Clinical psychologists' understanding of

the concept of spirituality, and of the

processes through which

it is addressed within therapy

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the

degree of Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Jon Crossley

Centre for Applied Psychology (Clinical Section)

University of Leicester

July 2000

Anything, perhaps, to help us conceal our embarrassment at talking openly about something which, now we presume it to be dead, has left behind an uncomfortable silence in the gaps between what there is and what we'd like there to be.

- *God: The Sequel* by Armando Iannucci

Acknowledgements

Clinical psychologists' understanding of the concept of spirituality, and of the processes through which it is addressed within therapy

Jon Crossley

Abstract

Traditionally, there has been a dissociation between spirituality and psychology. More recently, a greater focus has been placed upon spirituality within the psychological literature, but research has highlighted concerns that the phenomenon continues to be marginalised within a therapeutic setting. The aim of the current study was to develop an account of the way in which clinical psychologists understand and address spirituality within therapy. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight psychologists. The narratives were analysed using the qualitative methodology of grounded theory, which also informed the data collection process.

There was diversity in the meaning that was attached to the concept of spirituality by participants. A theme that bridged the diverse accounts however, was that spirituality (in its different forms) provides individuals with an ongoing sense of perspective about their existence. In this sense, spirituality was understood to be significant to a broad range of clients, and a prevalent issue within therapy. A further theme that emerged from the data, was that spirituality is a difficult concept to comprehend, that is infrequently discussed. In this sense, spirituality was understood to be a remote concept. It is suggested that further research needs to build standard frames of reference, in order that the concept may be more uniformly and coherently understood, and thus more available to the profession.

When addressing spiritual beliefs, participants attempted to respect the beliefs that were held. This created difficulties, when the beliefs were perceived to be contributing to distress. It was nevertheless emphasised, that it is possible to work in a way that is consistent with beliefs, yet also allows more adaptive spiritual understanding to be developed. It is suggested that this dilemma be considered more fully within clinical training, to prepare clinical psychologists for the challenge of working artfully with spiritual beliefs.

Contents

List of Figures

1. Introduction

1.1 Spirituality: a vague thing

Recently the question was raised in The Psychologist, as to whether it was appropriate to include advertisements for courses in 'spiritual healing', in "a periodical devoted to the scientific understanding of the human mind and behaviour" (Heap, 1998, p.9). A sharp debate followed, in which it was suggested that one contributory factor to discussion regarding the value of spirituality within psychology, is the confusion that exists over the meaning of the term; it is, "a concept which can be all things to all people" (McCourt, 1998, p.164).

The validity of this statement becomes apparent from a brief study of the literature within this area. Although there is an increasing body of research that refers to spirituality, these papers tend to use a broad range of criteria to define the phenomenon (e.g. Haug, 1998; Nino, 1997). Nevertheless within this diversity, spirituality is consistently used as a wider, more inclusive term than religion (e.g. Haug, 1998; Lukoff, Lu and Turner, 1998). This context inevitably leads one to agree with Samuels' (1998) assertion, that "spirituality is a vague thing" (p.349).

During psychology's relatively brief existence, the concept of 'operational definition' has been a central component within the dominant epistemology of logical positivism that has governed psychological method (Koch, 1992). The ascendancy of such concepts, which indicate that a task of psychology is to establish operations that equate with meaning, has implications for phenomena as broad and vague as spirituality. Is it necessary for such phenomena to be precisely defined, before research may commence? If this is the case, it is important to consider at the outset, whether spirituality is actually a suitable topic of investigation for a research project within the Doctorate of Clinical Psychology.

In order to establish an appropriate perspective regarding this question, it is necessary to consider the significance of operationalism within psychology. Koch (1992) asserts that the meaning of any concept will never be identical to the relevant operations described, and the assumption that this may be the case is based on a misunderstanding of Bridgman's method

of operational analysis. He therefore argues that the promotion of the process of operational definition within psychology is inappropriate, "inevitably leading to a 'precise' form of babble instead of meaningful discourse" (p.273). Koch (1992) suggests that psychology's task is to actually engage with concepts with an 'open horizon' character or complex meaning fields, and explore the meaning fields. Samuels (1998) similarly argues that a spurious precision dominates the style and content of many discourses, including those within psychotherapy. He also emphasises that it is possible to take the difficulty of definition as a starting point, and to continue debate from there. McCourt (1998) meanwhile focuses explicitly on spirituality, and suggests that the diversity of the term and the controversy surrounding it, make it a priority area for investigation by psychologists.

This section begins by reviewing the ways in which the term spirituality is used in the literature, and the meanings that it is afforded. This is followed by a discussion of the enduring prevalence of spirituality generally. There is subsequently an evaluation of papers discussing the ways that spirituality may be addressed and managed within therapy. This leads on to debate concerning appropriate areas for study, and a statement of the aims of this research project. Finally, the rationale behind the choice of qualitative methodology is presented.

1.2 The concept of spirituality

There is a rapidly increasing collection of psychological literature concerning spirituality, which conceptualises the term in a range of ways. In order to provide a broad overview of the domain of spirituality within psychology, authors have been sampled from a range of theoretical orientations. It has been noted by various analysts, that attempts at defining the concept of spirituality reveal numerous nuances of form and content (Nino, 1997; Adams, 1995). In an attempt to manage this complexity, many researchers have provided very broad definitions, but nevertheless there are others who have provided more precise conceptualisations. Both of these methods of understanding are considered in the following section.

Some authors define spirituality in terms of a specific impact on functioning. Haug (1998) for example describes spirituality as particular beliefs that lead to a range of thoughts, emotions and behaviours, such as being respectful and compassionate towards all life. She does not elaborate as to the type of beliefs that produce this response, but focuses upon the nature of the response itself. Duffy (1998) understands spirituality somewhat differently to beliefs, as "the essence of who I am, my value systems, and that which calls me out and energises me" (p.310), and she emphasises that spiritual development will be a unique process for each individual. Nevertheless, she too highlights that there are particular consequences for enhancing one's spirituality, for example assuming greater responsibility for one's life, and developing increased altruism. Another similarity between these analysts is that within their accounts, spirituality is perceived to influence functioning in a very broad sense; that is it impacts one's relationship with self, with others, and with the larger environment.

Another method of conceptualisation is to focus away from the consequences, and to consider the phenomenon of spirituality itself. Many authors define the term in this manner, by relating it in some way to the metaphysical world, or to some transcendent form. Lukoff et al. (1998), in outlining the roots of the DSM-IV category 'Religious or Spiritual Problem', cite the broad reference to spirituality that may be found in the Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms as the basis of their perspective; the "degree of involvement or state of awareness or devotion to a higher being or life philosophy" (Walker, cited in Lukoff et al., 1998, p.208).

Others define the spiritual relationship to the metaphysical world in less broad terms, and emphasise a particular type of response as the core elements of their understanding. King, Speck and Thomas (1999) relate the spiritual to beliefs in forces or powers transcending the present context of reality. They do not include higher philosophies within their formulation, but argue instead that spirituality is more than merely a search for meaning. In contrast, Nino (1997) proposes that a spiritual quest is the process of constructing individual purpose from experiences, by searching beyond the material aspects and the impermanence of things in life. This conceptualisation does not emphasise in any way the importance of particular beliefs. Instead, Nino (1997) explains that there are many who have abandoned religious sources as the basis of their understanding, yet who would

nevertheless consider themselves to be cultivating a spiritual life. Hence he suggests that the fundamental strivings of the self towards internal coherence and transcendence may be regarded as the common element within religious and non-religious spirituality.

Some authors indicate concern at making reference to metaphysical concepts. Hayes (1984) suggests that to distinguish the world of matter from that of spirit is essentially to adopt a dualistic approach, which is generally regarded as incompatible with his background of behaviourism. Adams (1995) similarly emphasises that separating the individual into body, mind and spirit can be problematic, in that it may reduce the complexity of thinking about an area.

Nevertheless, both writers argue that such dichotomising is actually helpful when considering the realm of spirituality. Hayes (1984) asserts that the ancient distinction between spirit and matter is actually very reasonable and sophisticated, and he uses behavioural analysis to define spirit as the context of self awareness, and matter as the content of life. He argues that these two entities are quite distinct, and proceeds to refer spirituality to dwelling in the context of pure perspective, away from direct verbal contingencies or automatic rule control.

Adams (1995) proceeds somewhat differently, highlighting the differences between mind, body and spirit, while acknowledging that they are nevertheless inseparable. He does not use such detailed analysis as Hayes (1984) to conceptualise spirituality, but chooses to maintain a very broad perspective. This position emphasises the wide range of possible spiritual beliefs and practices, associated with religious frameworks at one end, and more individual spiritual paths at the other. This breadth of understanding stems from accepting several ideas as the core themes of spirituality, including God, consciousness, life and love.

Other analysts have similarly avoided providing neat summaries of spirituality, and attempted to capture the breadth of the term instead, by emphasising the range of meanings to which it refers. Samuels (1998, p.350) asserts that:

> *Spirituality may be rooted in traditional, formal religion. Or it may be a highly idiosyncratic and personal affair. Or both. ....*

Spirituality may be understood as universal, comprehensive and catholic with a small 'c'. Or it may display a highly relativistic cast .... Or both. Spirituality may be regarded as fundamentally transpersonal, transcending the human realms or existence. Or it may exist only in relational, intersubjective, interactional setting. Or both.

Helminiak (1996) provides a more systematic overview of the ways the term is employed, and describes four key uses. Firstly, he notes that the term can refer to the spiritual component in the human being. Secondly, it can refer to an awareness or concern for transcendence, that is, something in life that goes beyond the here and now. Thirdly, it can refer to a lived reality, expressing that awareness. Finally, the term can refer to a subject matter for academic study. This framework of perceiving a range of definitions provides insight into the reasons for the confusion that surrounds the concept. It becomes clear that spirituality is in many senses an 'umbrella' term. However, this difficulty with definition has had considerable implications, in terms of ensuring that it has been problematic to develop reference points for discussion and investigation (Nino, 1997).

1.2.1 The relationship between spirituality and religion

The separation of spirituality from religion is a modern development; in the early twentieth century, the word spirituality was only used in a religious or devotional sense (Wulff, 1997). Currently however, spirituality and religion are distinguished in the psychological literature, with religion generally being viewed as less inclusive than spirituality (Haug, 1998; Lukoff et al., 1998). Despite the lack of concordance regarding spirituality within the field, there is at a superficial level some convergence of understanding about the concept of religion. Religion is generally understood as relating to frameworks for belief or practice (King et al., 1999), that are linked to particular organisations (Haug, 1998, Lukoff et al., 1998). These organisations include both the major world faiths, and other minor religions (Adams, 1995).

However, it is increasingly understood that within this seemingly broad, uniform reference, is actually a multidimensional expression of human creativity (Nino, 1997). One specific

area of theoretical guidance within the literature, that provides some semblance of order to this complex domain, is the framework that exists for categorising religious involvement into separate orientations. Pargament (1997) notes that there are three orientations identified within the literature (intrinsic, extrinsic and quest orientations), which represent different forms of religious activity, and which are motivated by different consequences. These orientations have been used to explore the relationship between religion and psychological well-being, but studies have led to inconsistent results (Maltby, Lewis and Day, 1999). Further research has therefore moved away from focusing on general orientation to religion, and considered particular religious practices instead. Maltby et al. (1999) for example, found that it is the frequency of personal practices such as prayer that is a factor in psychological well-being, rather than orientation to religion.

A critique of this approach to the psychology of religion is provided by Belzen (1999) however. He argues from an anthropological perspective, that religion is first and foremost cultural in nature. He notes that religion involves a range of psychic functions, which vary significantly between cultures and religions. From this perspective Belzen concludes it is fruitless to conduct research into religion as if it is merely a single entity. Pargament (1997) offers a similar criticism, noting that a full account of religious orientations needs to attend to the social dimension of religion. Peters, Day, McKenna and Orbach (1999) consider this issue with regard to the specific area of psychosis. They emphasise that when considering the distinction between psychotic and religious experiences, it is important to focus upon the broader context, as cultural setting may lead to very different attributions regarding the nature of beliefs. Hence within the field of the psychology of religion, there is a need for sophisticated studies which respect the complexity of the phenomenon, rather than proceeding as if religion exists apart from a larger social context.

1.3 The enduring prevalence of spirituality

Debate has long prevailed, as to whether spiritual issues in their many different guises, are of any enduring relevance to the human race. During the last generation in particular, many assumed and predicted that science, technology, economics and politics would lead to a completely non-religious world (Cupitt, 1980). Freud himself alluded to this, saying that.

"religious belief represents an immaturity which science will overcome" (Gutsche, 1994, p.3). During the latter part of the twentieth century however, it has become clear that a greater understanding of the questions of the physical world, has not resulted in the departure of religion from society. Even within 'secular' Western culture, an overwhelming number of people engage in some type of religious activity (Belzen, 1999). A Gallup poll in 1990 for example, reported that 60% of Americans consider faith to be the most important influence in their lives (Haug, 1998).

Other spiritual aspects of life beyond religion have similarly not disappeared, and currently may actually be more prevalent instead. Nino (1997) argues that presently in this post-modern age, there is an eagerness for the spiritual that was not as evident during the preceding era, with its greater preoccupation with new ideologies and technological wonders. Lukoff et al. (1998) note that in the US at least, the number of people who report that they engage in some spiritual practice and have spiritual experiences is increasing. As Cupitt (1980, p.1) has asserted:

> *Few people are happy to be quite without any religious dimension to their*
> *lives. At least they would like to retain something of a religious sense of*
> *life's meaning and something of religious ritual, values, and spirituality.*

It has been argued that the enduring pre-eminence of questions about meaning is related to our use of language. Hayes (1984) emphasises the importance of verbal behaviour in establishing knowledge of the self, and asserts that it is this self-awareness that raises questions about identity and purpose. Batchelor (1998, p.39) relatedly has commented that:

> *Meaning and its absence are given to life by language and imagination*
> *...... purpose is formed of words and images. And we can no more step out*
> *of language and imagination than we can step out of our bodies.*

This formulation implies that consideration about the purpose of life will continue to be pervasive, no matter what developments occur through scientific insight and progress.

Lifton (1987) takes a different angle and focuses upon the desire for some form of immortality, which he argues is evident in each of our lives. He asserts that this desire is expressed in a range of modes, for example a biological mode where we have the sense of living on in our children, or a creative mode where our individual works continue their

influence after our death. Lifton describes such expressions as an attempt to establish a symbolic relationship to that which has gone before, and that which will go on after, what we realise to be our own finite lives.

Understanding the enduring significance of spiritual questions, including those relating to religion, meaning, and immortality, highlights the ongoing relevance of the phenomenon of spirituality as a topic for investigation. Considering religion in isolation, Belzen (1999) asserts that the importance of this element of human life across every culture in history, highlights that it may not be ignored by psychology. Lifton (1987) comments that psychology has tended to avoid the large, enduring questions of 'ultimate concern' that exist, regarding immortality for example, labelling such as 'unscientific' and 'a question of personal belief'. He asserts however that these questions, as all manifestations of the human mind, do necessarily come under the broad banner of science. The realm of spirituality gains importance and may not be dismissed as irrelevant, simply because of the significant personal role that it plays in many individuals' lives.

1.4 The interplay of psychology and spirituality

At this stage, it is important to reflect upon the implications that such a discussion of spirituality has upon psychological practice. It has been widely commented, that traditionally there has been a dissociation between spirituality and psychology (e.g. Adams, 1995). Of course some authors have attempted to combine the two areas, perhaps most famously Jung, whom it is claimed was one of the first psychologists to recognise the relevance of faith and religious practice to the workings of the human psyche (Dry, 1961). Within the mainstream academic literature however there is only a very limited focus on spirituality; it has been described as the most unexamined issue of diversity within the field of mental health (Gutsche, 1994), and perhaps even more taboo than sex and death (Prest and Keller, 1993). It is argued that even those mental health professionals who consider spirituality to be important in their personal lives, have been hesitant to address it in theories concerning human dilemmas and the change process (Haug, 1998).

