 4: Participant E



E drew herself with arms upraised. Above her head was a ball of light, or the sun, which symbolised the source of life, or God. She coloured this yellow. Golden rays emanated from the source connecting her to it, directly. She explained that the light was received via her Higher Self (or soul) into her heart. She drew this literally, with a heart visible on her chest. She drew other rays, which did not descend to her, but to other people. She

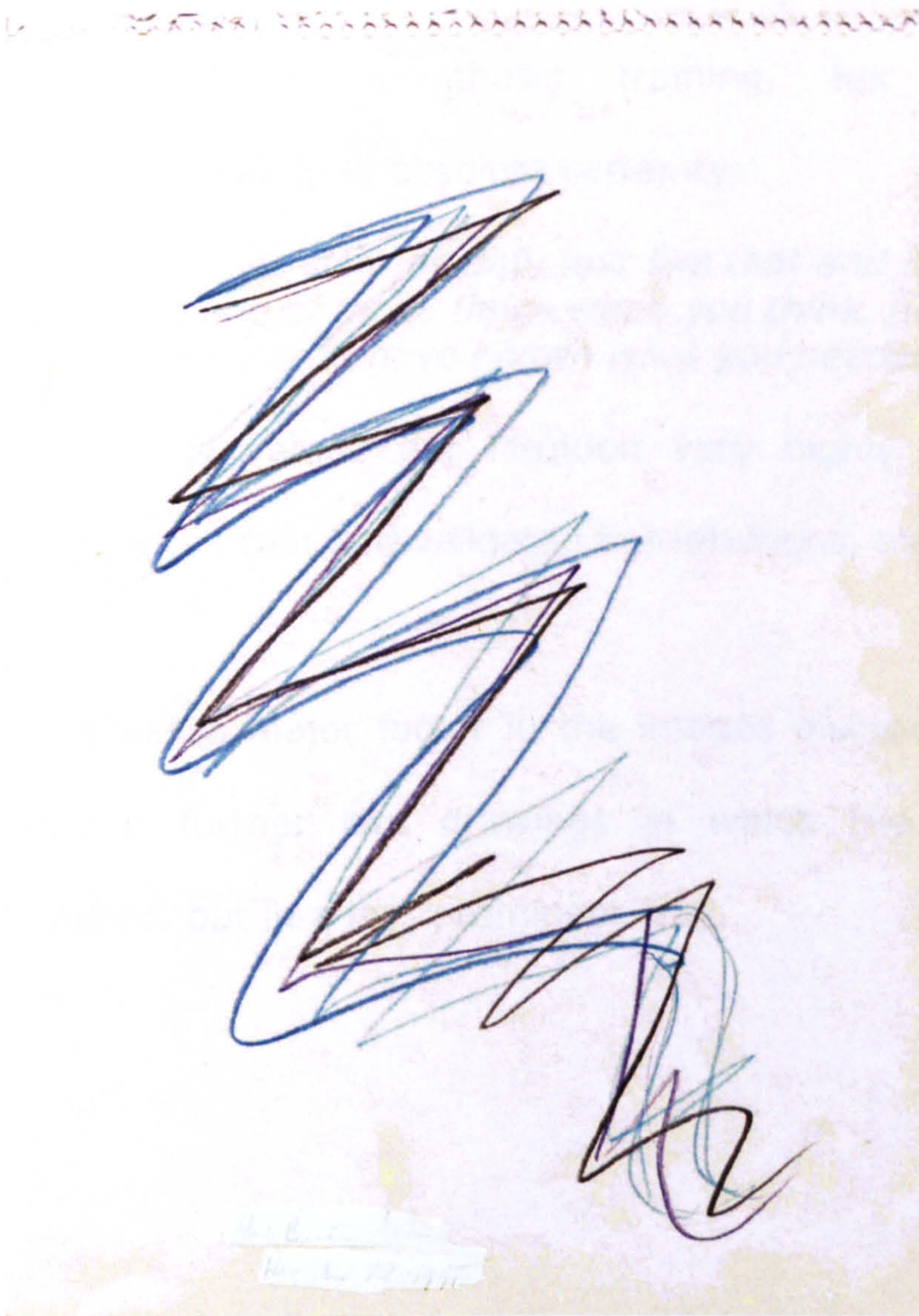
explained that this was to prepare or open them, for what she might give them. She, in turn, gives the light out to those with whom she interacts.

DRAWING 5: Participant DY



DY drew herself in an enclosed circular space, the edge of which was marked by a thin, blue, circular line. She explained that this illustrated her in a constricted background. She was being drawn out from this constricted background by rays of sunlight, which were attracting her, pulling her towards them. At the same time the very rays that were drawing her out were also coming into her.

DRAWING 6: Participant N



N also saw light, but in a rather different form, as a bolt of lightening, a bolt out of the blue. She drew sharp, zigzag lines in blue and black. The zigzags are the only drawing on the page and they fill the sheet almost entirely. This imagery conveyed very powerfully the suddenness with which she knew that Psychosynthesis was the therapeutic training, which was right for her. She explained that this sudden flash of insight came as she was walking with a close friend, in the garden. They were

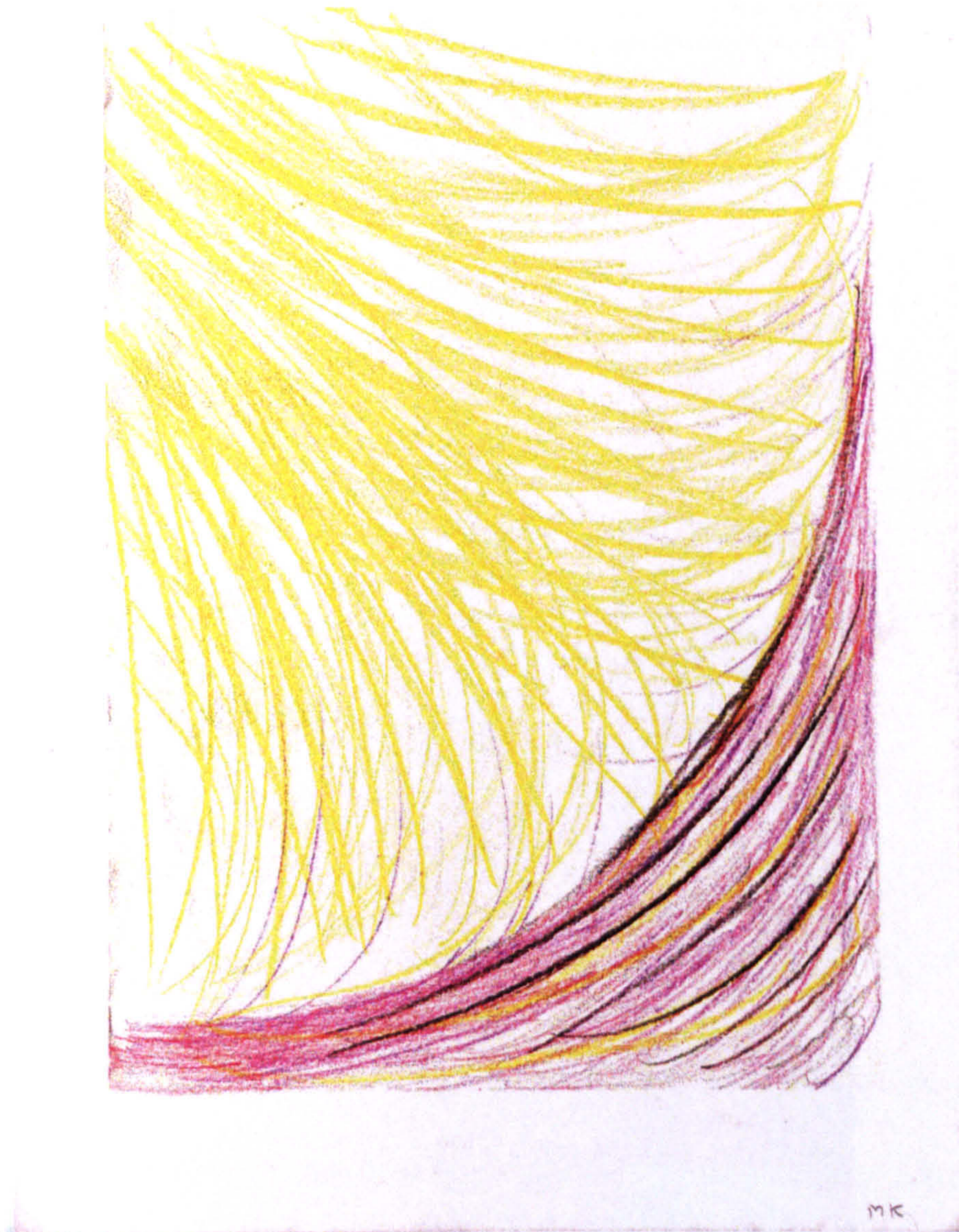
discussing possible trainings, which she might do, such as Jungian or Freudian. When the friend gently asked if she had considered Psychosynthesis training, her response was immediate and held absolute certainty:

It was as clear as day, just like that and it was so dumb, it was one of those times when you think, how can you be so stupid not to have known what you needed to do?

Because **N** valued her intuition very highly from earlier life experiences that had validated her intuitions, she accepted the

Light was a major factor in the images discussed so far. There were a further two drawings in which the image of Light featured, but in a less prominent way.