Many have noted that this situation is altering however. Interest in particular aspects of spirituality is reviving, for example within the psychology of religion (Belzen, 1999). It has been argued that this is part of the wider 'sea change' that has occurred within the fields of psychology and theology, which has resulted in a dialogue that would have been unthinkable until very recently (Thorne, 1998). A significant part of this development includes the introduction the new diagnostic category of Religious or Spiritual Problem, in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). This increased interest in spirituality within psychology, has highlighted a number of issues that are of relevance to the practice of therapy. These include the significance of respecting and discussing spiritual beliefs within therapy, and also the potential that exists as a clinician for using techniques associated with spirituality. These issues are considered in turn below.

1.4.1 Respecting Beliefs

Haug (1998) notes that respect for clients' beliefs and for their right to determine the course of their lives in accordance with those beliefs, is written into the code of ethics of all mental health professionals. It is universally accepted therefore that therapists should not impose their own values or beliefs upon the client. However, the feasibility of implementing this apparently straightforward guideline has more recently been challenged through the development of the constructionist paradigm, with its emphasis on the constructive role of the clinician in therapy.

The constructionist model argues that in the process of understanding the world, every individual is bound by the premises and beliefs that they hold about the world (Fruggeri, 1992). Furthermore it is claimed that as the narrative that is developed in therapy evolves from an interaction between client and clinician, this narrative will be co-constructed by these two parties; the discourse will not depend merely on that which the client brings, but will also be influenced by the orientation the therapist brings, including gender and cultural perspectives, and life experiences (Lax, 1992). From this perspective it is clear, that therapists' attitudes and beliefs have a highly significant impact on process and outcome. McMinn (1984) argues that it is also widely accepted as a basic element of therapy, that

therapists' values actually impact the values of clients. These effects however emphasise the difficulties that exist for clinicians, in maintaining respect for beliefs and values that are perceived indifferently or negatively.

Different strategies have been suggested, to allow the therapist to manage the impact of his or her own attitudes and beliefs. McMinn (1984) suggests that it may be useful for therapists to reveal their own values, including spiritual values, in order to attempt to achieve this aim. Even if such disclosure is not deemed appropriate, it is nevertheless important that clinicians are aware of their own beliefs, and how they have evolved. Ross (1994) notes that in order for patients' spiritual beliefs to be successfully incorporated into therapeutic work, it is necessary for therapists to be willing and able to confront their negative stereotypes and beliefs about religion and spirituality, as one would confront other issues regarding diversity, for example, culture or race. Reinertsen (1993) reports that she noticed a shift towards more open discussion of religion within therapy, once she felt more free to explore such themes herself.

Haug (1998) argues that in addition to gaining awareness of one's own beliefs, it is important for therapists to develop 'spiritual literacy', in order to respect clients' belief systems. This will involve gaining knowledge about the practices, language and history, of the major spiritual and religious frameworks that the clinician has contact with in his or her therapeutic work. In addition, an understanding of minor, less well known religious or spiritual traditions may be helpful. Seymour (1998) notes that Paganism, despite being essentially a nature religion and journey into self-realisation, is frequently incorrectly linked to Satanic Ritual Abuse. It is important that therapists do not make the same association, as this has the potential to lead to the groundless suspicion of abuse when meeting a Pagan parent. In order therefore for clinicians' personal values not to be inadvertently imposed, it is important that they do not allow themselves to be oblivious to issues of spiritual diversity.

1.4.2 Discussing beliefs

Another reason for considering spiritual values within therapy, is that such exploration may be associated with greater efficacy. Hall and Hall (1997) provide a review of literature, that suggests religious therapy may be more effective than traditional psychotherapy with highly religious clients. They do acknowledge however that further research with good methodologies is needed. Nevertheless, given that religion is almost as basic as family structures and relationships for some (Albany, 1984), it is clear that it will be a powerful motivator of behaviour. Stewart and Gale (1994) highlight that the underlying feature of religious orientations is their provision of worldviews, or interpretive lenses, through which believers apprehend and order their experience and reality. Therefore open space for non-judgmental and respectful discussion of such frameworks may lead to beneficial and fruitful developments. Reinertsen (1993) describes how discussion of religious themes that were pertinent to clients within a group setting, gave access to a private world of symbols, images and secret emotions. This allowed the members' images of God to be explored, which in turn provided the opportunity to work with important psychological material, for example the individuals' self-images. Of course such discussion of spiritual themes may not always be welcomed by the client, and merely allowing the client to perceive the space or the opportunity may be the most important contribution. Ross (1994) notes that in her experience, the pre-eminence of spiritual themes often paradoxically diminishes, once they have been thoroughly discussed.

1.4.3 Using techniques associated with spirituality within therapy

A slightly different consideration is the notion of employing spiritual techniques within therapy. A vast literature exists documenting the beneficial effects of meditation, guided imagery, and relaxation, in the treatment of clients struggling with stress related health problems for example, or with chronic or terminal illness (Haug, 1998). Some have suggested that similar techniques may also be incorporated successfully into therapy in a wider sense, as they are inherently therapeutic. Epstein (1995) asserts that the 'narcissistic dilemma' (that is the problem individuals face of not knowing who they are fundamentally), is the common focus of both psychoanalysis and Buddhism. Within psychoanalysis,

controversy remains regarding the method for dealing with this difficulty. In Buddhism however, Epstein suggests that explicit techniques exist for confronting and uprooting narcissism. Epstein therefore argues that Buddhist strategies of self-examination and mental training, may be introduced and employed to great effect within therapy. It is simply important, so as to be culturally relevant, for these techniques to be presented in the language of psychotherapy.

Of course some such techniques are currently already employed within mainstream therapeutic approaches, under different labels. Hayes (1984) highlights that a central focus of psychotherapy is the consideration of how to avoid the rules for ordering behaviour, which are constantly available to us and difficult to escape from, and at times incur significant costs. This verbal control becomes established as a result of the ongoing self-talk, or 'internal dialogue', that exists in each of our lives. Hayes highlights that mystical and spiritual traditions seek to weaken this verbal control, through meditation or rhythmic chanting for example, where discursive, analytical thought is discouraged. As a result, automatic rule-control is suppressed. Hayes notes that similar attempts to weaken verbal control are common in psychotherapy, and cites Beck's 'distancing', and Freud's 'quiet, unreflecting self-observation'. Hence he concludes that spirituality is already present within some approaches to therapy, and offers one solution to the problem of automatic verbal control.

1.5 The focus upon spirituality within therapy

Despite the broader focus upon spirituality in the literature, there is nevertheless concern that the phenomenon continues to be marginalised within a therapeutic setting. A consistent theme from a qualitative study of religiously committed clinical psychologists in Britain, was the perception that a significant proportion of colleagues neglect or ignore clients' religious experiences (Myers and Baker, 1998). This study was limited to the perspectives of participants with a religious background, who may therefore have been especially sensitive to this concern. In addition, participants would not have been able to directly observe this process occurring. However, research inquiring about clients' individual experiences of therapy does support this finding. A study of thirty individuals in the United

States, who were both interested in spirituality and engaged in psychosocial rehabilitation, found that a third had wanted to discuss spirituality within therapy but had not done so (Lindgren and Coursey, 1995). Reasons that were given included a general sense of discomfort around the topic in therapy, and the perspective that the therapist could not understand the individual's beliefs. The background and training of the therapists were not referred to in this paper, which limits the conclusions that may be drawn, but this study nevertheless highlights the potential within therapy to miss clients' preferences for addressing spirituality. Certainly it is possible to provide a number of individual case examples, where mental health professionals have actually been perceived as offering advice contrary to religious values (Loewenthal, 1995).

Several hypotheses are put forward in the literature, as to why spirituality may be neglected in the therapeutic setting. Shafranske and Malony (1990) surveyed over 400 clinical psychologists in the United States, and concluded that psychologists receive only limited training with respect to religious and spiritual issues. They further noted that it is psychologists' personal orientations towards religiousness and spirituality, rather than clinical training, that are the primary determinants of their clinical approach to these issues in professional practice. Thus personal orientations are likely to impact the process of therapy in a range of ways, and several authors have debated the potential effects.

Firstly, psychologists may attempt to adopt a neutral position, which Adams (1995) suggests may lead to remaining silent on the issue. This may be problematic for different reasons. Adams argues that silence may be perceived by the client as rejection, in the same way that silence about issues of gender, race and power is understood to be potentially marginalising and dangerous. Reinertsen (1993) meanwhile asserts that religious aspects are often split off and hidden in individuals, which would lead to such elements being missed or ignored, if silence was maintained.

An alternative suggestion is that the psychologist may actually hold a negative view of spiritual experiences, which will impede the way such facets are managed. Prest and Keller (1993) suggest that spiritual experiences are often presumed to interfere with mental health, and are viewed as the potential root of the presenting problem. Another possibility may be that therapists view religion as reinforcing of oppression (Adams, 1995).

It is important to recognise however that numerous misunderstandings genuinely occur within mental health services, and it may be too simple a perspective to conclude that they are merely a consequence of the professionals' negative attitudes to spirituality (Loewenthal, 1995). A further possible factor actually relates to the broader context under which psychologists operate. The strong Western philosophical tradition that emphasises the transparent and simultaneously rational possession of self (Cupitt, 1992), combined with the quest for scientific status and authenticity that is evident in new disciplines (Adams, 1995), has ensured that objectivity has been privileged over subjectivity within psychology. Hence the dominance of 'rationalist' approaches to therapy, which assume that psychological disturbance results from irrational or distorted ways of seeing the world (Moorey, 1996). Such approaches are more likely to exclude the discussion of spiritual themes, as this type of material does not then obviously belong to the therapeutic arena.

Other approaches that adopt a less 'rationalist' approach may be more likely to involve spiritual ideas within therapy. Family therapy for example, which has its theoretical underpinnings in social constructionism, and an acceptance that all knowledges are partial and situated, is a specialty where much literature surrounding spirituality may be found. 'Constructivist' cognitive therapy similarly provides therapy with a less fixed agenda, where the possibility therefore exists for a wider range of issues to be addressed. Sessions are viewed as part of a journey, on which neither therapist or client are sure where they will disembark (Moorey, 1996), hence ensuring spiritual themes are quite appropriate as the object of therapy. Finally, it has been suggested that the area of psychoanalysis also has strong links with spirituality, as the goal of therapy may be regarded as exploring meaning and purpose, and is therefore arguably inherently spiritual (Adams, 1995).

1.6 Rationale for the study

This chapter has highlighted the enduring significance of spirituality within people's lives, and has argued that there is a clear rationale for addressing the phenomenon, to a greater or lesser degree, within the therapeutic setting. Several questions remain however, regarding the manner in which spiritual concerns may be appropriately attended to. For example, Joanides (1996) notes that efforts by family therapists to discuss spiritual themes, may

actually function to alienate key family members' participation. Another specific issue relates to the manner in which therapists may respectfully respond to beliefs or behaviour, that are argued to be spiritually or religiously encouraged, but are nevertheless perceived to cause intolerable distress to the client or other individuals (Loewenthal, 1995). Many other dilemmas also exist, for example, regarding the type of client that will benefit from discussion of spirituality, or the level of emphasis that should be placed on spiritual issues.

Given the significance of these questions to the process of therapy, there is clearly a need for research to examine the way in which clinicians resolve such dilemmas. There is much concern within the field of mental health, as has been emphasised in this chapter, that no clear focus is placed upon such issues within therapy, and that spirituality actually continues to be marginalised in this context. However, these concerns are frequently based upon impressions drawn from individual cases, as in Britain at least, there have not been any broader studies exploring how clinical psychologists do address spirituality in the therapeutic setting. This highlights the need for research examining the extent to which spirituality is actually managed by clinical psychologists; for example, the conditions under which it is addressed, and the approaches that are used in such conditions.

It would have been possible to study these issues, by examining clients' perspectives of their therapeutic encounters with psychologists. There are numerous practical and ethical difficulties with obtaining access to clients' therapeutic experiences however. Furthermore, it has been documented within this chapter that there is considerable ambiguity surrounding the concept of spirituality, but studies have not generally explored how clinical psychologists understand this phenomenon. It was therefore believed that a stronger project was to examine the perspectives of clinical psychologists, as this would provide the opportunity to consider psychologists' understanding of the concept of spirituality, in addition to investigating their ideas about the role of spirituality in therapy. This was the approach that was adopted in this study therefore. Particular emphasis was placed upon clinical psychologists' constructions of spirituality, to examine if there was consistency in conceptualisation between psychologists, or if their views instead reflected the general diversity apparent in the literature. There was also a specific focus placed upon psychologists' attitudes and perspectives towards the concept of spirituality. It has been emphasised in this chapter, that therapists' values influence the process and outcome of

therapy. Attention was therefore paid to the extent to which psychologists had considered their spiritual values, or perspectives of spirituality, in relation to therapy.

It may be summarised that there were three aims to the study:

To investigate the manner in which clinical psychologists construct and understand the concept of spirituality.

To investigate the perspectives and attitudes that are held by clinical psychologists, towards the concept of spirituality.

To explore clinical psychologists' understanding of the processes through which spirituality is addressed in therapy.

1.7 Use of qualitative methodology

It was believed that the aims of the study pointed firmly towards the use of qualitative methodology, for several reasons. Firstly, spirituality is a relatively new area of study. Lukoff et al. (1998) report that there exists only limited psychological theory that is useful in understanding spiritual problems, and that the knowledge base that has developed to date is only at case level. Turpin et al. (1997) assert that the use of qualitative methods may be particularly advantageous when studying psychological phenomena not previously extensively researched, hence it appeared that they would be appropriate in this study. In addition, qualitative methods are ideally suited to the process of hypothesis generation (as opposed to hypothesis testing). which is often required within new domains of inquiry (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1995). This further extended the case for qualitative methodology, given the uncertainty that existed regarding the approach of psychologists to spirituality.

Secondly, the literature suggests that spirituality is a broad and vague term, that may be understood in a range of ways. It was expected that at least some of this confusion would be reflected within participants' accounts. The process of qualitative research has been described as in-depth examination of the meanings at work (Parker, 1994), with the aim of

providing a rich, thick and coherent account that resonates with readers (Elliott, Fischer and Rennie, 1999). Therefore it was anticipated that the use of such methods, would facilitate a more comprehensive and flexible investigation of a potentially complicated subject. This would subsequently allow the participants' detailed impressions and understandings to be represented, rather than superficially skimming over the ambiguities and complexities. Furthermore, attempts are made within qualitative research to represent the wider body of data (Silverman, 2000). This may be argued to contrast to some degree with quantitative studies, where the emphasis is on proving hypotheses, and thus negative data is often not included within the results (Brown, 1998). This was considered to be a further reason for adopting qualitative methodology in this study, as it would allow the full diversity of accounts to be included in the findings.