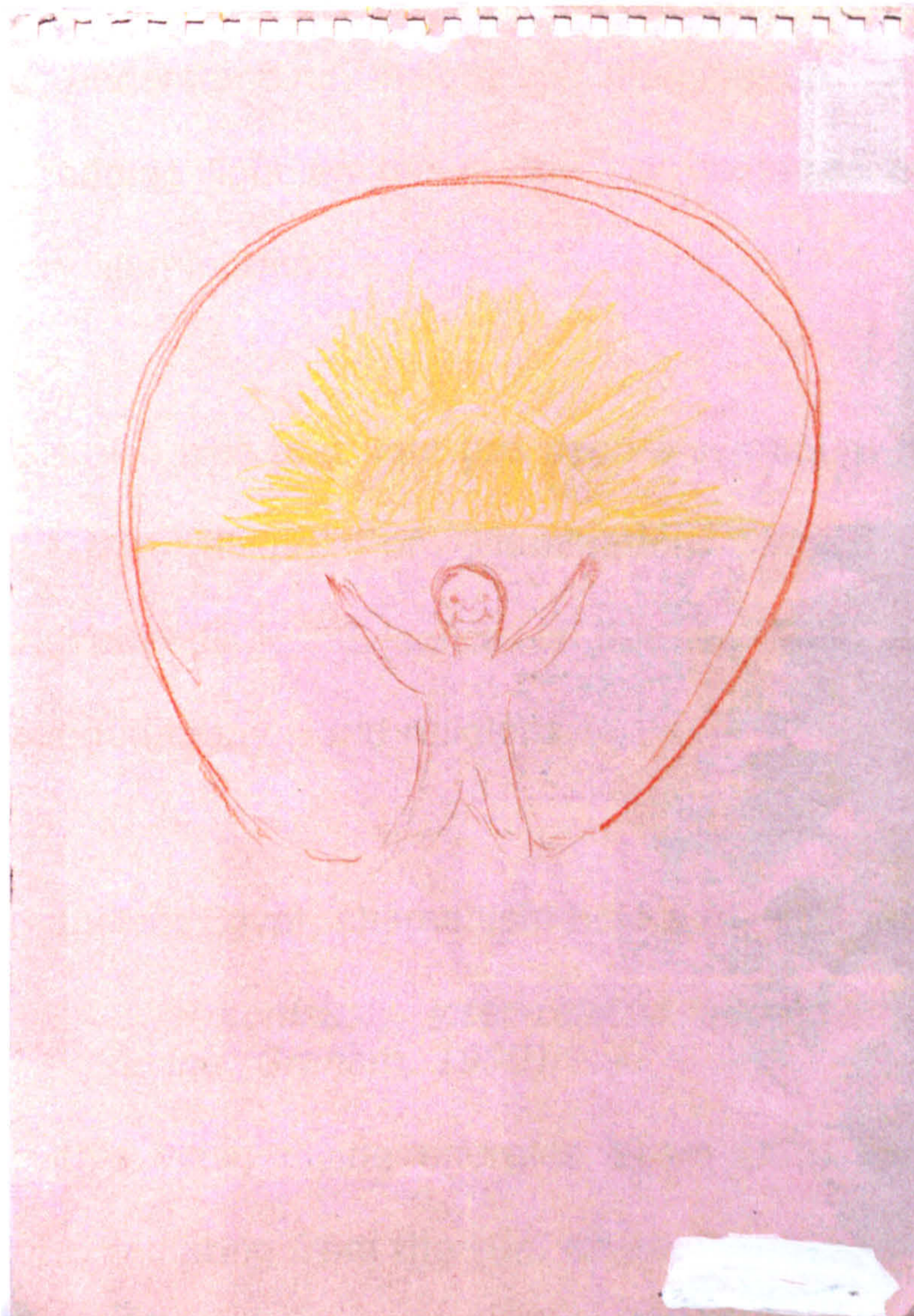
DRAWING 7: Participant MK



MK got an image of:

...a really wide-eyed, open eyes, very receptive, very open. This is not an eye, but the curved bit, but somehow it symbolizes the receptivity to something coming in, but also that reaching towards something very optimistic and hope-giving and meaningful, so I think that's what came to symbolize that point of choosing it and a tremendous welling up of excitement, of real, life affirming energy. In that wide-eyed innocent face, there was a sort of funnel of light coming from those eyes.

DRAWING 8: Participant T



In **T**'s drawing the main image was that of his baby daughter, at the moment of birth, with her arms and hands outstretched towards him. (This will be discussed more fully later on). Above her head were the rays of a huge sun, shining behind her. **T** explained that this symbolised his opening to life, joy and hope. The birth of his daughter and the start of his training in Psychosynthesis happened very close in time.

5.3.3. Discussion of the Symbolism of Light

Light is clearly a dominant and powerful symbolism in nine of the drawings. At the everyday, mundane level, light is a metaphor for understanding, insight and illumination. One might speak of "shedding light on the matter" or comment that something "is very illuminating".

It is also true that light has been a symbol of the Transpersonal, of the divine, of illumination, which transforms our understanding. Evidence of this symbolic expression can be found in many world religions.

In ancient Egypt, shamanism held a magical vision of a:

...harmoniously inter-related universe suffused with the divine (Graham, 1990).

In this view, divine energies (from God) were symbolised as light, radiating from the sun, or Ra, The light is broken down into rays corresponding to the colours of the spectrum. Each ray manifests a different facet of the divine and influences different qualities of life. The most important aim of life, was for man to realise the light and thereby God; to become enlightened, by opening up to the light, channelling and distributing it and merging it with earth energy.

In the ancient, mystical, Chinese philosophy of Taoism, the Tao or Dao, is the cosmic source without beginning or end. The Tao gives rise to two opposite reality principles, the dark and the light. These two polarities complemented each other in the formation of a creative force whose products are heaven and earth with its fruits.

Jung (1962) considered that the most important secrets of the Tao relate to consciousness, which is expressed in analogies with light.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, light is a familiar symbolism. In the Old Testament there is the declaration that:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; on the inhabitants of a country in the shadow dark of death, light has blazed forth (Isaiah 9: 2).

In the New Testament, Jesus proclaims:

I am the light of the world (John 8:12).

In Sanskrit, the Gaitri mantra, one of the most ancient mantras in the Vedas says:

Lead me from the unreal to the real. Lead me from darkness to light. Lead me from mortality to immortality. Om, Peace, peace, peace to all.

Ferrucci (1990) draws attention to the description of light in visionary phenomenon within the Hindu tradition. Swami

Vivekananda was a young, brilliant and apparently rather sceptical student of Ramakrishna. He described how, as a young child, he would fall asleep, seeing a wonderful point of light that changed, assuming various colours and then exploded, covering his whole body with a bright white liquid.

Light is therefore, a powerful symbol of the divine, the Transpersonal, in major world religions.

This is true also within the Psychosynthesis model. When Assagioli discusses the use of symbols in therapeutic work, he considers various symbols related to light, including sunrise, sunset, rays of light and darkness, including shadow (Assagioli, 1975). In a later work (Transpersonal Development, 1993), which was a posthumously published collection of papers, Assagioli uses 15 classes or groups of symbols to describe higher experiences. Included in these is "light, enlightenment". Assagioli states:

As with the ordinary waking process, in a spiritual awakening one comes out of the darkness of night into the sunlight- that is why the awakening of spiritual consciousness has been called 'enlightenment ' i.e. the passage from the shadows of illusion to the light of reality (Assagioli, 1993, p.95).

Spiritual enlightenment can also be experienced, he suggests:

... 'like a flash of lightening', the perception of immanent light in the human soul and in the whole of creation (Assagioli, 1993, p.95).

Assagioli suggests that there are many testaments to this, such as that of St Paul on the road to Damascus and, in Zen Buddhism, the aim of producing this sudden enlightenment or revelation of the transcendent reality.

One can comment then, that when the subjects were asked to re-connect with the moment of choosing Psychosynthesis, this moment was infused with a symbolism, which suggests the Transpersonal. Not only that, but of all the range of symbols which might be described as Transpersonal, e.g. a mountain, a fountain, a lotus flower, a wise being, a chalice, the majority of them imaged the same symbol, light. This suggests that there is something about what this particular symbol of the transpersonal represents that is especially relevant and meaningful in the context of their choice.

5.4. Path or Journey

The second symbol that emerged in three of the drawings was that of a path or journey. Two of the twelve therapists describe a journey in their imagery. A third describes a process of walking out into the unknown.

DRAWING 2: Participant M



M drew a spiral, which seems to erupt from the flat environment with great energy in a direct vertical orientation. The spiral widens as it gains height above the earth. The subject chose a deep orange-red to draw the spiral. The spiral is at the heart of a great upsurge of yellow and white light, which divides into two directions after leaving the ground so that the spiral continues its

trajectory, framed on the left and the right by the upsurges of light.

M explained:

I first imagined a pool of yellow and white light. It came up from the earth, going up like a fountain, the meeting of strong energy.

This energy has its roots in, is connected to, the bottom of the earth. This spiral represents the subject's journey, because it is a journey *...by greater and greater circles*. He describes his journey as... *a search*.

In his drawing he depicts himself, a little man, next to the powerful upsurge of light, which surrounds the spiral. He is seen walking towards Assagioli; each has their arms outstretched in welcome. He comments that the image of Assagioli is very important in the process of meeting with very big forces. His journey also includes other people and relationships. He draws them (four other figures, including what looks like a child).

He comments that nature and the elements are an important part of his journey too. He draws rivers, fields and flowers on the flat earth and the sun, moon and stars in the sky.

In the main body of the interview he refers to his personal journey as *...going home*. The spiral is a very sympathetic symbol in this respect in that the traveller almost comes back to the same point many times on their journey, but not quite. In the spiral we are moving on even though we come back to a certain space. What is seen physically in the spiral image can be experienced psychologically, emotionally and spiritually in a life's journey. **M** commented:

I feel this journey is my life. There is a journey of going towards certain goals, searching, looking for, doing and then maybe, never arriving or still going and then there is a moment when we realise, no, the journey is finished and the journey is not finished. You are at home and in that moment you feel, I am the journey.

The journey is to go home. Home is the place inside where we can be real, where we can feel really good with our selves and at ease. Where we can let go of attachments and tensions, where we can have spontaneity. We can connect with *...home...* some times in life's moments.

Psychosynthesis felt like 'home' because it provides a very respectful and open framework:

I felt at home there.

His final comments were:

Now looking at this really, it was getting in touch with the divine, the divine inside. This is very strong, this is very powerful and it is steps, steps in the journey and the journey is a general evolution. Also transpersonal too, personal and transpersonal too.