Clinical practice within all areas of health care is a complicated procedure, but Dingwall, Murphy, Watson, Greatbatch and Parker (1998) illustrate that there are essentially two core aspects to it. The first of these concerns the body of general 'rules' that exist for acting therapeutically, while the other element relates to the improvisation skills that are employed to fit the broader rules to the specific case. Dingwall et al.(1998) emphasise that it is not possible to write rules that apply to each case, as the practice of therapy is a heterogeneous experience, where the unique client has to be responded to in a unique way that fits each particular context. They argue that qualitative research may help to close the gap, between knowledge of what is effective in general, and the ability to apply it on an individual basis. This notion of the individuality of the clinician's practice, and the value of qualitative research in exploring this heterogeneity, is also referred to by Jarman, Smith and Walsh (1997):

> *The consideration of the individuality of therapists and their differential influences upon, and experiences of, the treatment process ... seems an essential component of a clinically meaningful research strategy. Qualitative methods are ideally suited to this task.*

A final reason for working qualitatively, lay with the personal significance of the area of spirituality. Belzen (1999) argues that the debate regarding the psychology of religion has been largely obscured by the personal beliefs of those conducting the research. He cites several examples of analysts who have contributed to the area, with findings that validate

their own orientation to religion. A review of the literature similarly yields, for example, papers that cite only studies that report that religious commitment has a positive impact within healthcare (e.g. Matthews, 1998), in spite of the contradictory body of research that has already been mentioned. The presentation of such articles therefore would again suggest that an argument is being promoted, that is consistent with the author's ideas. While it is clear that implicit assumptions will unavoidably affect psychological theorising, it is important to strive for a (religiously) neutral starting point (Belzen, 1999). Qualitative research attempts to manage the inherent values and biases that the analyst brings to the study, by a range of strategies for addressing reflexivity. Hence it was understood that a qualitative approach would allow the researcher to limit the impact of his values on the findings of this study. The procedures that were used to address reflexivity are discussed in more detail in the following chapter, where the values of the researcher are also presented, to provide transparency for the reader.

2. Method

2.1 Overview

This chapter contains an overview of qualitative research in general, a description of the specific procedure that was employed in this study, and an examination of the strategies that were used to enhance the quality of this piece of research. The field of qualitative research is focused on initially, and the methodology of grounded theory is introduced and summarised. The procedure that was used to recruit participants, and collect and analyse the data is subsequently described. Finally, the issues that relate to validity, reliability, generalisability and reflexivity are considered.

2.2 Qualitative research

The aim of social science research has been summarised as the production of descriptions that correspond to the social world in some controllable way (Perakyla, 1997). There has been a dramatic increase in use of qualitative methods to achieve this goal during the last five years (Elliott et al., 1999). Parker (1994) argues that the gradual embrace of qualitative research within psychology, is a response to the 'crisis' regarding methodology that surfaced towards the end of the 1960s. This 'crisis' was an expression of the awareness of the impossibilty of dealing with interpretation by attempting to suppress it; an awareness that challenged the dominant positivist conception of science (Parker, 1994). Qualitative methodologies were not developed as a response to the 'crisis' however. Many approaches actually already existed, but had been relegated within psychology as a consequence of advances in quantitative methods after World War II (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

There are different levels at which qualitative research may be understood and defined. For example it may be summarised as any research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical analysis or other means of quantification (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). It is clear however, that to understand qualitative research merely in terms of its relationship with numeric data, is to ignore the rather more profound issues that exist relating to epistemological considerations. As Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) highlight, the analysis

and interpretation of data is always conducted within a broader understanding of what constitutes legitimate inquiry. The choice between qualitative and quantitative research is not merely a technical matter therefore. The underlying assumptions about the structure of the world, and the role of science in describing that world, are highly significant and therefore require careful and critical examination.

Qualitative research is often differentiated from quantitative research, through reference to the apparently distinct epistemological positions that are generally understood to underpin the two approaches. Quantitative methodology is argued to subscribe to the positivist or experimental paradigm, while qualitative methodology is privileged within the interpretive or constructivist paradigm (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994). The former position assumes a realist framework of a world consisting of objectively defined facts (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992). The interpretive paradigm meanwhile challenges this approach to the philosophy of knowledge, by focusing on the particulars of human experience, and matters such as context that relativises knowledge (Elliott et al., 1999).

This format for distinguishing qualitative and quantitative approaches is somewhat crude however. Firstly, not all quantitative research assumes a positivist position (Parker, 1994). Furthermore, qualitative research is an inclusive and wide ranging term, which refers to a broad range of methodologies, procedures and philosophies (Holloway, 1997). Thus qualitative research may actually be conducted from a realist position, which assumes that there are underlying structures to be described, as well as from a constructivist position, which perceives science to create the world, as well as describe it (Parker, 1994). It is therefore not appropriate to understand qualitative research merely as a unitary paradigm. Reicher (2000) argues that where attempts are made to gather the different qualitative methods under a single philosophy of science, "there is a serious danger of papering over cracks that are nearer chasms" (p. 3).

In view of these complications, Silverman (1993) argues that it is unfortunate that qualitative and quantitative approaches have been defined on occasion as polar opposites. He emphasises that a researcher may need to combine both approaches at times, and that the choice of methodology essentially depends upon what one is trying to achieve. Both approaches will be more or less useful for particular research purposes, and therefore

should not be considered as valid in and of themselves (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992). Certainly as Woolgar (1996) emphasises, qualitative methods should not be regarded as a more reliable means of tapping into way things are.

Nevertheless there is a danger when considering the complexities of epistemological positions, of actually minimising the epistemological dimension (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992), and hence ignoring the positive contribution that the interpretive paradigm and qualitative research generally may make to the scientific process. One particular difficulty that qualitative research acknowledges, it is that there is a gap between an object of study and the way it is represented, and that interpretation necessarily acts to fill this gap (Parker, 1994). Thus it is accepted that researchers are not divorced from the phenomenon under study. Instead, the process of making sense of one's findings is understood as an interpretive practice that is both artful and political (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). All accounts, scientific or otherwise, are therefore bound to a particular perspective. This understanding emphasises that complete objectivity is not possible, although objectivity nevertheless remains a goal to strive for within qualitative research (Holloway, 1997). Woolgar (1996) argues that the evidence of this important interpretive aspect may be obscured by methods of quantification, which can "all too often fuel the fantasy of prediction and control" (Parker, 1994, p.3). Hence qualitative methods are valued in part, because of the manner in which they bring this issue of interpretation to the surface, and subsequently also attempt to manage it within the research process.

One method in which qualitative research attempts to manage the interpretive process, is through the use of reflexive procedures which cause the researcher to consider his or her own assumptions about the world and the area of investigation. In doing so, the researcher becomes more aware of the ways in which these underlying ideas may be impacting the research process. Such use of reflexivity has been argued to an overarching criterion for 'good' psychological research, which is also appropriate with quantitative methods (Stevenson and Cooper, 1997). Henwood and Pidgeon (1994) go further and suggest that science may only be warranted, if first its assumptions and processes are actually made publicly available. Certainly it is claimed within qualitative research, that by bracketing one's own values and existing theory, the researcher can represent participants' perspectives more adequately (Elliott et al., 1999). This use of reflexivity was thus an

important aspect of the current research process. The particular processes through which reflexivity was managed in this study are discussed in section 2.5.5, and the researcher's underlying perspective is made available to the reader in section 2.5.6.

The acknowledgement of the existence of the interpretive role however, lays qualitative research open to the accusation of solipsism, that is, that the account provided is merely that of the researcher (Schwandt, 1994). This criticism is countered through the presence of certain criteria, which allow the research to be tested empirically (Perakyla, 1997). Elliott et al. (1999) assert that qualitative research is actually able to reconcile relativism with objectivism, by taking factors that relativise the data (such as language and context) into account, while at the same time grounding understandings of the subject matter empirically. Charmaz (1995) records that grounded theory is one particular qualitative methodology that assumes an empirical enterprise. A strength of this method is that the data that is used to ground the analysis is presented in the findings, thus making it available for the reader to examine for him- or herself. This allows the reader to consider the fit between the data that is presented, and the claims that are made. Grounded theory questions tend to be oriented towards action and process (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), and therefore it was perceived to be an appropriate method for this present research, with its aim of investigating the processes through which spirituality is addressed in therapy. Hence the approach of grounded theory was chosen as the particular methodology for this present study.

2.3 Grounded theory

2.3.1 The history of grounded theory

The qualitative approach of grounded theory was introduced during the 1960s by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, as a method for developing theory from social research data. It was argued at the time by Glaser and Strauss (1967), that there was an overemphasis in the field of sociology on the verification of theory. Thus the method of grounded theory was described, in order to allow greater focus upon the generation of theory. The introduction of the approach has impacted the dimensions of research within sociology and related fields, including psychology. As Rennie (1998) suggests, grounded

theory was "something wonderful compared with what was customary research praxis in sociology. It turned method upside down: instead of using data to test theory, they were used to develop it" (p.114).

The process of research that was originally described, involved the systematic application of the method of comparative analysis as the major strategy (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss argued that the rigor of this approach provided the ingredients of a defence against the accusation that research is merely rhetoric, while actually encouraging the creativity required for generating theory. Subsequent texts that have been published by the two authors independently of each other (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), have highlighted discrepancies in their thinking about the precise nature of grounded theory analysis. Nevertheless, agreement has persisted between Glaser and Strauss regarding several features of the approach, including the process of comparative analysis, which is understood to be a necessary component of the method, in contributing to the objectivity of the emergent theory (Rennie, 1998).

2.3.2 Characteristics of grounded theory

The central component of comparative analysis allows the complexity of the data to be reduced to manageable levels. Rennie (1998) notes that each datum is compared to other data, and commonalities are grouped together at progressively higher levels of abstraction, with the objective of conceptualising the theory around a supreme or core category. Charmaz (1995) emphasises that through this method, the emergent theory is derived directly from the data, rather than preconceived concepts or hypotheses.

The strategy of comparative analysis was understood by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to be a process of induction; the researcher observes, infers and generalises, and thus moves from specific observations of particular cases, to abstract formulations (Dingwall et al., 1998). Thus it may be understood that the process of induction is another central characteristic of grounded theory. This procedure does not emphasise the testing of the emerging theory however, and grounded theory has been cricised for this as a result (Silverman, 1993). Nevertheless, a distinguishing characteristic of grounded theory is theoretical sampling

(Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This process involves testing for circumstances where the emerging theory does not hold, in order to check and refine the emerging conceptual categories. Thus it has been argued that grounded theory does include the element of testing or deduction (Dingwall et al., 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasise this aspect in their text outlining their understanding of the techniques of grounded theory, arguing that the approach involves the constant movement between the processes of induction and deduction. From their perspective therefore, deduction is regarded as a further characteristic of grounded theory. However, it should be noted that this specific area has been one of the points of disagreement between Glaser and Strauss. Glaser understands the method of grounded theory as validational rather than deductive (Rennie, 1998); thus he maintains that grounded theory is entirely inductive, with no interplay occurring with deduction (Corbin, 1998).

There are other characteristics of grounded theory that are significant features within the overall approach. Charmaz (1995) highlights that the researcher is simultaneously engaged in the data collection and data analysis phases of research. This parallel involvement allows the emerging categories to actually shape the procedures through which data is gathered, and hence the collection of general, unfocused data is avoided. Related to this aspect, is the notion of theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This refers to the capacity of the researcher to appreciate the pertinent features of the data; a capacity that develops as the study proceeds, and the researcher allows him- or herself to interact continually with the data. This capability is suggested to be fundamentally important, as it facilitates the creative aspect of the research process, which allows categories to be specified and developed. Another significant characteristic relates to the nature of the theory that is developed during the study. Glaser and Strauss (1967) highlight that the emergent integrated framework is an open-ended scheme, with room for further categories that may be generated at a later date. In this sense, grounded theory is concerned with putting another brick in the wall of knowledge, rather than creating an complete and independent theory (Dingwall et al., 1998).

Before describing the process of grounded theory within this particular study, it is important to emphasise a frequent criticism that has been levelled at the approach. This relates specifically to epistemological assumptions. Charmaz (1990) highlights that the

original method of Glaser and Strauss contained a positivist emphasis, implying that theoretical categories will reveal themselves, whilst the researcher remains passive. Charmaz (1990) asserts that this is inaccurate explanation of the procedure, and argues that researchers actually create an account of the data, rather that discovering order within it. This argument is consistent with the claims of the interpretive paradigm, in acknowledging the active contribution of the analyst in the research process. Others have therefore similarly pressed for such a constructivist revision of grounded theory, indicating that it more closely captures the creative and dynamic character of the method (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994). Interestingly, Rennie (1998) highlights that both Glaser and Strauss are also in tune with the challenge presented by these criticisms, and actually accept that grounded theory analysis reflects the perspective of the researcher. Hence it would appear that there is more consensus currently within the field regarding the epistemological position of grounded theory, than may have been assumed in the past.

2.4 Procedure

2.4.1 Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the study was sought from the Leicestershire Research Ethics Committee. The Research and Development Operational Group, which filters all research applications, decided that as the study did not involve client contact however, formal ethical approval from the Committee was not required. The Operational Group was therefore able to provide the approval that was needed for the study, which was granted on 13 August 1999. A copy of the letter providing confirmation of this decision may be found in Appendix 1.

2.4.2 Recruitment of participants

The broad aim of the research was to conduct an exploratory study of clinical psychologists' understanding of the concept of spirituality, and of the processes through which it is addressed within therapy. It was therefore believed that it was important for

participants to represent a range of psychological practice, in terms of theoretical orientation, specialty and extent of clinical experience. Within qualitative research however, sampling occurs on the basis of theoretical suppositions, rather than the statistical procedures of quantitative research (Silverman, 2000). Therefore the goal was not to choose a sample that was strictly representative of the broader population. Instead, a more theoretical approach to the recruitment of participants was employed, which involved the use of two specific strategies.

Firstly, an invitation to take part in the study was given at the area meeting of psychologists working within Leicestershire. Each individual who subsequently volunteered, was accepted as a participant. Silverman (2000) acknowledges that within qualitative research, cases are often chosen simply because they allow access to the relevant data, and it was understood that this meeting provided access to psychologists working from a broad range of psychological approaches.

The other strategy that was adopted, involved approaching individual psychologists directly and inviting them to participate. This method allowed theoretical sampling procedures to be utilised. The process of theoretical sampling is considered in more detail in section 2.4.10, with reference to the two distinct elements that are contained within it. Of significance to this section is the element that refers to the selection of a theoretically meaningful sample, which includes characteristics which help to refine and test the account that is being developed (Mason, 1996). Such a sample may be achieved, by using the concepts and categories that are specified from initial narratives, to guide the selection of further participants. Two participants were chosen in this study using this method, in the following ways. One concept that emerged at the initial stages of the analytic process, was that the emphasis upon spirituality within therapy would vary between specialties, with a greater focus being placed upon the area in the older adult specialty. Thus a participant was recruited who worked in this specialty, in order that this concept could be examined further and actually tested. A further category that emerged, was that of spirituality as an unfamiliar and unclear concept. Therefore a participant was recruited who had considered the topic in detail and had actually written about it, to allow this aspect of the developing account to be investigated and analysed further, with a psychologist who had a different background from the other participants.

Eight participants were recruited in total, which is consistent with the standards recommended by Turpin et al. (1997) for qualitative projects undertaken within the programme of Doctorate of Clinical Psychology. Demographic information regarding the participants is provided in Section 2.5.4.

2.4.3 Interview Guide

Holloway (1997) notes that within qualitative research, the interview questions are contained within a guide rather than a schedule, as the sequencing of questions depends on the process of the interview and the answers of each individual. The underlying goal when conducting qualitative interviews therefore, is to orchestrate an interaction that moves easily between topics and questions (Mason, 1996). It is important that the guide is developed at an appropriate level of specificity, in order to facilitate this process. The guide needs to be suitably detailed to remind the researcher about the issues that he or she is interested in (Mason, 1996), while at the same time providing enough flexibility for the participant to have a strong role in determining how the interview proceeds (Smith, 1995). A guide was therefore developed that consisted of several generally open questions, related to the topics that were perceived to be significant.

In order to select the topics for the interview, the researcher initially considered the three aims of the study (as described in the Introduction). Questions were subsequently devised around these three issues, that were perceived to be relevant to psychologists when considering spirituality. These questions were subsequently discussed within supervision and elaborated upon, until the guide was perceived to be appropriate for using within the first interview. The guide was further revised on several occasions as the study proceeded, according to principle of theoretical sampling. Glaser and Strauss (1967) define theoretical sampling as the process of jointly collecting and analysing data, and using the understanding gained to guide further data collection, in order to develop the theory. Thus after each interview was conducted, the procedure of analysing the data was started, in order that themes and categories could begin to be developed. These emerging categories were used to refine the guide, in an attempt to gather data in later interviews that were specifically related to these themes. In order to allow this process to be employed, and the data analysis

to occur simultaneously with the data collection, there was a suitable time delay between interviews.

Examples of the interview guides are included in the Appendices. A copy of the initial interview guide may be found in Appendix 2, and a copy of the final interview guide may be found in Appendix 3.

2.4.4 Interview Procedure

The interviews took place at a location that was convenient for the participants, which was generally the base from which they worked. Prior to the interview meeting, participants had been provided with a letter of invitation (Appendix 5), and an information sheet (Appendix 6) highlighting the rationale for the study. This information sheet and a summary of the interview guide (Appendix 4) were discussed before the commencement of the interview, to allow questions to be aired, and to provide orientation to the nature of the interview. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of data collected, and of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. This latter assurance is especially important within qualitative research, as the flexibility of the approach encourages interesting ideas to be followed in unexpected directions, and thus the researcher is not able to inform participants of the exact path of questioning, prior to the interview (Holloway, 1997). Agreement was gained for the interview to be recorded on audio tape, and a consent form was signed (Appendix 7).

King (1996) notes that a central issue when conducting research interviews is that of trust, and this was perceived to be particularly salient in this study, given the personal significance and sensitivity potentially associated with the subject of spirituality. The interview therefore commenced with questions relating to demographic information, to begin the process of establishing rapport, and to allow the participants to settle into their role as interviewee. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, as described by Smith (1995) and Mason (1996). The interview guide was used to direct the conversation towards the areas that had been highlighted as relevant, rather than dictating the interview process. Each interview did not include every item from the guide, and the questions were not asked in sequential

order. Instead, the researcher attempted to assess the relevance of each aspect of the interaction to the aims of the study and the emerging themes, and probed for more detail about areas that were conceptually rich. This allowed the participants to provide a fuller picture of issues of theoretical significance.

King (1996) and Barker, Pistrang and Elliott (1994) discuss appropriate interviewing styles for conducting qualitative research, with different conclusions. Barker et al. indicate that frequent paraphrasing may unduly lead the participant and bias the content of their utterances. King however suggests that paraphrasing is a helpful way of communicating empathic understanding, and argues that attempts to 'neutralise' the stimulus are artificial. In order to balance these two perspectives, the researcher did not refrain from paraphrasing the participants' ideas, but generally allowed a particular area to be elaborated on more fully, before engaging in this process. On occasions this reflection took the form of hypothesis-testing questions, with the researcher monitoring his understanding of the account with the participant. Both King and Barker et al. emphasise the importance of checking out the meanings of the data with participants, at certain stages during the interview.

Charmaz (1995) indicates the value of describing the context of research interviews, immediately after each interaction. Thus the perceptions of the researcher regarding the process and the content of the discourse, were written in the researcher's field journal following each interview.

2.4.5 Transcription

It has been suggested that the most important basic rule when conducting grounded theory is to study the emerging data, in order to become aware of implicit meanings (Charmaz, 1995). Charmaz highlights the importance of the analyst transcribing the interviews, to allow this process to begin. This guideline was therefore followed in this study, with the researcher transcribing each of the interviews himself.

The transcripts are included with this thesis as an addendum. In order to maintain the participants' anonymity, pseudonyms have been provided, and potentially identifying information has been altered. The transcription symbols that have been used to illustrate such features as pauses, were adapted from those which are common to conversation analytic research (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). A key to these symbols is provided at the end of each interview transcript.

2.4.6 Data Analysis

In order to conduct the data analysis, three different versions of grounded theory were referred to and drawn upon; Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original text, and the models proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (1995). Many of the core features of these frameworks are shared, although the actual procedures differ in emphasis, and are given different titles. The specific model that was followed during the analysis was that of Charmaz (1995), and thus particular terms such as 'focused coding' that are referred to in this section, relate to that approach.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that in order to build theory using grounded theory, it is necessary to maintain a balance between the attributes of creativity, rigour, persistence and theoretical sensitivity. Thus the aim throughout the analytic process was to operate in such a way, that allowed each of these skills to manifest themselves. Smith (1995) emphasises that meanings are not transparently available to the researcher, and may only be obtained through a sustained engagement with the narrative, and a process of interpretation. Greater familiarity with the text alone is not enough to conduct qualitative research however. The researcher also requires ways of turning the 'familiar' into the 'unfamiliar', to gain a different purchase on the processes at work (Rachel, 1996). If this process does not occur, the researcher will fail to observe much of what is within the data, because he or she may be immersed in the literature, and will necessarily hold preconceived ideas about the phenomena in question (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Thus the procedures that are described below, of constant comparison (line-by-line and focused coding), memo-writing and theoretical sampling, were applied rigorously yet flexibly throughout the study. The rigorous and persistance aspects were required to allow the full data set (each interview in

its entirety) to be coded, and the categories that were developed to be validated. The flexible and creative aspects were required to allow the researcher to generate new inferences and understandings, that is, to 'fracture' the data open.

2.4.7 Line-by-line coding

The data analysis began with line-by-line coding. This is the most detailed and generative form of coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), which allows the researcher to build the analysis from the ground up (Charmaz, 1995). Each line of data was considered in turn, and the phenomena present were conceptualised in specific terms. These conceptualisations were the individual codes, which were written directly onto the transcript. Aspects of the data that were perceived to refer to the same phenomenon, were coded using the same terms. The process of conceptualisation involved questioning in detail the process that was occurring, and comparing the data with the content of other codes.

A range of techniques were employed to allow this process of conceptualisation to occur, and to help the researcher steer away from standard ways of thinking. These techniques were described by Strauss and Corbin (1990), as methods for managing the 'mental paralysis' that may occur at this stage of the data analysis. One technique involved listing the range of meanings of words that appeared to be pertinent, to allow alternative understandings to be considered. Another strategy entailed imaging the opposite of a concept that was being described, to encourage greater insight into the characteristics of that concept.

As certain codes began to regularly reappear in the data, a greater emphasis was placed upon focused coding. The researcher repeatedly returned to conduct line-by-line coding during the analysis however, when concepts that were poorly developed were visited in the text. Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasise that the lines between each type of coding are artificial, and that it is appropriate to move freely between the different types of coding, as the researcher encounters concepts at different stages of integration.

An example of line-by-line coding, taken from one of the transcripts, may be found in Appendix 8.

2.4.8 Focused Coding

Focused coding was employed, to allow the data to be treated at a more conceptual and abstract level. During this stage, the codes that were understood as having overriding significance were used to develop categories (central processes that are perceived within the data). This process involved comparing the codes from the different stages of text of individual participants, and also comparing the codes from the different participants. The aim of this comparison was to develop the properties of the category; the characteristics, conditions and consequences relating to the category. The categories that were developed therefore, subsumed themes and patterns from several codes.

Charmaz (1995) emphasises the importance of identifying substantive processes as categories. The titles that were given to the categories were therefore generally 'active', to represent the processual nature of the way that participants addressed and understood spirituality. Category titles were taken directly from the participants' narratives, when a term was used that seemed to suitably capture the essence of the category. On occasions when such a term was not present, the title was derived by the author. The categories that were developed, were at a later stage of analysis compared with each other, and higher order categories specified. These 'main categories' were perceived to represent broader generic processes, which encompassed several of the more specific substantive processes, represented by the 'subcategories'. At the final stage of analysis, five 'core categories' were specified, each of which encompassed several of the 'main categories' at a higher level of abstraction, such that all of the 'main categories' were accounted for.

The process of focused coding allowed the researcher to sift more quickly through large amounts of data. Codes continued to be written directly onto the transcripts, but the codes were used to represent greater portions of the data, which were identified as properties of the emerging categories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) note that the development and linking of categories is a complex process, because several tasks are being performed

simultaneously; relationships between the categories and their properties are being validated, while the search for further properties continues, to allow the gaps within the category to be filled. To help the researcher manage the complexity of this procedure, memo writing was employed, which is discussed below.

An example of focused coding, taken from one of the transcripts, may be found in Appendix 9.

2.4.9 Memo-writing

Charmaz (1995) describes memo-writing as the intermediate step between coding and the first draft of the completed account of the data. It concerns initially exploring ideas about the categories, with the aim of gradually working towards being able to define the categories more fully. Thus Charmaz recommends that memos are regarded as preliminary, partial, and correctable. During this present study, memos were used to identify and describe the properties of categories, and also to search for underlying assumptions within the participants' accounts. The process of memo-writing took place in conjunction with data collection and coding, to allow the ideas generated by the memos to be considered in later interviews, and thus be developed and integrated further into the emerging account.

An example is provided below of a memo from this current study. As the researcher considered a specific category and its properties, he became aware of particular understanding that appeared to be implicit within the accounts. The category associated spirituality with values, and the examples that were provided by participants described spirituality in terms of socially positive values, for example caring. Such values were clearly therefore one of the properties of the category. No reference was made however to socially negative values, which the researcher concluded could also potentially be a property of this category, that associated spirituality with all values. Thus the researcher queried whether participants were actually implicitly associating spirituality with socially positive values, when describing the concept as values in general. Certainly it appeared that this was not a category that had been fully developed within the accounts.

In Brian's interview he talks about values:
#1019 - Everyone has values
#1021 - Spirituality is the expression of values
#1023 - Values steer people
So spirituality is associated with values; behaviour that stems from values.
But what values are spiritual then?
#951 - Brian suggests caring is one expression of spirituality
But what about other values about putting me first, sorting myself out, even being violent? Can these be spiritual? Or are only some values spiritual?

Extract from field journal, 2/2/00.

2.4.10 Theoretical Sampling

As has previously been noted, theoretical sampling is the process of simultaneously collecting, coding and analysing data, in order to use the understanding gained to guide further data collection, and develop the theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). There are essentially two distinct aspects to this process. Firstly, theoretical sampling may refer to the strategy of selecting participants on the basis of the theoretical account that is emerging. This idea was considered in section 2.4.2. Alternatively, theoretical sampling may refer to the process of focusing upon emerging themes, during the later stages of data collection. This aspect was emphasised in section 2.4.3, and is explored again here.

Charmaz (1995) emphasises that decisions regarding data collection may stem directly from memo-writing, as this highlights the discrepancies and gaps in the account. An example of the process of theoretical sampling from the current study, relates to the memo described in the previous section. A participant in a later interview presented the same conceptualisation of spirituality as previous participants had suggested, relating the concept to individual values. As the researcher was by this stage aware of the implications of this understanding of spirituality, he was able to use this opportunity to question the values that would be included within this definition, to examine whether socially negative values were referred to. Thus in essence he was able to query about the specific properties of this category. This led the participant to clarify his definition, and explicitly associate spirituality with socially positive values. This portion of the interview is highlighted below.

> Clive: ...... *it's a value system. It's a, (.) it's something that says, there's*
> *more to life, than this. ......*
> Jon: *Erm, (.) what type of value systems could it be? (.) I-, i-, i-, and,*
> *and, what, maybe would it, not be, or, or could it be, all value*
> *systems?*
> Clive: *(.) That's the sixty-four thousand dollar question, isn't it. ... I guess*
> *what, I know what I end up with myself, is that sort of, (.) erm, I*
> *think it was, it was from Kant, that it came originally, something*
> *about, do unto others, as you would, do unto you, and it's,*
> *something about, a mutual respect, for people,*

Interview 8 : 167, 554-571

The process of theoretical sampling leads to the position of saturation; that is, when no additional data may be found for developing the categories, and similar instances are seen repeatedly (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Saturation was not fully achieved within this study, as a result of the time constraints that existed, and the broad subject area that was addressed. Nevertheless, it is perceived that the account that has been developed is of a suitable level of conceptual density and richness, especially given the emerging nature of the topic area.

2.5 Ensuring the quality of qualitative research

Morse (1997) highlights that there is generally a lack of discussion on how to recognise the quality of qualitative work. This has the potential to lead to some unfortunate consequences. For example, it has been suggested that qualitative research is at times inappropriately evaluated using the standards of quantitative research, and also that the number of poorly executed qualitative projects is increasing (Elliott et al., 1999). In order to counter these problems, Elliott et al. provided a set of guidelines for conducting and reviewing qualitative research. Key features of these guidelines were considered during the process of this research, in conjunction with other available criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992; Silverman, 2000; Perakyla, 1997).

It is recognised that even within qualitative research, where the interpretive paradigm is dominant, that validity and reliability are significant considerations. "Short of reliable methods and valid conclusions, research descends into a bedlam where the battles that are

won are by those who shout the loudest" (Silverman, 2000, p.175). However, it is now generally accepted that researchers cannot be completely objective (Holloway, 1997), as the interpretive paradigm challenges the assumption that it is possible to achieve independence between the knower and the known, which is the classical norm of objectivity (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992). This understanding has implications for the consideration of that which validity and reliability constitute. As the research methodology shifts in approach towards methods that privilege the interpretive paradigm, concerns about validity and reliability adopt different forms (Perakyla, 1997). Thus there are particular issues regarding validity and reliability within qualitative research, and within grounded theory in particular, that are quite separate from the issues that exist in quantitative research. These are considered in turn below.

2.5.1 Validity

There are a range of issues that are discussed in the literature, that are argued to have relevance to the notion of validity within qualitative research. Several of these are discussed below. The strategies of constant comparative method and comprehensive data treatment are highlighted by Silverman (2000), the method of transparency of analytic claims is suggested by Perakyla (1997), and the method of deviant-case analysis is indicated by both Silverman (2000) and Perakyla (1997). The methods of triangulation and respondent validation have been commonly used by some researchers to promote validity within qualitative research, but have recently been suggested to be less than satisfactory approaches (Silverman, 2000). Thus these methods were not employed within this study.

Constant comparative method

This method has been emphasised as the core strategy of grounded theory, thus it was employed extensively throughout this research project. The specific procedures that utilised this method were described in detail in sections 2.4.7 and 2.4.8, and thus will not be repeated here. It should merely be emphasised that the breadth of this method ranged from comparing individual slices of data at the start of the analytic process, to comparing higher order categories at the end of the analytic process. The implications of this method were

that the analysis remained close to the meaning of the text, enhancing the validity of the account that was developed (Rennie, 2000).

Comprehensive data treatment

Silverman (2000) notes that within qualitative research, each aspect of relevant data needs to be included within the analysis. He comments that this comprehensiveness actually goes beyond that which is demanded by many quantitative methods. Several strategies were employed, in an attempt to achieve this goal. Firstly, each of the interviews were transcribed in full. All sections of the narratives were subsequently coded, either using line-by-line or focused coding, with the exception of the account of demographic information that was the initial part of each interview. The information from this section has been used to situate the sample instead (see section 2.5.4). The coding of the interviews was not merely a linear procedure however. As categories were developed in later transcripts, it was necessary to revisit the earlier interviews, to examine the data there in light of these themes. Thus some aspects of the data were examined on several occasions.

The transparency of analytic claims

Perakyla (1997) emphasises the relevance of this method to another qualitative approach, that of conversation analytic research, but it may be argued also to be relevant to grounded theory analysis. The method involves exhibiting apparent validity, such that a reader is convinced that the findings are transparently true. Perakyla (1997) highlights that this process involves a paradox, between the complexity of method and the simplicity of findings.