DRAWING 3: Participant I

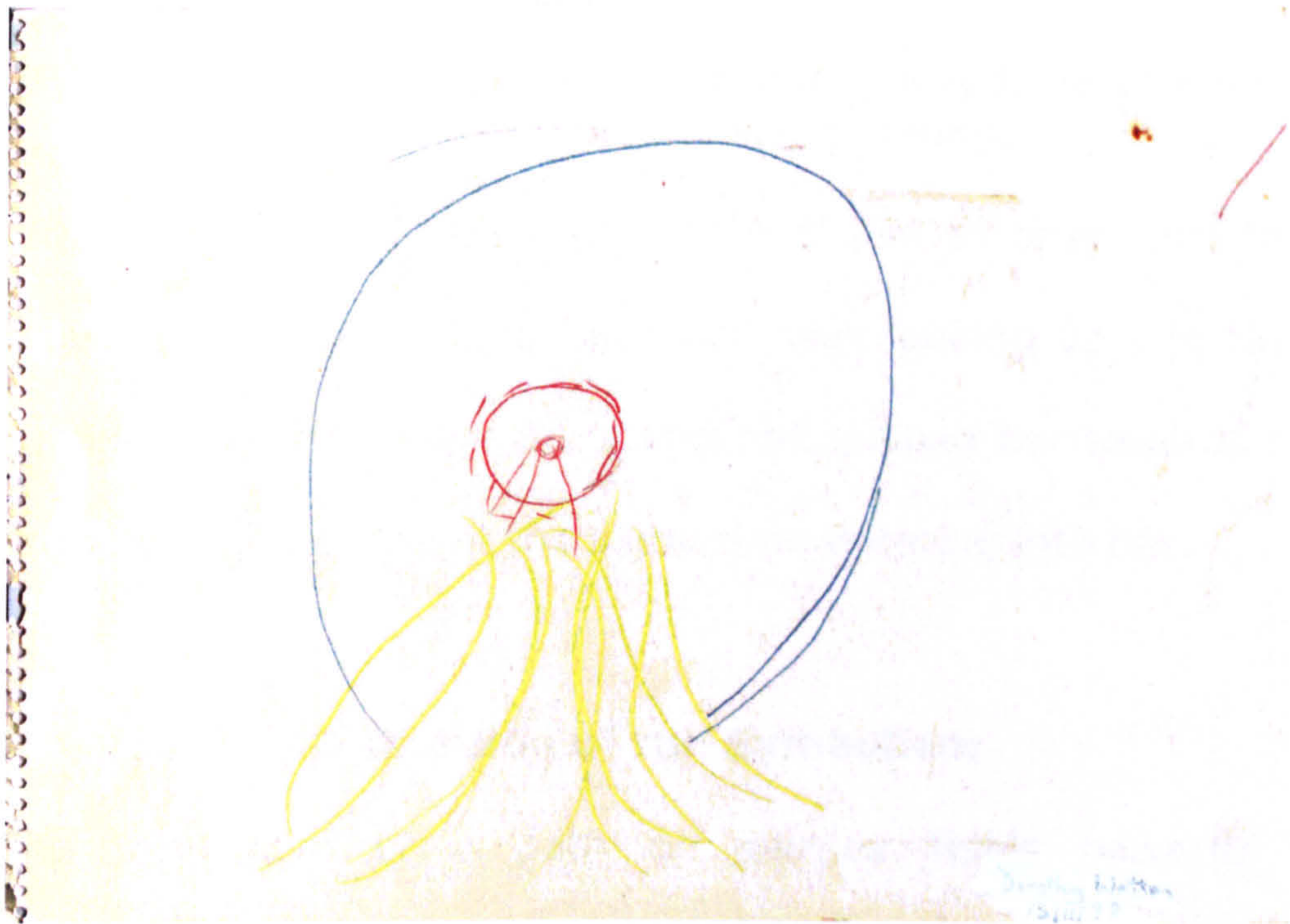


Participant **I** drew a path. She said that the experience of the path had seemed dark (and indeed she used the colour black in the initial stage of drawing the path.) The path had felt so dark because she had been groping.

As she continued to draw, she switched to the colour green; so that most of the path was drawn in green. She commented that she had been groping towards growth all her life and so in reality, the path was a green one because it was a growth path. In the drawing, the path begins as narrow but then opens out to resemble the shape of an opened fan. Here the path becomes full of golden light. The subject changed her pencil to deep yellow. She commented that when she had found Psychosynthesis, in some ways it was the "blossoming of the path". The path was out-lined along its whole length with green, except for the initial section, which she left black.

She went on to add that Psychosynthesis had not only allowed her to find a path, but also to enter upon a voyage, in which she could shed light upon her understanding of all human beings. The path in her drawing ended with a vivid rainbow. She explained that the rainbow represented the path to greater and greater compassion, a greater ability to work with the complete psyche. This relates to the fact that transpersonal therapeutic models, such as Psychosynthesis, include the Spiritual dimension as well as the psychological in the map of the human psyche.

DRAWING 5: Participant DY



DY did not describe a path or journey in such explicit terms but still, her drawing was of her walking out from a constricted background. She was *...just...* able to do this. In her drawing one sees, as in an aerial view, a small figure encircled, but rays of light breaking into and through the encircling line so that a space through and out, is created. She commented that although she was walking out into the unknown, she felt safe. This sense of safety she felt came from the inclusive nature of Psychosynthesis. It provided a structure within which she could find an identity, where she could belong.

There were boundaries within this model without a constricting exclusivity:

There is no 'sort of', this is the only way to do it and this is what is right and the other thing is wrong.

Within this kind of structure she was able to open out. In the drawing, the figure, which was her, was looking up into rays of sunlight. The rays were attracting her, pulling her towards them drawing her out, and at the same time entering into her.

5.4.1. Discussion of the Symbolism

The symbolism of a path or journey holds powerful and meaningful imagery. As with the symbolism of light, the imagery of a path or journey is familiar in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In the Old Testament, Psalm 23, (The Lord is my Shepherd) gives the imagery of hope in the midst of the lowest points of life's journey. It paints a picture of the peaks and troughs of a journey through life, to God. It assures the traveller that Divine love and support are closest when they are on the rugged parts of the path.

In the New Testament, one finds the story of the Road to Emmaus, a journey of the disciples of Jesus, in which their failure to recognise the Truth is transformed by their eventual understanding.

In Tibetan Buddhism, the Spiritual path is the only way to achieve union with our fundamental enlightened state. In "The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying" Sogyal Rimpoche states:

All the spiritual teachers of humanity have told us the same thing, that the purpose of life on earth is to achieve union with our fundamental enlightened nature. There is only one way to do this and that is to undertake the Spiritual journey with all the ardour and intelligence, courage and resolve for transformation that we can muster (Sogyal Rimpoche, 2002, p.27).

In Psychosynthesis, the notion of a path has symbolic significance. Assagioli has described the 15 classes of symbols that are relevant to attempts to describe the higher experiences and conquests open to man. He refers to the eleventh group as that of:

...the way, path or pilgrimage (Assagioli, 1993, p.99).

Assagioli suggests that this has always been a universal metaphor. Esoteric tradition speaks of the "path of the disciple" and about the way of initiation, with its various doors. Religion refers to "the mystical way". Of course, expression of this symbol is still given an external form in that of pilgrimages to various 'holy' places.

In "Inevitable Grace" Ferrucci (1990) puts forward the view that peoples lives are in motion- and that their goal is the Self. He asserts that:

Each one moves forward in a different way, and each has a different path (Ferrucci, 1990, p.6).

He groups the various paths under different headings to better facilitate their description.

- The Way of Beauty
- The Way of Action
- The Way of Illumination
- The Way of Dance and Ritual
- The Way of Science
- The Way of Devotion
- The Way of Will

He asserts that the whole of human life is, or can be, in motion, a journey towards greater meaning and awareness. On this journey there will be attempts, there will be learning experiences and achievements. Ferrucci argues that one cannot arrive at a full realization of the Self accidentally, effortlessly, as it were. Self-Realization is won, only through a:

... systematic approach that mobilises all of one's attention and every resource at one's disposal (Assagioli, 1993, p.343).

The symbolism of a path or journey therefore, can be seen as a metaphor for the search for spiritual growth. In Psychosynthesis this is seen as the awakening of the Self.

5.5. Chalice

Two of the therapists envisaged a **Chalice** in reconnecting with the moment of choosing.

DRAWING 9: Participant MF



MF said that her drawing was linked to the discussion during the interview, about the imagery in her personal therapy. Many years earlier, during a personal therapy session involving guided imagery, she had gone down under the sea into a cave. In the cave she had found a beautiful, jewel-encrusted chalice. This same chalice appeared again in re-connecting with the moment of choosing Psychosynthesis. The chalice had a strong, firm base, it was actually on the earth and therefore it was literally,

grounded. She showed this by using the colours brown and green.

The chalice had lots of different facets, or sides, to it and they were like little doors that you could open. Each door was a different coloured jewel. The jewels were very rich colours and they were from the earth. There were emeralds, topazes and rubies.

The chalice was of course, open at the top, and there was this sense of the overflowing of what was in it, coming out, like the story of the cup overflowing (Biblical reference). The cup was surrounded by light, which she showed by using the colour yellow.

When she was just finishing the drawing, she realised that she wanted a bird in it and she laughed at this point. She commented that the bird takes wing, and as she drew it she realised that it looked like a flying saucer. It was like something hovering up in outer space. She drew the bird in yellow.

Looking at her drawing after she had completed it, she commented on the significance of the various elements: the

chalice, holding the **water**, or the bread, or the blood. She suggested that there were:

... religious connotations of the wine, the good wine, the water and the wine.

Also significant is the fact that the chalice:

... is grounded, it's based, it's got a firm, strong base, holding the jewels and the riches...

and the jewels come from the earth.

She went on to explore the meaning of the images for her. She said:

Of course, what this represents for me is connection.

This was the connection she had been talking about in the interview. Her sense of standing on the shoulders of those who had gone before, a connection with the past, in the present, for the future. So in this drawing are the past and the present and the future, all together at once.