This notion of transparency may be regarded as containing the issues of coherence and grounding in examples, emphasised by Elliott et al. (1999). This method of demonstrating validity will therefore be described with reference to these two aspects. Coherence refers to representing the findings in a way that emphasises integration. Attempts have been made to achieve this, predominantly though two procedures. Firstly a consistent hierarchical structure has been maintained throughout the findings, which organises the account around core categories. The lower order 'subcategories', that were the initial categories to be developed through focused coding and memo-writing, are subsumed beneath a smaller number of higher order 'main categories'. These 'main categories' are in turn encompassed

within 'core categories', of which there are five in total. The second procedure demonstrating coherence refers to the use of figures, which are presented within the findings, to depict the logical hierarchical relationships between core categories, main categories and subcategories. Five of these diagrams are presented in total; one for each of the core categories.

Grounding in examples refers to providing examples of the data, to allow the reader to evaluate the fit between the data and the researcher's understanding of them. Thus throughout the findings, excerpts from the narratives are provided to illustrate the properties of the categories and subcategories, and to substantiate each analytic claim that is made.

Deviant-case analysis

This method may be understood as one aspect of comprehensive data treatment, as that process implies actively identifying and managing deviant cases (Silverman, 2000). The term deviant case refers to those aspects of the data where 'things go differently' (Perakyla, 1997), that is, the data does fit with the emerging categories. Such cases are regarded as a resource within grounded theory, as they provide the opportunity for the richness of the developing theory to be further refined and enhanced. Thus within this current study, the researcher attempted to actively seek out deviant cases, and integrate them into the account of the data.

2.5.2 Reliability

Perakyla (1997) emphasises that checking reliability is related to assuring the quality and accessibility of the 'raw material' that the researcher is using. In the method of grounded theory, the 'raw material' relates to the tape recordings and the transcripts of the interviews. Perakyla (1997) highlights that such materials have particular advantages over materials used in other areas of qualitative research (such as field notes), as they provide highly detailed and publicly accessible representations of social interaction. In order therefore to allow the reader access to the transcripts within this study, they have been included as an addendum to the thesis.

A further issue relates to the inclusiveness of that which is recorded. Perakyla (1997) accords that a large database has key advantages, as the researcher is not aware of the phenomenon that he or she will focus on, at the outset of the research. This has specific implications for the transcription of interviews. For example, Silverman (2000) notes that the reliability of the interpretation of transcripts may be seriously weakened by a failure to transcribe apparently trivial, yet often crucial, pauses and overlaps. It was identified, that several participants did frequently pause, both silently and verbally (for example 'erm') during the interviews in this study. It was hypothesised that the reported unfamiliarity with the topic area of spirituality contributed to this hesitancy. These aspects of the discourse were thus regarded as potentially significant features of the data, and were included in the verbatim transcriptions. To maintain consistency, and to allow the reader to observe this hesitancy for him- or herself, these aspects are also included in the excerpts of the narratives that are presented in the findings.

2.5.3 Generalisability

The issue of generalisability has been widely debated within the field of qualitative research, and it may be argued that two contrasting positions exist. The first perspective argues for the notion of representative credibility (Morse, 1997). From this standpoint, theoretical claims should only be made that are consistent with the manner the phenomenon under study was sampled. The second perspective asserts that qualitative researchers ought not to be satisfied with limiting their findings to the empirical parameters of their study, but should argue for explanations that are generalisable in some way (Mason, 1996). Brown (1998) claims that the understanding that data from individuals are less general than group data is actually a misconception. He contends that the scientific method is not well understood in psychology, and that data from individuals actually allow one to generalise to other individuals, in way that is not possible with group data.

Given the debate surrounding this issue, it was decided that it was important to identify the participants' clinical and theoretical backgrounds. Using even the more conservative notion of representative credibility described above, this would allow inferences to be extended to psychologists working from broadly similar standpoints. Furthermore, Elliott et al. (1999)

emphasise within their guidelines, that it is good practice to situate the sample by describing the research participants.

2.5.4 Participants

Eight qualified clinical psychologists (four male, four female) participated in the study. All were employed within the National Health Service. The specialties in which the participants operated were adult mental health (n=3), child and adolescence (n=2), older adult (n=1), psychosocial rehabilitation (n=1) and drugs and alcohol (n=1). The length of time practising as a qualified psychologist ranged from 3 months to 24 years (mean of 11.75 years). The theoretical orientations described were eclectic / integrated (n=2), cognitive-behavioural (n=2), personal construct (n=2), systemic (n=1) and community psychology (n=1). There was a broad range of spiritual beliefs and values that participants ascribed to. Some participants described beliefs in transcendent forces, while others reported an atheist position. Each of those participants who aligned themselves with a specific religious framework, commented that they did not fully practise that religion. Other participants emphasised that their spiritual values related to ideas that were distinct from religious notions.

2.5.5 Reflexivity

The significance of reflexivity, as a criterion for 'good' psychological research within both qualitative and quantitative traditions, has already been highlighted in this chapter. Furthermore it was argued in the Introduction, that there is a particular need for the researcher to address reflexivity and to communicate this process with the reader, within the area of spirituality. This is because of claims, that the debate regarding the psychology of religion has been largely obscured by the personal beliefs of those conducting the research (Belzen, 1999).

In order to acknowledge and manage the impact of the researcher's values and assumptions within this present study, two broad procedures were employed. Firstly, a 'reflexive

journal' was maintained throughout the research process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Within this study diary the researcher regularly noted a broad range of observations, including his perceptions of the interviews, the potential role of his values in the data analysis, and personal considerations of the data. Examples from this journal are provided below, and hypothesises are made about the impact that it had upon the study. The other strategy adopted was that of peer support. This allowed the researcher to discuss his experience of the research process, and provided insight into others' ideas of the ways in which one's perspective may impact findings.

2.5.6 Owning one's perspective

The specification of the researcher's perspective, is listed by Elliott et al. (1999) as an important guideline to follow, when conducting qualitative research. They emphasise that it allows the reader to interpret the researcher's understanding of the data, and to consider alternative positions. The researcher in this study held Christian beliefs, and his theoretical position was interpretive phenomenological. These perspectives had particular influences upon the interpretation of the data, and examples of these effects are discussed in turn below.

Through documenting his perspectives of each interview in the reflexive journal, and reflecting back on these in due course, the researcher became aware of the potential for his view of the participant's account to be influenced by the attitude that the participant held towards religion. Following interviews where the participant inadvertently reported ideas that conflicted with the researcher's own beliefs for example, the researcher recognised that he tended to adopt a more critical attitude towards aspects of that participant's account. This process is captured in the passage below. The researcher was aware however, that there were other additional factors that influenced his attitude to the account, such as the interest shown by the participant towards the interview. Thus following one interview, where a more negative perspective towards religion was described within a very engaging narrative, the researcher noted that he empathised with the participant's view. Through becoming aware of the potential for these effects and documenting them, the researcher was able to limit the impact of unconscious biases towards participants' narratives.

> *Realise from transcribing X's interview, how much is in there; really interesting examples, clearly thought a lot about the subject etc. Yet when I came out of the interview, I noted down that it seemed as if it was an attempt to be too polished; he seemed less honest than others, and I was more critical of it. What was that about? Because he was dismissive of the idea of God - which left me feeling defensive? Or was it a combination of this and the other stuff as well, like him having nothing additional to say at the end, so he seemed not interested; also we kept being interrupted during the interview, so it didn't seem that important; (no drink too?)*

Extract from reflexive journal, date withheld

The interpretive phenomenological approach has been summarised by Smith (1995) as a 'middle position', between the extremes of realism and symbolic interactionism. Thus an assumption is made, that there is a relationship between the participant's narrative, and the beliefs or constructs that he or she may be said to hold. Meanwhile it is also accepted that meanings are negotiated within a social context. This latter understanding, that a narrative is co-constructed by the interviewee and the interviewer, led the researcher to consider the extent of his impact upon the participant's account. This process is highlighted below in an another excerpt from the researcher's reflexive journal. Mason (1996) notes that it is important not to underestimate the challenge of analysing one's role within the research process, and certainly it was not possible to delineate the specific contribution that the researcher had made. Nevertheless, this awareness of the wider influence of the researcher, facilitated a determination to consider and also manage this process whenever possible; for example through engaging fully during the data analysis stage, with the procedures that have been described for enhancing the validity and reliability of findings.

> *I've noticed with Peter's interview, that at the beginning he was unsure about the word 'practice', and questioned it several times - yet by the end he described 'religious practice' as being one of the two elements behind spirituality. Had I therefore encouraged that distinction by probing about religion, about practice etc? Helped him / led him to conclude that religion was actually an individual component of spirituality? Or did this just reflect his own developments in thinking about spirituality? How much of me is in there??*

Extract from reflexive journal, 8/2/00.

3. Results

3.1 Overview

This chapter contains an account of the data. As was highlighted within the Method, there were five core categories developed through the process of data analysis. These core categories represent the five central phenomenon that were specified from the data, and they organise the account that follows. A descriptive narrative is provided for each of the core categories, termed a 'story' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Thus this chapter comprises five stories in total, which are presented in turn.

The title of each of the stories is the core category. This is initially introduced, with reference to the main categories that exist beneath the core category. The main categories represent the generic processes that were developed from the data, which were compared at high level of abstraction, in order to specify the core category. Following the description of the core category, the first of the main categories is presented and described. This is followed by the presentation and description of the first of the subcategories. (Stories 4 and 5 do not contain subcategories. They are briefer accounts, that consist merely of a core category and main categories.) The subcategories represent the more specific substantive processes, that are encompassed beneath the broader generic processes, represented by the main categories. Each of the subcategories are presented in turn, and subsequently the next main category is presented. This process is continued, until the story is completed.

The presentation of both the main categories and the subcategories, consists of a description of the properties of the category (or process) in question. These properties are the characteristics of the process, the conditions that give rise to that process, and/or the consequences of that process. All of the claims that are made regarding these properties, are substantiated by excerpts from the participants' narratives.

The location of each excerpt in the addendum containing the interview transcripts is provided, through reference to the page and line numbers. The symbol '......' is used, to represent the removal of a portion of the participant's account from the excerpt. This has occurred on occasion, in order that the participant's ideas may be presented more

concisely. The shortened version of this symbol ('...') is used to represent the omission of a minimal encourager by the researcher (e.g. 'Right').

To promote clarity throughout this chapter, the different category levels are written using different formats. For example:

Core category - *__SPIRITUALITY AS A REMOTE CONCEPT__*
Main category - *FEELING UNCLEAR ABOUT SPIRITUALITY*
Subcategory   - **Perceiving several definitions**

A figure is also provided with each story, to illustrate the hierarchical relations between the core category, main categories and subcategories.

There were three aims to this study presented in the Introduction, regarding the three areas that were to be investigated. These were clinical psychologists' understanding of the concept of spirituality, their attitudes towards the concept of spirituality, and their understanding of the way spirituality is addressed in therapy. Silverman (1993) notes that in qualitative studies, the research may actually adopt a different direction as it proceeds, as the researcher becomes aware of other issues that are conceptually relevant. This process occurred to a certain extent within this study, which contributed to the development of five stories. The focus of the stories may be summarised as follows:

Story	Core Category	Focus
1	Spirituality as a remote concept	Participants' relationship to the concept of spirituality
2	Having a sense of perspective	Participants' understanding of the concept of spirituality
3	Working consistently with beliefs	The processes for addressing spiritual beliefs in therapy
4	Focusing upon the sense of meaning	The role of the client's sense of meaning in therapy
5	Perspective impacting therapy	The impact of the participants' perspective of spirituality on therapy

3.2 *SPIRITUALITY AS A REMOTE CONCEPT*

This story focuses upon participants' accounts of their relationship to the concept of spirituality. From the descriptions of the contact and understanding that respondents had towards the term, '*SPIRITUALITY AS A REMOTE CONCEPT*' was developed as the core category. There are three main categories subsumed within this higher order category. These relate to the particular modes in which spirituality was understood to be remote. Figure 1 illustrates diagrammatically the relationships between the core category, the main categories and the subcategories.

The first main category described is '*FEELING UNCLEAR ABOUT SPIRITUALITY*'. This category emphasises the difficulty that participants reported in coherently understanding the concept of spirituality. It was suggested that there were different definitions that could be applied to the term, and that this ambiguity created a sense of confusion regarding the meaning of spirituality.

> *- I think as well, erm for me, spirituality's tied very much up with, religion, ... Erm, and that might not necessari-, that doesn't have to be the case, but that, that's sort of the way it is, that's the way I, sort of see it. So that's a, I suppose that's, and I suppose the nature of sort of, spirituality as well's felt quite, it's felt quite nebulous, (Claire: 135, 1164-1170)*

The second main category presented is '*THE NEGLECT OF SPIRITUALITY*'. It was asserted that spirituality is rarely a topic for discussion within the profession of psychology, and that the absence of debate extends to the arena of clinical training. The final main category is '*FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE WITH DISCUSSING SPIRITUALITY*'. This category refers to the sensitive nature of the topic of spirituality, and the embarrassment that was perceived to surround consideration of it.

> *-it's [spirituality] not something, that gets talked about, very much. ... And, if it does, people get very embarrassed, (Clive: 176, 1047-1049)*

Figure 1
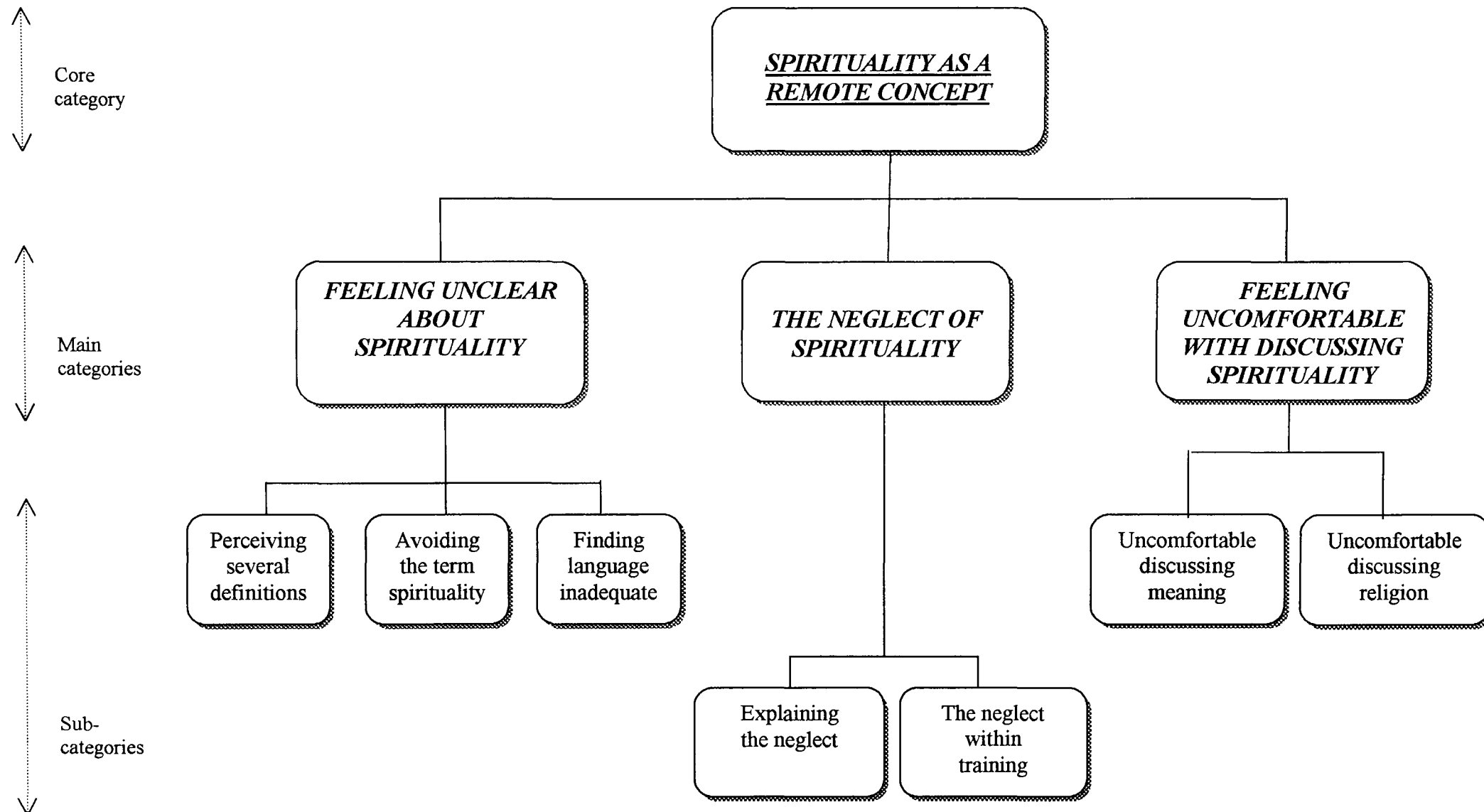
3.2.1 *FEELING UNCLEAR ABOUT SPIRITUALITY*

Many participants described feeling confused or uncertain about that which the concept of spirituality actually referred to. One particular difficulty for some of the participants was considering the relationship between religion and spirituality, and questioning whether spirituality equates to religion or not.

> *- but spirituality what does it mean, yeah, what does it, I've not got, I was thinking, was it religion, or, sort of, ... I guess I'm not clear about it. (Kamini: 22, 1165-1168)*

Some of the participants who reported this confusion, emphasised that they had not considered the issue in great detail.

> *- when you ask me, "How do you see spirituality?" ... I must say I was bit stumped but, that had nothing to do with the question, it's more to do with, me, sort of trying to, because it's something I never gave thought about. (Kamini: 21, 1146-1150)*

Another participant however highlighted that the uncertainty he experienced regarding this question, was in spite of the large amount of time that he had spent reflecting on the phenomenon.

> *- where I get confused I suppose, is about, is, spirituality, I'm, I'm still confused, after twenty years of, trying, ... Can you be spiritual, and not religious? ... Because the two are often, (.) used, as if, to believe in the spiritual, means, to believe, in some sort of religious spirit at work, (Clive: 160, 202-208)*

Some participants described entering the research interview feeling uncertain about the concept of spirituality. This may have been despite attempts to consider the area prior to the discussion.

> *- I've known, that the interview was coming up and, ... Often I'd find myself, driving to work thinking, "he's going to be asking me about spirituality. What, what, what would I think about spirituality?" And I just would end up getting swamped. (Susan: 35, 621-626)*

Another perspective was of respondents becoming aware of their difficulty in understanding and articulating spirituality, as they attempted to describe the phenomenon.

> *- this interview I think has, ... in oth-, many areas I think kind of forced me to try and tighten up my thinking about what I mean by spirituality, and I think that, it's made me aware of, perhaps how incoherent my thinking about what spirituality is, (Harvey: 156, 1111-1114)*

A less common perspective, was that of finding the topic straightforward and relatively easy to discuss. One participant suggested that this was related to the way he had developed his thinking of the issues that he talked about prior to the interview. This may be regarded as a deviant case.

> *- it was quite easy to talk, it was, I mean the, I, I'd formulated some of these ideas anyway, as you, as you, probably, ... Probably know. (Brian: 70, 1903-1906)*

3.2.1.1 Perceiving several definitions

A theme that emerged from the narratives, was that the term spirituality has a range of meanings or definitions, that are used to pertain to different notions in different contexts. This was highlighted as creating difficulty in coherently grasping the meaning of the concept.

> *- I kept meeting it in all sorts of contexts, and it felt really elusive, and I think it's probably like the, the word de-, depression. It can be used, at different levels, and, you know with, with slightly different, sets of characteristics or meanings attached, (Helen: 92, 81-84)*

It was emphasised that the way in which spirituality is conceptualised, would vary between individuals.

> *- It's a difficult topic ...... just by its very nature it, you, for every individual they might have their own definition of it, (Peter: 89, 946-957)*

The narratives also illustrated that individual participants used the term spirituality to refer to a range of phenomena in their own accounts. When originally discussing their construct of the spiritual, some respondents provided a definition that was inconsistent with the form they used to understand the term at later stages in the research interview. Thus it appeared that there were a range of conceptualisations available, which some participants moved freely between.

> *- [to be spiritual means] to have a belief, that, you're not, this isn't all there is. ... Erm, that, either it could be that you're here for a reason, or, it could be that, there's something else, to move on to. (Claire: 115, 98-101)*

> *- I suppose I, I'm using spiritual, to equate with very much thinking, he was a very deep thinking, sort of, man. ...... he struck me as being spiritual but I suppose he struck me as being, erm, deep thinking maybe (Claire: 125, 642-653)*

One method that was used to attempt to reconcile this confusion, was to separate spirituality into two distinct areas. On one side spirituality was associated with religion, and on the other side, spirituality was understood as referring to aspects of life in general, not in any way related to a god. For one participant, this non-religious aspect was a spirit within the person.

> *- I'm almost arguing for, spiritual, relig-, is like, conservatism with a big 'c' and a small 'c', there's, (.) a small 's' and a big 's', that there's, spiritual, as in, (.) I think, religion, but, ... And there's, small 's', which is about life, or, ... A spirit within you, I suppose. (Clive: 185, 1560-1566)*

3.2.1.2 Avoiding the term spirituality

Participants reported a tendency not to use the term spirituality. One reason cited for this was the different meanings that are attached to the concept. It was felt that this ambiguity could potentially cause confusion in certain contexts, if the specific meaning was not clarified. Hence it was suggested that the word would actually be avoided, unless the individual was aware that those he was talking to shared the same understanding of the term.

> *- sometimes I think that, spirituality as a word, isn't, enough, to communicate it, because of the different meanings, that other people would, have, of what it is (Harvey: 143, 389-391)*

> *- if I'm aware that, there's a, more of a match, in their understanding, then I can start throwing around the term spirituality. ... But if say, (.) I don't know, m-, my parents are, in the kind of, religious spiritual school, ... And their idea of spirituality, i-, is connected with religion and god. ... Err, and, so if I start to talk about being spiritual, (.) to them, I'd have, I'd have to be careful. I'd have to clarify, exactly what I meant. So it's perhaps not so useful, to use the term in that situation. (Harvey: 143, 422-432)*

Another reason suggested for not using the term spirituality, was that participants felt that they would naturally use other words to describe and refer to the phenomenon that they perceived to be spirituality.

> *- I'd probably call it other things, I probably wouldn't, if I'm thinking about it I would never call it spirituality or, (.) but, I think it is spirituality. That's just not a word I would use, easily (Susan: 26, 140-143)*

Some participants were able to identify specific words that they would use in place of spirituality.

> *- my self awareness, self awareness, another word that I might use, er, in exchange for spirituality, (Harvey: 143, 401-402)*

A further reason that was given for this tendency to avoid using the term spirituality, was the perception that phrases typically associated with spirituality, and the concept of spirituality itself, had religious connotations. It was emphasised that this association with religion, may lead to individuals incorrectly perceiving that spirituality has no relevance to their lives.

> *- if you don't have a strong relig-, religious conviction in a traditional sense, then it's a difficult, subject, to talk about. Not, in that it's, emotionally or psychologically difficult. It's just difficult to find the words, because all the words that you have I think are couched in, religious terms. ... So I guess, there might be a danger when talking about spirituality, one might say, "no, it's not part of my life at the moment", but I think it is a part of most people's lives, but they call it something else. (Susan: 34, 583-591)*

3.2.1.3 Finding language inadequate

A further aspect of the difficulty with comprehending the concept, related to the language that was available to participants to express their ideas. Some respondents reported being unable to find appropriate words to represent their intended message regarding spirituality. It was indicated therefore, that participants were having to use words that they perceived to be somewhat inadequate.

> *- I think that there are forces, forces is quite a strong word, erm ...*
> *(.) But I think that's, that's probably the only word I have to express it, that*
> *we can tap into, that we can be part of, erm. (Helen: 96, 292-296)*

It was further noted that within formal discussion of spirituality in journal articles, a similar problem had been alluded to.

> *- a paper from a, I think it was the Royal Journal of Medicine,*
> *about spiritual healing and, ... And physical healing, and so on. ...... the*
> *idea that there's some, energy, within, that we're not, energy's the only*
> *word that I think these articles were able to come up with but, ... For, be-,*
> *want of a better word that there's some-, something out there, an energy,*
> *(Harvey: 154, 1030-1040)*

Another difficulty that respondents reported with a certain amount of frustration, was that they were having to resort to using clichés to express their ideas.

> *- it's more to do with the sort of connectedness with, and it's the,*
> *the problem is when you start to talk about this, you end up with clichés.*
> *(Susan: 26, 124-126)*

Different strategies were used to navigate the difficulties related to limitations of language. One was to actually describe the context of a particular episode, when the participant felt he was acting in a spiritual way, to illustrate this process.

> *- I suppose it's the case that I haven't got, always got the words to*
> *describe, what I want, ... sometimes it's more useful to, (.) to describe*
> *the, you know the context, of, of what, an event was, (Harvey: 142, 388-*
> *394)*

An alternative method was to provide a parallel example, to guide the interviewer towards the idea.

> *- I struggle to put it into words, but it's almost like, (.) well, when you see an old friend, you, and you're both happy to see each other, there's a feeling of joy, ... And you can readily identify that. You, you, you, you can label that. ... Erm, (.) there is a similar level of some sort of feeling, I think, and I don't know what to label it as, ... In a therapeutic exchange, (Helen: 97, 345-355)*

3.2.2 THE NEGLECT OF SPIRITUALITY

It was reported that there was not a great deal of discussion regarding spirituality within the field of psychology. Several participants emphasised not having discussed spirituality on any occasion within the professional context.

> *- it's [spirituality] something that's never, ever, been addressed, sort of with me and I wouldn't, I haven't brought it up with anyone else, and probably wouldn't. (Claire: 117, 212-214)*

It was also suggested, that the lack of discussion extended to more formal discourse in journals. One participant asserted that this was despite the frequency with which spirituality was evident in therapy.

> *- there isn't a lot of talk about it [spirituality] formally in kind of texts or journal articles but ... In actual clinical practice, it crops up quite a lot of the time. (Peter: 78, 373-376)*

Some respondents identified particular contexts, where they believed it was more likely that spirituality would be referred to. These included special interest groups, for example those focused on cultural issues. One participant perceived greater freedom at such groups to discuss religion or spirituality, in relation at least to particular cases, and the difficulties being experienced with that. However, it was qualified that such debate would not specifically use or refer to the term of spirituality.

> *- I do speak about it, perhaps more at special interest groups like, race and cultural special interest group might, erm, (.) it seems more open there to talk about, a particular client that you're having difficulty with and*

could, spirituality or religion or, cultural, issues be being neglected or, needed to be addressed, in that sort of forum. ... So it's like a case presentation where, questions about it might come up. ... Erm, so say I, I sort of, I do sort of speak about it, but not in terms of spirituality. (Claire: 118, 274-283)

Another context that was perceived to be associated with more frequent debate, was the religious dimension of spirituality. It was highlighted within the subcategory '**Perceiving several definitions**', that spirituality was separated into two entities by some respondents. Using this system of conceptualisation, it was suggested that the religious arena of particular beliefs and practice was a more common focus of discussion and consideration. The alternative arena of a sense of meaning or sense of self, was felt to be less openly attended to.

- there's two elements to it [spirituality]. One is about the, the religious, practice, ... Which there is a lot more about and we have to be aware of, er, different religious traditions and (part of it), but there's, there's a broader as well about, erm, meaning if you like, ... And err, a person's sense of self. ...... Erm, that isn't, so much talked about. (Peter: 89, 971-986)

3.2.2.1 Explaining the neglect

A range of explanations were provided, for the lack of reference to spirituality within psychological debate. One suggestion focused on the manner in which the task of therapy is conceptualised. It was asserted that clinical practice may be understood as providing clients with some form of help. It was emphasised that this perspective does not lend itself to a focus on the framework of spirituality. Instead it may suggest, at a superficial level at least, that spirituality is largely irrelevant within this process.

- the focus of therapy is about err, err, prescribed erm, approaches, or practice, you know, and, which you implement or, intervene with, ... And the words like intervention, therapy, connote, something being given, and accepted, erm, and the kind of spiritual context, er, superficially doesn't appear to have much relevance to that. (Peter: 77, 310-316)

One participant indicated that the dominant position held by this perspective of therapy as treatment, would prevent him from sharing his ideas about the spiritual elements of therapy.

> *- every study of therapy, I think always, without exception, what's the critical thing? The relationship. ... And I think it's a spiritual, relationship, if, you allow me, but I wouldn't say that, outside, there, ... Err, because that's not the language, that one's allowed, to use in the health service. ... Erm, (.) cos we're, treating, ... And making them better. (Clive: 177, 1144-1155)*

A separate concern, was that spiritual beliefs were neglected within therapy. One participant postulated that this occurred as a result of the understanding that this was a difficult area, and that beliefs were neither inherently positive or negative. From this perspective, it may be concluded by the therapist that he or she is not justified in inquiring about the beliefs. They may further be perceived as irrelevant to the process of therapy.

> *- I think we don't pay that much attention to, people's sort of cultural or, or spiritual beliefs I suppose. ... Erm, (.) I suppose because, (.) it's quite a, (.) we don't, well it's quite a, it's quite a difficult area. You know, we don't, feel that we, you know, we don't have any right to, it's just that's someone's belief, and it's, neither right nor wrong and, might not be of any interest to us, and I think, I think so there's that sort of, we just sort of think well it's got, nothing to do with us. (Claire: 131, 972-979)*

3.2.2.2 The neglect within training

A theme that evolved from some transcripts, was the absence of the concept of spirituality within clinical psychology training. One participant suggested that within her experience, the topic had not actually been considered as a potential area to be covered.

> *- my understanding, certainly having gone through training and, and working now is that, erm, it's [spirituality] not, something that's addressed, and it's not something that people, wish to address, {laughs} or really have even, thought about wanting to address. (Claire: 117, 199-203)*

Another respondent described the impact of encountering ideas about spirituality shortly after completing training, and finding it difficult to integrate these into the information he

had received about clinical work. He did not elaborate in any detail however about the concepts, which were reported to be shocking, yet enlightening.

> *- it ['If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him' by Sheldon Kopp] had quite a significant, impact on, how I thought about spirituality, ... at the time that I read that book I think it was kind of, quite shocking, (.) because I was fairly, fresh, off the X course, and they never mentioned any of that. {laughs} And err, you know that, it didn't, I don't, working out how this quite, how this fitted in with err, you know, cognitive-behaviour therapy was quite a struggle but, ... Interesting and enlightening. (Harvey: 154, 1013-1023)*

A further suggestion, was that the absence of philosophy on the clinical course, represented a definite gap in training.

> *- I think philosophy, was something that was very missing, from our training course. ... And it was a real, a real lack. (Helen: 112, 1161-1164)*

It was suggested that gathering information about clients' religious beliefs is one aspect of assessment that ought to be included as an area for training. This was highlighted, because of the significance the respondent attached to obtaining this data about religious background.