She notes that there is a lot of order in the drawing; it's quite like an ordered painting, all these little jewels and the light. But she likes the fact that the chalice is open, it's not closed. And she realises that the bird can fly, so it's almost like there is room for this flight path, for it to extend, expand. That is what she still finds exciting about Psychosynthesis: it's open to other things coming in or going out. So things could be poured in and they

could also flow out. This is symbolising the openness of Psychosynthesis as a model. There is the possibility for expansion. The bird:

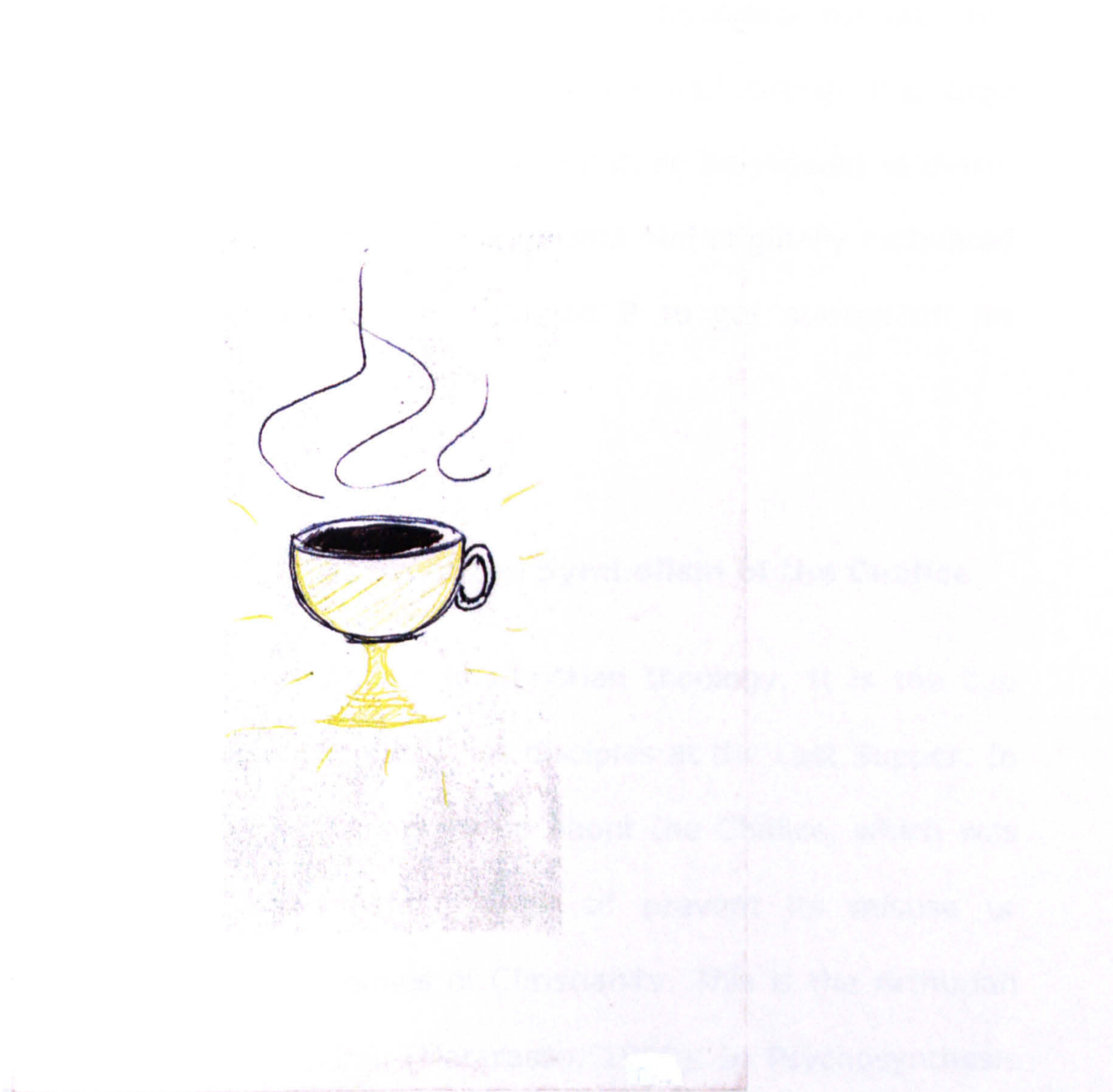
... represents more of what is coming, or what is still on the wing, still...that's a kind of unknown space, flight, height, that kind of thing.

She commented:

...and I think for me, as well, that the challenge for me at the moment in my life, is the expansion of 'What is the transpersonal?' But of course, it still has to come back down to earth...there's still that connection of grounding it.

The jewels symbolise different traditions, different ways of finding your Self, my Self, one's Self. Rich Spiritual teachings, psychological work, everything. The psychological and the Spiritual. All the work that's come before, that's been done.

DRAWING 10: Participant P



P's drawing was of a cup of coffee. He explained that it had to be good quality, strong and hot. This was the image that had come to him and funnily, Assagioli used to joke with him that Psychosynthesis is Spiritual coffee, and Assagioli loved drinking coffee. The image suggested that Psychosynthesis was a Spiritual stimulant, just as coffee was a substance stimulant.

P also drew another image superimposed upon the cup of coffee. It was the Holy Grail, which symbolises the search for the Self, the Spiritual path. He added that he had drawn the Grail tenuously because he hasn't yet found it, so he showed as there, but not completely there. This was what had originally motivated him, so Psychosynthesis had helped **P** to get started on his Spiritual journey.

5.5.1. Discussion of the Symbolism of the Chalice

The Chalice is well known in Christian theology. It is the cup from which Christ drank with his disciples at the Last Supper. In the Middle Ages legends grew up about the Chalice, which was said to have been hidden away to prevent its misuse or destruction by the enemies of Christianity. This is the Arthurian legend of The Holy Grail (Matarasso, 1969). In Psychosynthesis theory, the search for the Grail symbolises the Spiritual journey of each individual to realise the Self. The Chalice is also a symbol for the archetype of Love. In Psychosynthesis theory, Love and Will, together constitute the two central archetypes of the model. Love has many manifestations ranging from love of the self (in the sense of a necessary valuing of the self), to love for others, widening out to love of impersonal Ideas or Ideals. Assagioli argues that:

Finally, there is love of God, or whatever designation may be preferred to represent Universal Being or Beingness: the Supreme Value, Cosmic Mind, Supreme Reality, both transcendent and immanent. A sense of awe, wonder, admiration, and worship, accompanied by the urge to unite with that Reality, is innate in man. Present in every age and every country, it has given birth to the many varieties of religious and Spiritual traditions and forms of worship, according to prevailing cultural and psychological conditions. It reaches its flowering in the mystics who attain the lived experience of union through love (Assagioli, 1975, p.95).

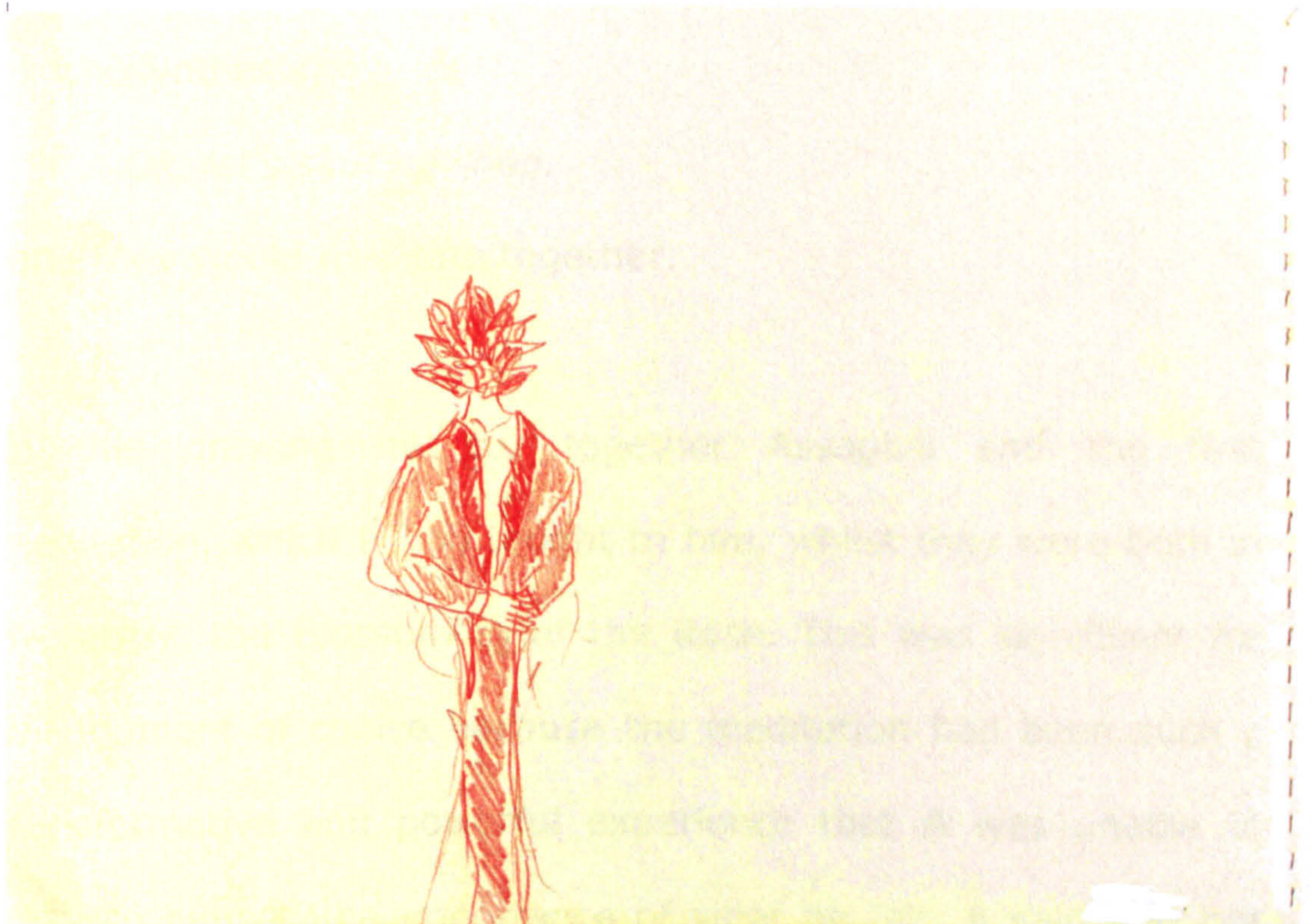
This view is one way to interpret the existence of religion and it would, of course be strongly disputed by many Philosophers, Sociologists and Psychologists, who would take a very different perspective. Freud (1963), for example, saw religion as a negative experience, which grew from a neurotic need to explain life and to find a meaning in existence. He asserted that:

The whole thing is potentially so infantile, so foreign to reality...it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life (Freud, 1963, p.11).

5.6. The Rose

Two of the therapists drew a Rose in reconnecting with the moment of choosing Psychosynthesis.

DRAWING 11: Participant A



A's drawing showed a standing figure, with arms loosely folded in front of his waist. In place of his head was a fully opened rose. The figure was clothed in a boudoir jacket, like a formal, full-length dressing gown. The only colour used was red and some parts, such as the hands and the clothed chest, apparent between the lapels of the robe, were left without any colour, so appeared white. The figure appeared to be wearing a bow tie. **A** expressed surprise at what he had drawn, because drawing was

not something he enjoyed or felt he did well. He was surprised because he hadn't drawn anything that would have been easy for him, which he would have expected. The image that had come to him was of Assagioli, wearing his 'boudoir jacket', which he used to wear at home. At the end of the day, he would say to **A** (who was working as his secretary in exchange for his training in Psychosynthesis):

Ok, let's shut up shop.

and they would meditate together.

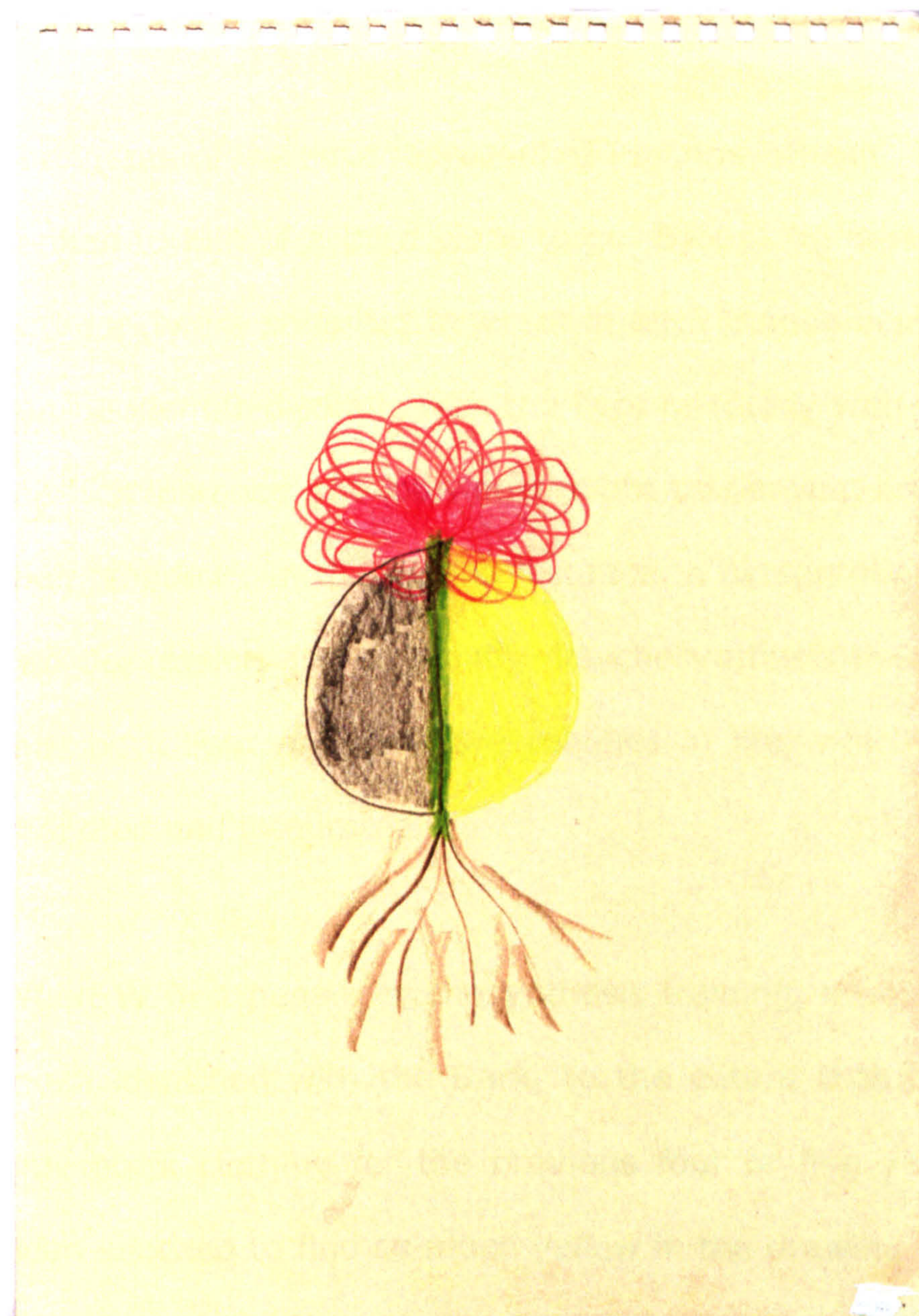
In this drawing he put together Assagioli and the first meditation, which **P** had taught to him, whilst they were both in the army, the Blossoming of the Rose. This was significant for the moment of choice because the meditation had been such a transformative and powerful experience that **A** was unable to deny to himself the importance of what he felt. **A** said that not only could he see the Rose clearly, he could also smell its perfume. In learning to meditate **A** experienced something totally different to his previous life.

He said:

I had an experience that was transforming to me, discovering new scenery, a new (? Tape indistinct at this point). It's very special, very particular, which I have not had in any other part of my life. Totally different, fresh, subtle, still. Stillness was not my best quality! (He laughs at this point).

He added, that he could possibly have come across Buddhist or Tibetan meditation first, and therefore have got into that instead of Psychosynthesis, but that wasn't how it happened.

DRAWING 12: Participant W



The Rose was also a powerful image in **W**'s drawing.

W drew a circle, divided in to two halves, representing Light and Dark, which, as already discussed, in themselves had symbolic significance. A red rose divided the two halves of the circle. It's long, green stem divided the two halves of the circle and it's brown roots dangled below the bottom edge of the circle. The fully- opened head of the rose emerged from the top of the

circle. **W** said that the rose was breaking open something in him, which had been divided.

The image of the rose represented Psychosynthesis, and this had spoken to him of a third place to go. By this he meant that light and dark were polarities inherent in each human being. A person can be identified totally with the light or totally with the dark. In the first instance, the individual might be denying or suppressing their 'shadow'. In the second instance, a person might be locked into depression and negativity. Psychosynthesis theory suggests that both light and dark are realities in life, which need to be accepted and integrated.

When **W** first began Psychosynthesis training, he had been very much identified with the Dark, to the extent that he had worn only black clothing for the previous four or five years. He had been shocked to find so much yellow in the drawing he had done in his first Psychosynthesis session, where the image he had drawn had been the divided circle. At that point he had drawn just the polarities, there had not been a third way apparent to him, as there was later, as he moved into the Psychosynthesis training.

He described the Rose exercise as a classic Psychosynthesis meditation that **P** had talked about a lot when **W** first met him. (As previously noted, **P** had been drawn into Psychosynthesis by his powerful experiences in meditation).

5.6.1. Discussion of the Symbolism of the Rose

It is pertinent at this point to discuss the symbolism inherent in the Rose meditation, as it is used in Psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1975, pp.213-215). This meditation uses symbolic imagery to focus a person on their potential for growth, expansion and fulfilment, which ultimately is in realisation of their inherently Spiritual nature. It is a guided visualisation, which begins with the visualisation of a tightly furled-up rose bud, symbolising the individual before they begin to realise their potential.

The meditator is invited to see the colours and the textures and the forms of the rosebud. They are then invited to watch as the tiny sepals unfold and the petals gradually emerge and spread into their full beauty. The meditation is multi-sensory, so the meditator is invited to smell the perfume of the rose as well as to watch it's blossoming. The meditation goes on to expand the awareness of the meditator to include the whole rosebush, imagining the whole rosebush:

... and the life force that arises from the roots to the flower and originates the process of opening (Assagioli, 1975, p.215).