> *- It's finding out, particularly about religious beliefs, yes, it's very important to find out about those. ... And of course, that's, that's, I suppose that's part of training as well. (Peter: 81, 533-536)*

3.2.3 *FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE WITH DISCUSSING SPIRITUALITY*

There was a strong emphasis in some of the narratives, of the unease that is associated with debate on spirituality. One possible explanation that was suggested, was the potential that exists within such situations for offending others. There was also uncertainty present however, as to other reasons for this phenomenon.

> *- this [spirituality] isn't the most difficult issue, I suppose, clinical psychologists talk about, but as with a lot of difficult issues, it's never really addressed, and I suspect that's because, people are frightened of offending, other people or, ... people feel, just uncomfortable about it*

and I, I suppose there, I'm not really sure why that is. (Claire: 117, 193-199)

3.2.3.1 Uncomfortable discussing meaning

The perception was held, that people generally do not feel comfortable discussing ideas about the meaning or purpose of life. This sense of unease was argued to be particularly salient within British society, as if it was understood that it is not appropriate to converse about the topic.

> *- It's a, (.) it's something that says, there's more to life, than this. ... And as such, it's something that, particularly in English society, is, mustn't, mustn't talk about it very much. ... It's an, it's embarrassing. (Clive: 167, 554-560)*

It was emphasised that in certain other cultures, the concept of a sense of meaning is far more familiar to people. It was suggested that one reason for this familiarity was a different emphasis within the educational system, that promoted greater consideration of the subject of philosophy.

> *- whereas if you took the French for instance where philosophy is just part of their, core part of their educational curriculum, ... This, this, this [the sense of meaning] wouldn't be a, a topic that's alien to people at all. ... But it is in this country, particularly. (Peter: 90, 1023-1028)*

A deviant case was identified however. One participant suggested that discussion about the meaning of life could typically occur within certain social settings, where it would fit quite appropriately. It was further noted that such debate could be quite absorbing.

> *- it can be err, (.) you know, a dinner table, kinda, conversation, wi-, and, and, yeah, the sort of exploring of, of what you mean by your existence, and err, ... I think, you know, that, that's where it goes, and I think that, (.) you know, it's a stimulating area of, interest, (Harvey: 142, 364-369)*

3.2.3.2 Uncomfortable discussing religion

A related theme was the perception of some respondents, that religion is a divisive subject that can create problems. The participants who highlighted this disposition, described coming from areas where religion created certain difficulties.

> *- religion also, in X particularly, seems to cause quite a lot of problems and so, I suppose I'm aware of, sort of taking a view of, I, I wonder if that's why I don't really speak about it very much, ... Erm, because it, it's, quite a divisive, erm, (.) you know, issue, in the background that I come from. (Claire: 120, 333-338)*

It was also emphasised that religion is a sensitive topic, as people can hold very strong convictions. As a consequence of this perception, one participant reported that she had initially tended to avoid the discussion of religion in therapy.

> *- it can be a sensitive issue especially, sometimes, ... Sometimes people are very, very staunch believers, ... err, so, I, I guess by, my, general, err, initially, which is changing now, would be, it's like, stay away from religion, it's a sensitive area, especially, maybe, coming from X because there's so many religions and, ... it can cause problems, (Kamini: 22, 1184-1197)*

It was suggested however that it is difficult to avoid consideration of religion, when growing up in Britain. Religion was argued to be a topic that everybody has an opinion about.

> *- you will always get a, a position off people if you ask 'em about religion. ... Yeah, it's not something they say I've never thought about. ... Yeah, they either do or don't, or are in-between or, you know, ... Because as I say, growing up in our culture, it's difficult to avoid, avoid it. (Brian: 42, 357-364)*

3.3 *HAVING A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE*

This story explores the different constructions that the participants used to understand the concept of spirituality. From the broad range of definitions that were provided, the core category of '*HAVING A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE*' was developed. This category encompasses the four main categories that were derived from the data. Each of these main categories relates to a different method for understanding the term spirituality, and each has a different relationship to the idea of perspective. Figure 2 illustrates diagrammatically the relationships between the core category, the main categories and the subcategories.

The first main category is '*HAVING A SENSE OF MEANING*'. This method of conceptualisation suggests that spirituality may be regarded very broadly, as the perspective or understanding that an individual has towards his or her life, or to life in general.

> *- there is an element of spirituality which I'm aware of. ... But that's, more, but that's about erm, it's more about, how I am as a person and how I interact with other people, ... and what sense I make of things, and what importance I give to things, and, the meaning that I ascribe, ... to, what I'm doing. (Susan: 25, 93-102)*

The second category is '*HOLDING TRANSCENDENT BELIEFS*'. This category refers to particular types of belief or understanding, which assert that the physical world of which we are aware does not represent all forms of life. There were a range of such beliefs described by respondents, which included religious beliefs, and beliefs in other life forces or energy fields. It was emphasised that such beliefs inform one's perspective on the world.

> *- spiritual beliefs are quite important, in some sort of way. They do sort of shape, how you see things, and maybe how you, shape other, i-er, they shape how you, sort of, see other people as well, I suppose. (Claire: 133, 1074-1077)*

The third category described is '*PERCEIVING HUMANITY TO HAVE VALUE*'. This understanding of spirituality similarly associates the concept with an emphasis that there is something beyond the physical world. However, the transcendent aspect referred to by this category does not relate to other life forms, but instead relates to more abstract beliefs

Figure 2


```
Core
category          ┌─────────────────────────┐
                  │   HAVING A SENSE OF     │
                  │      PERSPECTIVE        │
                  └─────────────────────────┘

Main       ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
categories │ HAVING A │  │   HOLDING    │  │  PERCEIVING  │  │  HAVING A    │
           │ SENSE OF │  │ TRANSCENDENT │  │  HUMANITY TO │  │ WIDER SENSE  │
           │ MEANING  │  │   BELIEFS    │  │  HAVE VALUE  │  │ OF AWARENESS │
           └──────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘

                  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐
                  │ Gaining  │  │The process│  │ Beliefs  │
                  │perspective│ │of gaining │  │impacting │
                  │ through  │  │perspective│  │functioning│
                  │ beliefs  │  │          │  │          │
                  └──────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘

Sub-    ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐          ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐
categories│Relationship││Having an ││Sense of  │          │ Wider    │  │ Wider    │
        │of meaning │  │individual│  │meaning   │          │awareness │  │awareness │
        │with religion││spirituality││impacting │          │impacting │  │as a      │
        │          │  │          │  │functioning│          │functioning│ │continuum │
        └──────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘          └──────────┘  └──────────┘
```

60

regarding the value of life. These beliefs provided the respondents with a particular perspective regarding the rights of other people.

> *- one part of me thinks, "what have we done? We've, brought, two kids in-, into this ghastly, awful, mess," ... "It would be better, to, just not be." ... And the spirituality bit, ... is simply about saying, "no, there's something intrinsically valuable about, humanity." (Clive: 175, 1036-1044)*

The final category is *'HAVING A WIDER SENSE OF AWARENESS'*. This category relates spirituality to holding an understanding of one's position within and relation to the surrounding environment. This construction asserts that spirituality relates to a specific perspective, that of being aware of the wider scheme of life beyond oneself.

> *- I think that spirituality's something to do with, a person's awareness, of, themselves, and, (.) and their world, err, or a, the world. ...... it's more than a meta, cognitive, perspective. It's, it's not, just about knowing your own thinking. It's something about, knowing your place in that world, (Harvey: 138, 159-166)*

3.3.1 *HAVING A SENSE OF MEANING*

This category refers very broadly to the understanding or perspective that is held by every individual, both specifically about human life, and more generally about the world. These ideas were conceptualised as spirituality.

> *- It's [spirituality] more about meaning. ... And, broader than that, it's, it's, it's about meaning related to human activity on the planet really or even the, the, even the non, erm, biological, events on the planet as well. (Peter: 74, 114-118)*

One participant emphasised the significance of scientific theories in providing explanations about the reasons for life, and thus a sense of meaning, for himself.

> *- I'm interested in scientific explanations of that [the universe]. When it comes to human behaviour, erm, biological determinism, evolutionary theories, ... All, would be important to me, err, as, as a way of having some explanation or meaning if you like. (Peter: 74, 155-159)*

This category also refers to more personal philosophies about one's own existence, which were similarly conceptualised as spirituality. This includes the attitudes that are held regarding, for example, what is important in life, and how one should spend one's time. To an extent therefore, this category relates to the values that one holds.

> *- It's got to do with, what we do with our time, here erm, and, some sort of connectedness to, a meaning. ... And it's no more than that. It's not, it's not erm, couched in religious, stuff. (Susan: 25, 61-65)*

Another way of understanding personal philosophies is to consider the aspects in life that motivate an individual, and that are used to define that life. This category also therefore includes the perspective one has about the reasons for one's life.

> *- It's [spirituality] something about, a sense, of, I suppose, in the end, and this is what I struggle with, ... What really matters? And, what really matters, is that sense, of, what does it mean to be Jon, ... What keeps him, going, and, (.) I mean, an even bigger one, I suppose, which is, what would you want, written on your tombstone? (Clive: 175, 1016-1023)*

One participant described spirituality as being the way in which one lives. She emphasised the importance of the perspective or philosophy she holds towards life, in informing and orienting her way of being in the world.

> *- spirituality, religion, it's, it's a way of life. ... Probably I look at it that way. ... Err, it's more a way of life, or sort of a certain, philosophy towards life, then. (Kamini: 3, 150-154)*

> *- Probably that, that, that's the major influence [of spirituality]. The way I view things. (Kamini: 6, 291)*

3.3.1.1 Relationship of meaning with religion

Spirituality, when viewed broadly as a sense of perspective towards life, was generally felt to be a concept that was wider than religion. Religion was understood to be potentially included within spirituality. It was therefore asserted that to associate spirituality with religion, was to understand spirituality only in its narrowest sense.

> *- I suppose in its [spirituality] narrowest sense it has err, religious, co-, connections really but, I mean I see it broader than that, (Peter: 74, 112-113)*

> *- I think that spirituality kind of sub-, subsumes, religion. You know ... Religion is a, is a potential part of spirituality, rather than, the other way round. (Harvey: 140, 226-229)*

A deviant case was identified however, regarding this relationship. This suggested that although spirituality did not necessarily equate with religion, as it actually referred to a way of life, the two were nevertheless very closely related.

> *- I think I relate it [spirituality] to religion. ... But having said that I don't think it necessarily has to be, religion. ... Erm, it could be something to do with philosophy, err. But more towards religion, ... Connected to religion, (Kamini: 3, 138-145)*

3.3.1.2 Having an individual spirituality

A theme for some participants, was that a spiritual perspective towards the world was one informed by one's own personal values. It was not imposed by others, but was meaningful and true for that person. It was therefore potentially individual in nature. This notion was contrasted with a religious experience of life, which was felt to be further removed from the individual, and based upon approaches to life with origins external to that person. Thus religious experience was regarded to be distinct and possibly unconnected to spirituality.

> *- Spiritual issues would be, internal, internal to me, and, and it would involve some instructions that I had, and what I did, mainly true for me, in my, erm, life. So it's a quite personal, individual, internal thing. Religious issues I think are erm, are much more about the rituals, and, and experiences and, God dominated, religion. ... So in, in some ways they're not connected at all. (Susan: 25, 78-84)*

Spirituality was also viewed as not merely having a perspective on life that was meaningful, but also living in a way that reflected and was consistent with that attitude or understanding. This was again contrasted with the ritualistic approach of much religion.

> *- the thing with spirituality, it's something about, (.) a lived sense of, (.) value I suppose, as distinct from a lot of religion, which is, (.) err, ritualistic. (Clive: 166, 506-507)*

The lack of personal meaning of religious experience to the individual, was argued to stem from both the external origin of religious values, and the outdated nature of the rituals and rules. This absence of personal meaning, was asserted to be one reason why individuals were seeking new approaches to spirituality.

> *- Rather than a way of being in the world, that would guide you, that you could interpret and use yourself. ... You had to rely on some intermediary, to, bring that philosophy to you, to allow you to practice it really, who would be some, man of God, er, you know, erm, and that there would be a lot of associated, rituals, laws, edicts, which, (.) which I think have, (.) have lost their meaning over the years, ... And I think that's why people are looking for new ways of expressing, ... Spirituality (Helen: 94, 215-228)*

It was emphasised, that as the perspective or meaning that any person holds is personal and idiosyncratic, there is a great sense of variety as to what may be thought of as an individual's spirituality.

> *- it's very individualistic, ... and there's nothing like right or wrong, ... in that, ... and it's each one what they want to, ... believe and, ... what they want to follow. So, I guess the range [of spiritual beliefs] is, infinite because, ... it's each one individually what they want to. (Kamini: 3, 165-177)*

> *- So it ranges from religion, ... Which is dictated by, erm, err practice, past experience, but, but also the, wr-, written, rules, ... And, and, and conventions, to, freer forms you could argue, like atheism, or, or, erm, humanism. (.) ... Erm, and then it's much more idiosyncratic. (Peter: 76, 248-256)*

Two deviant cases were recognised however, which suggested that there were particular difficulties with this concept of an individual spirituality. Both of these limitations were raised by the same participant. The first concern was that if spiritual values were regarded as internal and idiosyncratic, there were therefore not any limits to the essence of these. Hence there was the potential for spirituality to be associated with being selfish. This connection would have contradicted other assertions that had been made by this participant in other sections of his transcript. It was hence indicated that an individual spiritual

perspective needed to be constrained within the boundaries of not transgressing others' lives.

> *- this is the problem with that. There's quite a risk in that, in that, what's the difference between that and, just being bloody selfish or, yeah, it's a question of where do my values, (.) transgress yours, or, ... What are the boundaries (Clive: 168, 628-633)*

The second concern related to the absence of a framework for spirituality, if it was associated with values and perspective instead of religious beliefs. This difficulty further contributed to the participant's ambivalence about the notion of an individual spirituality.

> *- and there being a real tension for me, that it's something I still struggle with. ...... it's, almost something about, if you take, spirituality out of religion, ... What would, (.) the framework be? (Clive: 186: 1616-1627)*

3.3.1.3 Sense of meaning impacting functioning

It was suggested that having an understanding or perspective towards the world is helpful, and allows people to function effectively. It was indicated that this understanding or meaning does not have to extend to the wider issues about the physical world and universe, but a comprehension of the world with which there is contact is important.

> *- unless a person has a, a sense of understanding of, err, the world, both the social world and the physical world, ... Erm, not necessarily the universe but err {laughs}, err, quite a br-, a br-, a broad understanding, erm, err, or, and even that may be limited just to, individual relationships, it's going to be very difficult to have a, a, a good state of mental health, (Peter: 86, 808-815)*

Furthermore it was asserted that if the perspective that an individual holds, is at any time not allowing them to function within the world, this will be destructive and cause psychological distress.

> *- it's, because your construing isn't working, is why people come. That's, ... The definition, if you like, of psychological distress, is my construing system, is, not allowing me, to be in the world. (Clive: 178, 1201-1204)*

3.3.2 *HOLDING TRANSCENDENT BELIEFS*

This category refers to conceptualising spirituality, as the understanding that other forms of life or higher beings exist. Understanding the concept of spirituality in this way, limits the boundaries of it in a manner that the definition of meaning does not. There may be particular themes, but these are limited in their scope, as they relate to particular perspectives on the world, rather than every individual perspective towards existence. For one participant, the theme related to life forces.

> *- it's, [the range of spiritual beliefs is] orthodox religions of the world, erm, and then there seem to be, so-, there does seem to be some sort of, (.) I loosely call it new age thinking, ... Erm, which seems to embrace, ourselves, with the rest of the physical world and this earth that we are part of, and philosophies that are a-, are about, energies. Erm, so some of the sort of, Chinese ideas of Chi. ...... and, this sort of practice of Feng Shui, ... Which is about, channels of, energy. ... (.) So, so the, so the kind of, grand concept is, life force I guess. (Helen: 93, 159-180)*

Through holding the perspective that there are other life forces, one declares that life consists of more than merely the physical world of which we are aware. Related to this, it was suggested that people may actually have capacities that they are unaware of, for contacting these life forms.