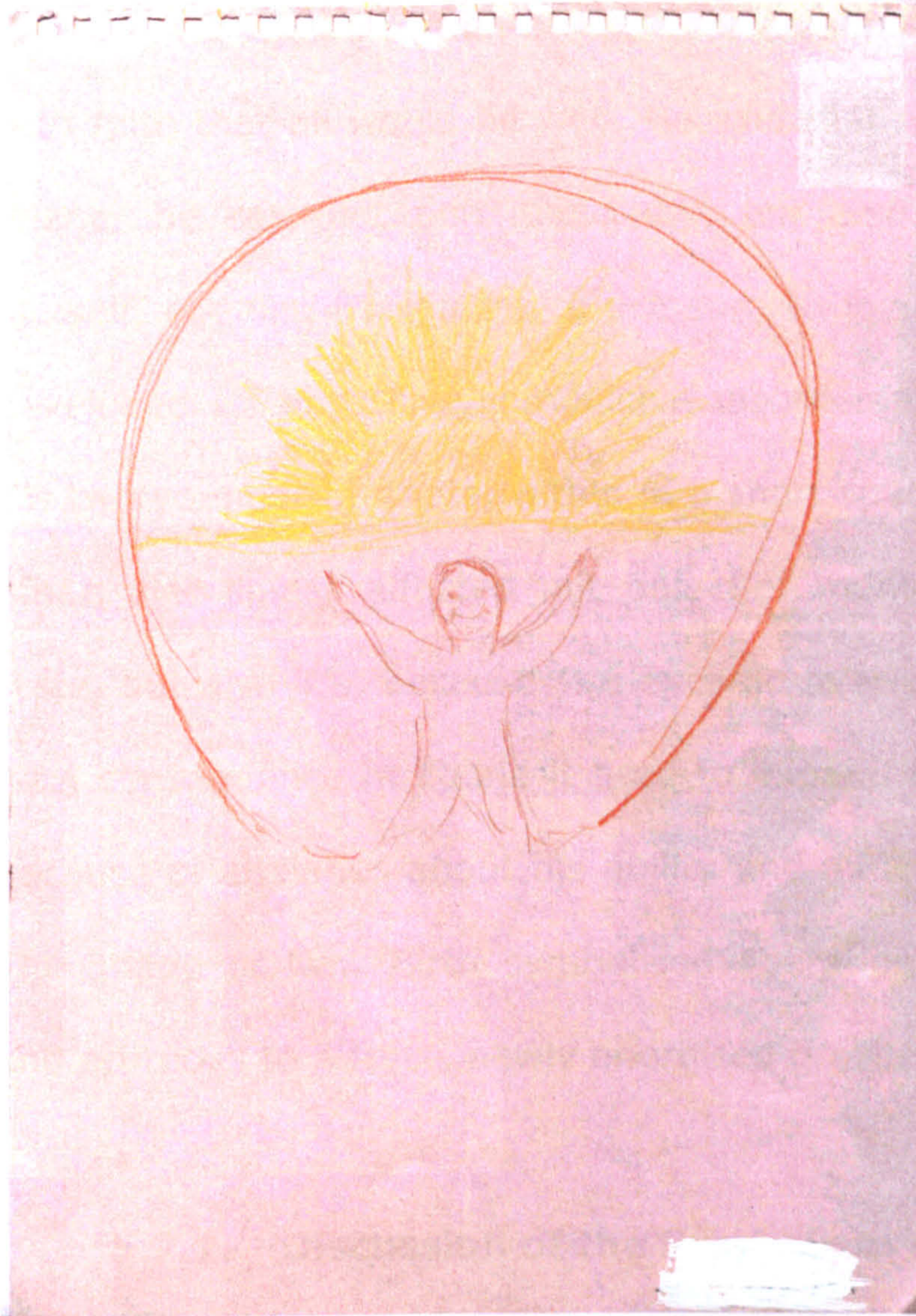
Finally, the meditator is invited to identify with the rose itself or, as Assagioli says to 'introject' it into them self:

Symbolically, we are this flower, this rose. The same life that animates the universe and has created the miracle of the universe is producing in us a like, even greater miracle-the awakening and development of our Spiritual being and that which radiates from it (Assagioli, 1975, p.215).

The meditation leads into an invitation to the meditator to draw, using a full palette of colours, and then to talk to the therapist about their drawing and how it might speak to them of their own life.

5.7. New Birth

DRAWING 8: Participant T



One of the therapists (**T**) got the image of a new birth when he reconnected with the moment of choosing. His daughter was born at the same time that he started Psychosynthesis training. He drew her emerging from the womb with her arms and hands outstretched to him. The background to his daughter, but still shown inside the womb, was a large, shining sun. At the time, his professional and personal life were going through a difficult

phase, but both his baby daughter and the start of his training evoked in him a new spirit of faith in life.

The drawing spoke to him of hope, of opening to the joy of life with faith that all would be well. He said that when he drew the image, he saw not only the baby, but also his mother and himself, opening their arms to the sun, to joy. (His mother had developed an obsessive/compulsive disorder after the death of T's two younger brothers, within in a short space of time of each other. Her illness affected not only her mental and emotional state, but also T's, because she became over-protective of him. As a consequence he found it hard to expand in to his potential because of anxieties about his ability and difficult to take risks). The image of New Birth symbolised liberation from old beliefs and attitudes to a freer, newly energised growth for T.

5.7.1. Discussion of the Symbolism of New Birth

In Psychosynthesis theory, a New Birth is a symbol of the transpersonal or Superconscious. Assagioli notes the difficulties of language in conveying such experiences and suggests that it is partly because of this difficulty that:

All the words used to refer to psychological or Spiritual conditions and realities were originally metaphors or symbols based on concrete things. For example, 'soul' is derived from anemos, meaning 'wind'; 'spirit comes from 'breath' (Assagioli, 1993, p.88).

He suggests however that:

This difficulty is not insurmountable if we are prepared to recognise and bear in mind the symbolic nature of each expression, be it verbal or some other type (Assagioli, 1993, p.88).

He asserts:

When the symbols are properly recognised and understood, they have great value, for they are evocative and lead to direct intuitive understanding. Indeed, the fact that words representing higher realities have their roots in the experiences of the senses serves to highlight the essential similarities between the external world and the internal world, between the macrocosm and the microcosm (Assagioli, 1993, p.88).

Assagioli groups such symbols into fifteen categories but warns that any one symbol is limited because of its one-sided nature:

Each symbol can only express one aspect, one mode and a partial concept of a given reality (Assagioli, 1993, p.88).

One way around this is:

... to use various symbols to describe the same truth. Then the sum, the convergence and the synthesis of all the different ways of looking at something can give us a greater, overall understanding of the reality they stand for (Assagioli, 1993, p.88).

Assagioli describes fifteen groups of symbols. New birth constitutes the thirteenth group, which he also links to the previous group of symbols, that of transmutation. He says of transmutation:

The body can be transmuted by a process of regenerating psycho spiritual transformation (during the course of which psycho-physical and Para psychological powers are also develop)(Assagioli, 1993, p.100).

This is a process by which:

The mind is brought into harmony with the spirit and includes the body, achieving an organic, harmonious unity of all aspects of a person's being, what we might call 'bio-Psycho-synthesis'. This is true spiritual alchemy (Assagioli, 1993, p.100).

He notes that when one speaks of alchemy one usually thinks of attempts to transmute one substance into another, i.e. a base metal into gold. However, the Arab and medieval books on alchemy often used symbolic language to express a psycho-spiritual alchemy, i.e. the transmutation of man himself. Assagioli refers to Jung's work on the symbolism of alchemy. In his work ' Psychology and Religion' Jung speaks about this at length, showing how he also found this symbolism in the dreams of his patients and in the drawings produced by both sick and well people (Jung 1958). The thirteenth group, New Birth, or regeneration, is linked to that of Transmutation:

...because complete transmutation and transformation prepares a person and opens him up to regeneration. In its deepest and quintessential sense this represents a 'new birth': the birth of the new man, the Spiritual man within the personality (Assagioli, 1993, p.100).

Assagioli notes that Hindus called Brahmins:

...those who have been born twice (Assagioli, 1993,p.100).

Within Christianity many mystics have spoken about 'the birth of Christ in the heart' and in contemporary society the term 'born again Christians' is used by evangelical Christians to describe themselves.

5.8. Symbolism in Psychosynthesis

It is pertinent at this stage to comment upon why symbols and imagery are seen as powerful tools in Psychosynthesis theory and therapy. From a Psychosynthesis perspective, Assagioli asserts the huge potency of symbols in the dynamics of psychological life. Symbols are actually unavoidable, since at the most basic level, all words are symbols. He describes them as:

Stenographic, condensed symbols (Assagioli, 1993, p.179).

Assagioli suggests that symbols may evoke meaning. Assagioli argues that this can be seen graphically in two words used frequently in psychology (especially Jungian) and religion. These two words are 'anima' and 'spirit'. Anima comes from the Greek 'anemos', which means 'wind'. Spirit comes from the Latin 'spiritus', which originally meant 'breath' or 'wind'. Thus, Assagioli argues that the symbol incorporates many dimensions and levels of meaning, including the visual, the dynamic (implying the energy pattern) and the auditory Imagination (we may be able to hear the sounds in our Imagination).

Assagioli (1965) takes Dante's Divine Comedy as an example, to illustrate four levels of meaning: -

1- The literal meaning

- 2- The allegorical or symbolic meaning, the symbolism being of a human and poetic nature
- 3- The meaning at a moral level, which is on a higher level than the allegorical
- 4- On a still higher level, the anagogic i.e. leading upwards

Assagioli makes explicit links between the literal imagery in The Divine Comedy and the stages of the process of realization through the unconscious to the Superconscious. Writing of this as a spiritual process of growth based on the Psychosynthesis model of the Psyche he says:

The first part of- the Pilgrimage through Hell- indicates the analytical exploration of the Lower Unconscious. The second part- The Ascent of the Mountain of Purgatory- indicates the process of moral purification and gradual raising of the level of consciousness through the use of active techniques. The third part - the Visit to Paradise or Heaven – depicts in an unsurpassed way, the various stages of Superconscious realization, up to the final vision of the Universal Spirit, of God Himself (Assagioli, 1975, p.211).

Jung (1959) takes a similar stance to Assagioli, in asserting that symbols are images or signs of psychological realities of many kinds. To reach the unconscious we have to speak to it in its own terms and the mode in which the unconscious normally operates is by way of symbols. Fromm (1957), as was discussed earlier in this chapter, differentiates between three categories of symbols: the Accidental, the Conventional and the Universal. He suggests

that one category, Universal symbols, actually have an inherent meaning in that they speak to that which is universal in human experience.

6. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Introduction

This research study focused on two issues.

- Firstly, to explore the motivations of the twelve Psychosynthesis therapists, in choosing a transpersonal therapeutic model, rather than what might be perceived as a more 'main stream' model such as Psychoanalytic; Person-Centred or Cognitive Behavioural therapy.
- Secondly, to explore the 'moment of choosing' using a Psychosynthesis technique of centring, allowing an image to come and then drawing. The meanings attributed to the imagery and symbolism in the drawings was explored in discussion with the participants. These two issues will be addressed in turn.

6.2. The First Issue

In relation to the first issue, overall, the data analysis supported the findings of earlier research, which suggested that many therapists have a dysfunctional family background. Earlier research into the motivations of therapists in choosing their career has attributed a causative relationship between

dysfunctional family histories and career choice as a psychotherapist.

However, the researcher suggests that to relate unhappy childhood experiences within the family to a later choice of career as an adult is to attribute causation to those childhood experiences. The phenomenological perspective adopted in this research study focused on the level of explanation/meaning, rather than on causation. Further more, to make such an interpretive link would frame the participants' choice in pathological terms. The researcher suggests that an alternative, transpersonal perspective, can suggest a meaning, which frames the choice in a positive, rather than in a negative way. The literature on a career as a 'calling', discussed in Chapter one of this thesis, supports such an interpretation and consequently challenges the pathologising of the career choice. The literature on 'subjective career' also supports the finding that the career choice had a deep level of meaning for these therapists in terms of a powerful sense of life purpose, rather than being judged as 'merely' an interesting and rewarding profession.

6.2.1. The Wounded Healer

However, it is possible to further explore the concept of the 'wounded healer' using a transpersonal perspective. Rather than

hypothesising a general link between childhood wounding and career choice as a therapist, a more specific link might be hypothesised that if the childhood wounding was of a spiritual nature, it might evoke a career choice grounded in a spiritual model of therapy. The findings of earlier research had revealed a background of 'wounded healers', suggesting that usually the choice had a strong unconscious motivation. The therapists had a need to care for others because their own needs had not been met in childhood.

Much of the earlier research had been carried out by psychoanalytically trained psychologists. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the choice of a spiritual model might be interpreted as that of unconscious sublimation to redeem the effects of damaged childhoods through spirituality (Freud, 1963).

6.2.2. A Spiritual Wound

A transpersonal perspective would assert it is a mistake to see spiritual urges as merely evidence of sublimated energies, and argue that a human being has innate spiritual drives in the same measure as the basic drives towards aggression and sexuality posited by Freud.

Following a transpersonal perspective, one could ask what type of experience might constitute a 'spiritual' wound? From a transpersonal perspective a spiritual wound might be the child not being 'seen' or valued for who they really are. Firman & Gila (1997) have described this as the 'Primal Wound'. This was the experience of **MK, W and Participant I.**

Another aspect of spiritual wounding might relate to a perceived lack of meaning in one's life. The interview data did suggest that a sense of purpose and meaning was of key importance in the lives of these therapists. Some of them e.g., **MF, P and M,** began asking themselves 'big' questions about social justice and suffering and death, even in their childhoods.

6.2.3. Transpersonal Motivation

A transpersonal perspective would recognise the importance of spiritual wounding but also assert that motivation can equally stem from 'higher' impulses too. That is to say, that the positive as well as the negative can motivate us, by reaching out for fulfilment in our lives. For eleven of these therapists, the basis of fulfilment was spiritual.

It is interesting that **D** said:

I have come to believe that everyone who comes into Psychosynthesis has both a personal motivation and a

transpersonal motivation and the personal motivation is often the redemption of pain, and I think that is why most people become therapists. But I also think that in the case of Psychosynthesis, people have a spiritual motivation, I certainly think I did and it had to do with wanting to redeem pain in the world and the sensitivity to pain in the world and a sensitivity to the global situation and I think, you know, the Psychosynthesis model, that when we have contact with the Self there is a spontaneous impulse to share, to express, that if people come into Psychosynthesis for their own therapy, they soon make contact with the Self, experiencing a positive urge to serve, to give, and that often leads them on to do the training ((L. 59-70).

The data did seem to support this perspective to some extent: six of the participants (**D, E, I, M, MF** and **W**), were initially impressed by the personal relevance the model seemed to have to their life experience and by the effectiveness of its techniques for them personally in therapy. Later, they began to utilise the model and the techniques to serve others as Psychosynthesis therapists.

This finding, that at least six of the research participants had a dual motivation (personal and transpersonal) is linked to a further conclusion. This is that Psychosynthesis held a powerful attraction to the participants because it appears to provide a meta-model of what it is to be a human being and a wider vision of the place of human beings in creation. This contrasts with the much narrower parameters of Freudian or Cognitive psychology and their respective therapies.

6.2.4. Grounding Spirituality

A further conclusion as to why the therapists were drawn to Psychosynthesis is that it was seen to give a practical means to 'ground' one's spirituality. It provides tools to 'embody' spiritual experiences, that is, to find concrete, practical ways to express one's spirituality in ones everyday life.

Three of the research participants spoke of how important it was for them to be able to 'ground' their spiritual experiences in everyday life. They found that Psychosynthesis had given them tools to do this and so this was another part of their motivation.

MF related how when her marriage fell apart and she was:

...being a transcendent mystic... and she... didn't know how to ground (L306-310).

She was able to use the techniques of Psychosynthesis to ground her experiences in everyday life.

W explained how Psychosynthesis had enabled him to bring his spiritual and esoteric interests:

...together with the more, how do we operate in the world ways (L.128-130).

D said:

It is not enough to just contact the spiritual world or the transpersonal or the Self, it is equally important to express that in your daily life, so that your daily life becomes more of an embodiment of your soul (L.135-138).

However, Psychosynthesis is not the only transpersonal model in psychology. The researcher's hypothesis that it was the spiritual dimension of Psychosynthesis, which had drawn the therapists to this particular therapeutic model, was confirmed as the strongest finding, as all twelve therapists interviewed named spirituality as a key factor in their decision to train as a Psychosynthesis therapist. However, the question still remained, as to why this particular transpersonal model?

6.2.5. The Psychosynthesis Model of a Human Being

The researcher came to understand that this choice had a deep underlying significance. Psychosynthesis is a transpersonal psychology and a transpersonal therapy, but so is Jungian psychology and Jungian therapy. What might draw an individual to this specific transpersonal model? Through the interviews with the twelve therapists, the researcher drew the conclusion that it is the Psychosynthesis model of ***what it is to be a human being***, which was so compelling to these therapists.

All twelve participants expressed their belief in the essential tenets of the Psychosynthesis model, which are given as follows:

Psychosynthesis asserts that:

1) A human being is not a person with a spiritual dimension.

Rather, a person IS a soul and has a personality.

2) Each individual's life has a meaning and a purpose, that our problems and painful experiences are more than just that: they offer us the potential for growth and movement towards our goal or life purpose. It is significant that eleven of the twelve therapists spoke about spirituality explicitly or implicitly as in their life purpose, or Path (the symbol evident in two of the drawings). The theme of Service to others was a strong one.

3) It gives a wider vision of the place of human beings in creation, of the relationship of each individual to others, to the world, a sense of interconnection, and unity.

The interview data illustrated the personal depth of feeling the participants held, in line with these precepts. The Psychosynthesis model was never talked about in a merely detached academic way as 'just' a useful theoretical basis for

therapeutic practice. Its precepts were seen as having life-affirming consequences that went far beyond the aim of helping an individual make a better adjustment to their life situation.

The implications of these premises are 'grand' in the true sense of the word.

Firstly, they give the person of the therapist a positive and valuable way to reframe their concept of themselves as a human being (it gives them dignity and value, it honours them) and to reframe negative, painful experiences, often from their past, their damaged childhoods.

Secondly, it gives a vision of their work beyond that of 'fixing' what is damaged or dysfunctional from the client's past, and their present way of functioning. Unlike some other therapies whose goal might be to 'just' help the client to function 'normally' e.g. Cognitive –Behavioural therapy. Psychosynthesis holds a 'bi-focal' vision of the client as *more than* their pathology. Part of the therapist's role is to hold a vision of the client in their full potential, or, as Ferrucci (1982) says, of 'What they may be'. Alongside this, it provides tools to work with and towards this potential.

Thirdly, it provides direction or focus for life, not in a specific directive way, but as a trust in the ability and wisdom of the Self, to be able to heal and to grow.

Fourthly, it provides a schema of where we, as individuals, fit into the whole of creation. It gives a sense that we are not just individuals or even just an individual within a family and friendship, etc network. We are part of the widest possible network going beyond groups, nations, and even global dimensions. In this sense Psychosynthesis appears to present a Meta framework within which human life can be understood.

Hardy (1987) expresses this point as follows:

It is a picture of all individuals and groups being related to all others, in space and in time, and of each person being responsible for the whole (Hardy, 1987, p.92).

The researcher suggests that if a person is drawn to spirituality, then choosing to become a Psychosynthesis therapist provides the individual with a 'vocation' rather than just a 'job'. As a consequence, one is enabled to live out one's deepest values in one's work.

6.2.6. The Importance of Meaning

In relation to point (2) the researcher came to believe that the emphasis Psychosynthesis gives to the importance of meaning in human life is especially attractive to those drawn to a spiritual model of therapy, since eleven of the twelve participants spoke of their personal search to find meaning and purpose in their lives.

Frankl (1978), one of the first transpersonal psychologists, posits that the search for meaning is critical in human life. Frankl was interned in and survived the Nazi death camps. From his personal experiences he concluded that human suffering and even death could be accepted if there is meaning. He cites the ultimate self-sacrificing action of Maximillian Kolbe, a Roman Catholic priest in a concentration camp during World War II who volunteered his own life in exchange for the life of a family man, seeing the achievement of a greater good in his own sacrifice.

6.2.7. Spirituality as a Functional Dimension of Experience

In general psychology, spirituality was for a long time 'off the agenda.' It was not recognised as relevant to psychological health or well-being. It is only fairly recently that a category related to spirituality was included in psychological diagnosis and

this was in terms of seeing spirituality as a 'problem'. The fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV: American Psychiatric Association 1994) introduced a new section (V62.89) called 'Religious or Spiritual Problem'. It suggested that:

This category can be used when the focus of clinical attention is a religious or spiritual problem. Examples include distressing experiences that involve the loss or questioning of faith, problems associated with conversion to a new faith, or questioning of spiritual values that may not necessarily be related to an organised church or religious institution (1994, p.685).

The Psychosynthesis model does acknowledge that there can be problems of a spiritual nature. For example, Assagioli asserted that there might be times when the Superconscious breaks through into conscious awareness. If there is not a healthy integration of the personality already in place, this can result in mental unbalance. For instance, the use of hallucinogenic drugs to induce Transcendent states can give an enhanced vision of potential so immense that it leads to chronic dissatisfaction with reality. As Whitmore (1991) suggests:

The personal ego may become inflated by glimpses of the essential Self and the divinity of life ...in effect, the Transpersonal, if misused or misunderstood, can multiply neuroses (Whitmore, 1991, p.18).

Two of the therapists had tried what Psychosynthesis would see as potentially dangerous short cuts to transpersonal experiences.

P described his own experiences with Hallucinogenic drugs in California as a young man. **W** described his paranormal excursions whilst dabbling in occult practices.

However, the model also suggests that crises may facilitate a spiritual awakening. Whitmore gives a number of examples:

For one client, the death of a love one stimulated a search for meaning which led her to the experience of the Self: another, overwhelmed by a midlife crisis, found relief through deep acceptance of her being which altered her priorities and life direction. For an overstressed businessman, the loss of his valued career shocked him into a transcendent experience of his true identity far beyond his role as a businessman. These insights are often gained through the work of transpersonal counselling (Whitmore, 1991, p.17).

The difference in perspective lies in how one frames experiences. In Psychosynthesis, spiritual experiences are framed as positive, but where there is a threat to a fragile personality, it gives a framework to comprehend what is happening and ways to work with this. **MF** described how Psychosynthesis therapy had helped her in the crisis of her father's suicide. **W** had carried the burden of his childhood abuse and later his wife's chronic depression and eventual suicide. Psychosynthesis therapy had given him a positive way to reframe his 'negative' experiences.

6.2.8. A Holistic Model

A further conclusion is that the participants were motivated to undertake Psychosynthesis training because they perceived it as offering a holistic way to do therapy. They felt that it was a coherent model and that it used practical techniques to facilitate and integrate both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' work. This was because its theory and techniques encompassed both the woundings of childhood and the transpersonal dimension. Every participant in the research study described the holistic nature of the model as essential to his or her choice. It was because the model addressed the physical, the mental, the emotional and the spiritual dimensions of a human being, that they found it meaningful. Even **MK**, who was the only participant not to speak of spirituality as an initial factor in her motivation, said that although she was not consciously drawn by its spirituality in the beginning, she was nevertheless drawn to its holism:

But I guess I was more interested in, very drawn to the holism of Psychosynthesis (L 78-79).

6.3. The Second Research Focus

The second aspect of the research study was to explore the moment of choosing using the Psychosynthesis technique of centring, allowing an image to come and to draw. The rich discussions that followed, which have been reported in detail, suggest that this research method was a valuable way to access

a deeper level of meaning. This aspect of the research study supported the key finding from the life narrative interviews that the spiritual dimension of Psychosynthesis was central to the participants' choice. This is deduced from the finding that the symbolism and imagery in all the drawings was of a transpersonal nature and from a Psychosynthesis perspective would be described as emanating from the Superconscious. The symbol of Light appeared in nine of the twelve drawings. The symbol of a Path or Journey appeared in three of the drawings. Three of the drawings included both of these symbols. A third symbol, that of a Rose, was central in two of the drawings. A fourth symbol, that of a Chalice, was prominent in two of the drawings. A sixth symbol, appeared in just one drawing, that of New Birth.

The researcher suggests that the use of this method provides a creative way to generate data that is rich in meaning. This research study adds to the body of data generated by creative methods. This research study adds to the literature on the motivations of psychotherapists in choosing a career. It especially contributes to the findings about transpersonal therapists in their career choice. Furthermore, the choice of method resonated with the values of the participants and was consistent with the premises of the Psychosynthesis model that

deeper levels of meaning can be accessed through the unconscious.

6.4. The Limitations of the Research Study

The researcher acknowledges that the sample size of the research project was small and that therefore it is difficult to generalise from the findings. However, it would be difficult to obtain this richness of detail in a large-scale study, without being swamped by the data.

A further difficulty relates to the use of self-report methods in the data collection, using semi-structured interviews. Participants may only give responses that they perceive to show themselves in a positive light, or they may give answers that they think the researcher would like to hear (social expectancy effect).

Also, the influence of the participant's unconscious mind may influence their responses and lead to distortions or inaccuracies. Similarly, there may be a parallel influence in the unaware researcher who does not recognise their own biases and unconscious assumptions in the research process. In respect of the participants, most of the psychotherapists involved in this study had high status in the psychosynthesis world, which could

mitigate against their being influenced by the researcher, who is relatively unknown in this field.

In dealing with life events that occurred many years previously, there may also be the issue of 'reconstructed memory'. Earlier assumptions about memory as a straightforward system of storage and retrieval have been challenged and replaced with a model that takes account of the selective and constructive facets of the process. The only way to fully account for this possibility is to go on to interview significant people who knew the therapists in their earlier lives: a complex task beyond the limits of this project. The researcher does however feel intuitively that the experiences the participants related to her came from an authentic place in themselves.

6.5. Personal Reflections

This research journey began at an international conference on Psychosynthesis in San Diego, California, in 1996. It was then that a seed was sown in the researcher's mind that excited her interest in such a research project. Probably, like most PhD students, she was blissfully ignorant of the long journey ahead of her. This was no doubt a useful state of ignorance because, if

she could have foreseen the many years of work ahead she may have been too overwhelmed to proceed.

The most exciting stage of the research was undoubtedly the interviews with the twelve psychotherapists. The researcher was in no way prepared for the intimate and powerful revelations about their personal lives in which she was privileged to share. She had met most of the participants either as part of her own training as a Psychosynthesis counsellor, or at the two international Psychosynthesis conferences she attended, in San Diego in 1996 and later in Bologna, in 2001. Her contact with the research participants before beginning the research study was of a student-to-therapist/trainer nature (with herself as the student). The research interviews opened up a whole new dimension of the therapists' lives to her which in ordinary circumstances she would never have experienced. The researcher is deeply appreciative of the honesty and willingness to share, which the therapists demonstrated in the interviews.

The researcher had planned to use a semi-structured Interview format and to carry out a comparative thematic analysis of the interview data. When the research study was quite well advanced the researcher began to read more about Heuristic methods, particularly the work of Clark Moustakas. She also took

the opportunity to attend a Rudolf Steiner conference in New York in 2005, on the topic of 'Consciousness, Spirituality and Research'. The researcher was very excited about Heuristic methods and regretted that she had not gone more strongly down this path in her own research.

Research using the technique of meditation was a particular topic at the conference. This seemed to parallel the Psychosynthesis technique of Reflective/Receptive meditation and the researcher considered introducing a further level of analysis to her research using this technique. She did in fact spend a week re-familiarising herself with the individual interview transcripts and carrying out a meditation on each. She followed each meditation with drawing, just as she had invited her research participants to do at the end of each life-history interview. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to follow-up this new dimension of the work, due to family illness. She did not have the energy to write up her reflections on this process at the time and so the impetus to complete this level of analysis was lost.

At a personal level the research study confirmed the researcher's own enthusiasm for the model that is Psychosynthesis, as it was affirmed by the life choices of each of the therapists. It does seem to her to go far beyond the more purely functional task of

'fixing' peoples' lives that some other models espouse. It offers an inspirational vision, as Piero Ferruci's book suggests, of 'What We May Be'.

When the researcher began the research study, she felt intuitively at the personal level, that spirituality was an important and valuable dimension of human experience. Her experience as researcher gave affirmation to this view. This stemmed both from the data analysis and from her exploration of the literature. Whilst the initial literature review was carried out prior to the data analysis, the data analysis itself prompted a further literature review around the topics of spirituality and mysticism. The work of Ken Wilber (2000) and Brian Lancaster (2004), writers of impressive academic stature in the field, provided a rich source of material. Wilber's work provides a comprehensive and in-depth review of models of spirituality across cultures and time. Lancaster argues convincingly that spirituality cannot be reduced to the neurological functioning of the brain. The research experience consequently confirmed the researcher's own views on the relevance of spirituality to human life both through the analysis of the data and through the literature review.

The privileged position of researcher gave an entry into the intimate world of the research participants. The researcher's choice of participants from some of the most respected and eminent figures in the world of Psychosynthesis stemmed from her admiration and respect for their work and for some, the charisma she perceived them to exude. When the research study began, the researcher was cognisant of her obvious responsibility towards confidentiality. What she learned from the opportunity to hear the participants' life narratives was that the ethical position of the researcher carries with it great responsibility as well as great privilege: the researcher bears a duty of respect and sensitivity towards his/her research participants who are disclosing personal and sometimes 'shocking' details about their lives. In this process, she came to value her own background of training as a Psychosynthesis counsellor, in preparing her to listen to their stories, both as one human being to another and in a professional capacity. Martin Buber (1923) described the sensitive and deeply respectful attitude required in such privileged listening as an "I-Thou" relationship, as compared to an "I-It" relationship. Reflecting on the research experience from a post-project perspective, the researcher came to the conclusion that very few people would be admitted to such an arena. The researcher feels that she was allowed such a privilege because she was to a certain extent already part of the

professional world of Psychosynthesis and also because she presumably conveyed an impression of trustworthiness in her behaviour as researcher.

To an individual considering training as a Psychosynthesis therapist, the findings of the research study offer the opportunity to make a more informed choice. This is because it presents a picture of the major and minor dimensions of the model that were influential to the eminent therapists who had chosen this training. The major factors were those that the majority of the therapists articulated and which might therefore resonate with a large number of potential therapists.

Alternatively, the articulation of these factors might be a useful way in which those considering Psychosynthesis training might come to an equally helpful conclusion that this was not training attractive to them.

A less formal presentation of this information might also be a positive contribution to materials used in the training of aspiring Psychosynthesis therapists, since it facilitates an understanding of the theoretical model and its experiential applications.

Thirdly, materials aimed at helping a client choose a counselling model in sympathy with their own belief system and values, could usefully draw upon these findings. The therapists had articulated what were the key factors that had drawn them to the Psychosynthesis model: in what ways it had resonated with their own values and belief system. The researcher considers that the values and belief system underlying what it is to be a human being are central to a choice of therapeutic training and therapeutic work. For the client this may not have been articulated at a conscious level, but it is the responsibility of professional therapists to have explored this for themselves and to be able to explain this to potential clients. Consequently, this aspect of the research findings could be usefully incorporated in written materials aimed at helping a client make an informed choice of therapeutic model and indeed of a particular therapist.

6.6. Future Research

The research utilized semi-structured interviews and comparative thematic analysis to explore the reasons why the participants chose a particular transpersonal model to train as psychotherapists. The use of drawings following an invitation to centre and to reconnect with the moment of choosing, added an unusual dimension to the research method. The researcher would be interested to further test the technique of meditative

analysis, which she was unable to complete in this research study. It did seem to her that it might be possible to tune in at a deeper intuitive level to the consciousness of a research participant. This did appear to happen after her meditation on the interview data of **MK**. It would be possible to use a triangulation method to check the extent to which researcher interpretations resonate in a meaningful way with those of the participant.

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