> *- supernatural, is probably, should, should, should be a word I would have used, really, because perhaps that conveys, the idea that I think that there is something, (.) there are other possibilities, maybe other senses, maybe other capacities, that we have, that we don't know about. (Helen: 111, 1111-1115)*

In the subcategory **'Relationship of meaning with religion',** it was emphasised that many participants perceived spirituality to be a broader concept that merely religion, and equated it with a sense of meaning instead. One participant however, highlighted that he had not previously separated spirituality from religion.

> *- I see down here you've got a, distinction between spirituality and religion. ... Erm, and, I, I guess I haven't really looked, deeply, erm, in, in, into the distinction between the two. (Brian: 39, 170-174)*

It was further suggested that spirituality would be regarded as having some association with religion by most people.

> - *I suspect for most people, erm, it would have religious connotations the word, ... And they would, they would define it in those terms. (Peter: 78, 350-353)*

One specific proposal was that the equating of spirituality with religion, would be particularly likely amongst those who believed in a god themselves.

> - *for many people, particularly people, (.) who believe in the existence of a god, or a supreme being, or another being, I, I think that, erm, spirituality is, is probably kin-, probably equated with, (.) with religion, (Harvey: 141, 288-291)*

3.3.2.1 Gaining perspective through beliefs

This subcategory highlights that perspectives will be gained on the world or on life, by holding either religious beliefs, or beliefs in other life forces. One area in which such beliefs will provide perspective or explanations, is the subject of existence. It was asserted that spiritual beliefs have been used to make sense of the world throughout history.

> - *religion, was one of the first on the scene I think to harness our capacity for ritual, ... Erm, and for, for our, our, err, way of understanding and explaining things and making sense of the world. ... Religion was round there first. (Brian: 39, 217-223)*

It was further suggested that there is much that we still do not understand about the origins of the world, and that spiritual beliefs continue in their attempt to provide understanding about this.

> - *So there's something that, you know, that's not quite been, put together. The circle hasn't been completed yet. ... As I see it. And that's where I think spirituality, starts to fit in, as a way of, you know, understanding, or attempting to understand, ... An equation which, seems, pretty open at the minute. (Brian: 41, 283-289)*

Theories based on spiritual beliefs can provide a full explanation of the process of how the world came to be, hence there may be no need to supplement the account using other theories and philosophies.

> *- You wouldn't need to call on any other explanations, because it can become, complete, if, if you're thinking, a religious explanation perhaps. (Peter: 75, 171-172)*

It was highlighted that spiritual beliefs also provide perspective about more intimate information; they affect how one views individual events and personal experience. They may be used as a basis for interpreting and developing explanations for particular incidents that occur.

> *- I came to her after she had been, seven years dry, and in a church, and ... and, practising, Christianity. And, it was interesting, that she, construed something that had happened, recently, as a gift, from God. (Helen: 109, 996-1000)*

In addition, spiritual beliefs may provide explanations for one's own behaviour.

> *- I guess if you go and stand by a grave and talk to someone, to, a mound, on the ground, {laughs} ... You've got to somehow make sense of it in your head, ... religion actually, or, or, spirituality, actually gives, gives you a rationale. You can now talk to the lump in the ground. ...... so it, it, it justifies if you like, behaviour which otherwise would have the men in the white coats coming along. (Brian: 49, 752-763)*

A deviant case was identified, which suggested that spiritual beliefs may not necessarily provide a detailed perspective upon life. It was highlighted that some spiritual beliefs are not structured according to a framework, and may not actually be fully articulated. In this situation, which was suggested to be frequently occurring, these beliefs would not be associated with a wider perspective, as the beliefs are not fully formulated.

> *- I think quite a lot of people, have a spirituality, erm, or believe in some sort of spirituality, that they never really talk about. ..... They, cos they can't, for-, they can't really formulate, what it is. People, they don't have a, they're not firmly tied to something, so it's not like, the Catholic church or, a particular church but they, they believe in something. They believe there's a higher, god or, another being or, ... Something like that. (Claire: 115, 83-93)*

3.3.2.2 The process of gaining perspective

One participant emphasised that the process of gaining understanding through religious beliefs, was one part of a wider system of making sense that operates within people in general. Thus it was indicated that the phenomenon of having perspective or understanding was related to a part of the human core brain structure.

> *- you can call it religion or you can call it, you know, limbic structure. ... {laughs} It's still the same thing that's operating, it's the same, we've only got the one mechanism. (Brian: 71, 1914-1918)*

The assertion was made that this process of gaining understanding was deeply ingrained within individuals, and that therefore the perspective that is held will often be firmly fixed and resistant to change.

> *- it really locks in, very, very deeply, into people, does this, and I think if you, if you take religion out, the same mechanism is at work, ... There, because, people have political beliefs that they won't shift. (Brian: 61, 1379-1382)*

One piece of evidence for this suggestion, was the observation that people are prepared to die for what they believe in, rather than align themselves with another perspective.

> *- one of the things that I think is quite, interesting, about, about religion, i-is, that it, it is part of that, core fundamental belief, structure, that attitude structure, that humans have. People will die for what they believe in. ... Yeah. Peop-, people, won't recant, you know. (Brian: 60, 1362-1367)*

3.3.2.3 Beliefs impacting functioning

It was acknowledged within the participants' accounts, that religious or spiritual beliefs may have either a beneficial or a maladaptive impact upon the different aspects an individual's functioning.

> *- I would be looking very carefully at how they, how they interpret, their situation, ... And how, whether, their religion, is having a positive,*

effect, it's a positive, force, or whether it's, can be a potentially very negative effect. (Brian: 60, 1353-1357)

It was further suggested that the implications of a belief system may vary with time, as the person's attitude towards that framework develops. Thus a framework may helpfully provide an enduring and stable perspective. However, if the individual later questions this framework and perceives it to be inaccurate or incomplete, this may create difficulties.

- for some it's almost, like, they've been, indoctrinated, and then suddenly they realise, well maybe there's more, {laughs} you know. Or there had been more, and have I missed it all, and I th-, I, you know, I th-, I think that can be a, a difficult phase for some folk. I think, I think other people, erm, allow it to be, a, a framework, a guide, erm, something stable in, a changing world. (Helen: 108, 986-991)

A deviant case was recognised regarding this issue. One participant expected that strong religious beliefs would have specific forms of impact upon functioning, which would be mostly negative. These related to being not being open to alternative explanations about experience, and to having difficulty within relationships. It was however suggested that beliefs would also have a specific adaptive influence, in providing the individual with a framework for making sense of life's experiences, and therefore generating a sense of meaning. The participant who expressed this perspective, emphasised that it was based upon a negative view towards religion.

- I'm biased but I think it [a strong religious conviction] might make people erm, more rigid and, less flexible. ... Or narrow minded. Err, less open to, other people's, experience. ... So, I don't have a very positive view of the other version of spirituality. ... Sort of it gets, because of the potential of it getting abused. (Susan: 28, 235-242)

- They're, [strong religious convictions] probably quite negative in terms of relationships as well, their contact with other people, but personally themselves it might be very good. It might, erm, it might be very useful, it might give them their own personal, reasons for things and err, a connectedness to, to, their thing, (Susan: 28, 257-260)

3.3.3 *PERCEIVING HUMANITY TO HAVE VALUE*

This category relates spirituality to a specific belief in the inherent value of life and humanity. This belief does not relate to theories about the origins of the world, or to thoughts about a god or other life forces, although one participant did link this belief with the notion of an afterlife. Instead, it is a more abstract perspective, which asserts that each individual and humanity as a whole has a particular worth.

> *- I, sort of, do occupy a more, humanist, is, that's how, I would probably use the word humanist more than spirituality, (Claire: 119, 319-320)*

> *- I suppose, thinking, that, the humanist position about, what everybody has a worth, ... Erm, and that, there is, sort of, well, basically I suppose that everybody has, has worth in that, erm, everybody's sort of, here for the sort of same reason and that there is, sort of, something else to, move on to, (Claire: 120, 350-355)*

One participant associated the declaration that life has value, with a broader perspective towards life, which he conceptualised as spirituality. This particular perspective emphasised several different factors. Firstly it was accorded that humans do have an impact on the world, and actually leave behind a contribution when they die, even if this is just in the form of memories that are held by others. This understanding was used to imply that it is insufficient to imply that life is without value, and consists merely of the physical acts of one's existence such as eating.

> *- there's another bit of me thinks, no, there's something, there is, something unique about being human, ... That, (.) does live on, in some-, maybe only lives on in my memory, of another person. ... Maybe that's all. ... But it's, I suppo-, the spirituality bit is, that, it's not enough, to just say, you and I were born, erm, (.) ate, one and a half tonnes of food, over, or whatever the figure is, ... Erm, (.) and died. (Clive: 164, 405-417)*

> *- the crucial, it's, that, thing that in the end, says, so are you really saying, that, when you die, that is absolutely it. Cremated, buried, whatever, there's nothing left. ... And, (.) I ha-, that's a really hard idea to, you know, that's, there's one, one says, "yeah, that's right, we're just an accident on the planet, we've lasted a couple of thousand years, we might last another five hundred years, but, really, in the grand scheme of things, we're just an aberration". ... And, there's another view that says, "aberration or not, that, (.) we, have some effect on, (.) the, that there is*

some sort of higher place, or higher part, even if it's, (.) back within the living planet", (Clive: 163, 346-357)

Secondly it was emphasised that as there is value to life, it is not appropriate to live in a purely selfish manner, as this would impede others in expressing their equivalent right to exist.

- if you say there's no such thing as spirituality, ... well to my mind you're saying, (.) that we are just an accident, that happened and, that we have to go through the motions for, err, the only thing that stops me, (.) ripping your bag off, is the fear you might be stronger than me ...... it's jungle warfare I suppose. ...... and I think there is, it goes back to what I was saying earlier, some sense of, (.) what's, the core of being hum-, what does it mean to be human? ... And, (.) that other person has as much right, to be, as, you have. (Clive: 172, 844-865)

3.3.4 HAVING A WIDER SENSE OF AWARENESS

The final category is the association of spirituality with holding a particular perspective of the world. This view is not related to specific beliefs or ideologies. Instead it involves understanding and accepting one's relatively small role within the wider context of the surrounding environment or the world. It was suggested that this perspective entails focusing away from the details of the immediate situation, and the activity that one is engaged with. In its place, one becomes aware of the bigger picture, and sees the world from a wider perspective.

- I think that the, more, the times when I'm, most spiritual, are the times when, I'm ...... most aware of the kind of, (.) the game of the rest of it, and it's sort of, it's a freeing thing, potentially, ... To be aware, that er, (.) to be aware of the kind of scheme of things, as opposed to kind of focused on what I'm doing within it. (Harvey: 144, 481-490)

Through this process the individual realises that the world is inevitably continuing without their own input, and that they are only one part within a greater system.

- It's something about stepping back, stepping back, and seeing the cycle, the system and it's, erm, (.) and that there's, there's an, an inevitability to so-, to some thing, to what happens, which, is not fatalistic but, it's, erm, you, can step back from it (Susan: 27, 218-221)

3.3.4.1 Wider awareness impacting functioning

There were several consequences reported for having such a perspective on oneself and the world. It was suggested that generally such a sense of awareness is helpful and positive, as it has the potential to relieve anxiety, and restore a focus on one's broader priorities in life.

> *- I think my construction of spirituality, (.) tends, when I'm, when I'm able to kind of, access it, when I'm able to, (.) to use it, like this time in, X Park, ... (.) Is the sort of, psychologically healthy one. I don't know quite what I mean. I'm willing to elaborate on that but, i-, it's something that, (.) somehow, (.) de-stresses me, reconnects, me, err, refocuses me, erm, (.) that it kind of places things in perspective, again, replace-, re-establishes perspective on things, (Harvey: 144, 445-452)*

One participant therefore indicated that it would be detrimental not have this type of perspective.

> *- I think so many people don't, wouldn't have those ideas, which, for this purpose you would label as spirituality. ... I think they would erm, they would, lose out and suffer. Their angst would be much greater. (Susan: 28, 225-229)*

Another respondent questioned this position however. He asserted that although this process of being aware may be generally beneficial, he queried whether it might actually be unhelpful for some individuals.

> *- for some people it [broadening their sense of awareness] might be actively a bad thing, you know, that. They might be too spiritual, {laughs} huh, ... Some people might be too aware of their, {laughs} maybe. (Harvey: 150, 784-787)*

3.3.4.2 Wider awareness as a continuum

It was generally indicated that this particular perspective may be accessed at different levels. One respondent felt there were times when she felt slightly different to normal, slightly more aware of the bigger picture, but as these occasions were infrequent and provided a different perspective, they could be labelled as moments.

> *- There's, there's times when, when you might feel a bit more connected or you might try and reflect on how you are, or there's just something, that's just a bit different. It's very private and, not clear so, sort of glimpse, of something. ... Those moments are quite, awesome, but perhaps they don't happen very often. (Susan: 26, 152-158)*

Another participant similarly indicated that there were occasions when he was not able to access the perspective he described. However, he also suggested that the process of being aware fell upon a continuum, whereby one could have a greater or lesser realisation of the broader spectrum, and thus be either more or less spiritual.

> *- The awareness of, of the fact that the planet was turning, without me. ... That, that trees were growing, and the sun was shining, without me, and that people are getting on with it. Well that's, sort of, only, only, (.) quantitatively, different, from, the, the sort of, you know, making somebody who's paranoid aware that, well maybe people aren't looking at you. (Harvey: 149, 737-742)*

3.4 *WORKING CONSISTENTLY WITH BELIEFS*

This story is focused on the practice of therapy, and more specifically on the processes through which clinical psychologists address spiritual or religious beliefs. From the accounts of the contexts in which beliefs were identified and managed, the core category of *'WORKING CONSISTENTLY WITH BELIEFS'* was developed. This was specified to be the central heuristic, that guided participants when working therapeutically with clients who held spiritual beliefs. The category refers to the approach, whereby the psychologist is able to act in ways that are aligned and fit with the particular beliefs that are held, and which therefore makes sense to the client.

> *- this is more subtle in a way, and I think that's, that's probably the art of therapy. ... Erm, and that if you're an effective therapist, you're working in a way, which puts you in harmony, with their spiritual beliefs. (Peter: 88, 886-890)*

There were two main categories subsumed within the core category. Figure 3 illustrates diagrammatically the relationships between the core category, the main categories and the subcategories. *'RESPECTING BELIEFS'*, the first main category, refers to operating in a manner which is not critical of the beliefs that are held, as the clinician's own attitude to those beliefs is suspended. The aim therefore is to understand the spiritual values of the client, and work therapeutically within that framework.

> *- you're actually talking about understanding people's construing systems, ... And, (.) in, the act of doing so, you, are suspending your own, (Clive: 178, 1194-1196)*

'UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS MEANINGFUL', the second main category, refers to the process of becoming aware of the belief systems of the client, and also of deciding which of the related issues it is important to focus upon. This was understood to be part of the broader procedure for understanding that which holds significance for the client.

> *- if an area of, of, of, of living, of existence is, significant to the client, important to the client, then it's, I think that it's usually worth exploring, understanding at least, and then, deploying, what, whatever you do from there. Whether you, go on to kind of elaborate, or, to kind of, to sort of, attempt to kinda, close that down, ... And I think that that, you know, that applies to spirituality, as much as it would as we-, apply to any other, area (Harvey: 148, 667-675)*

Figure 3
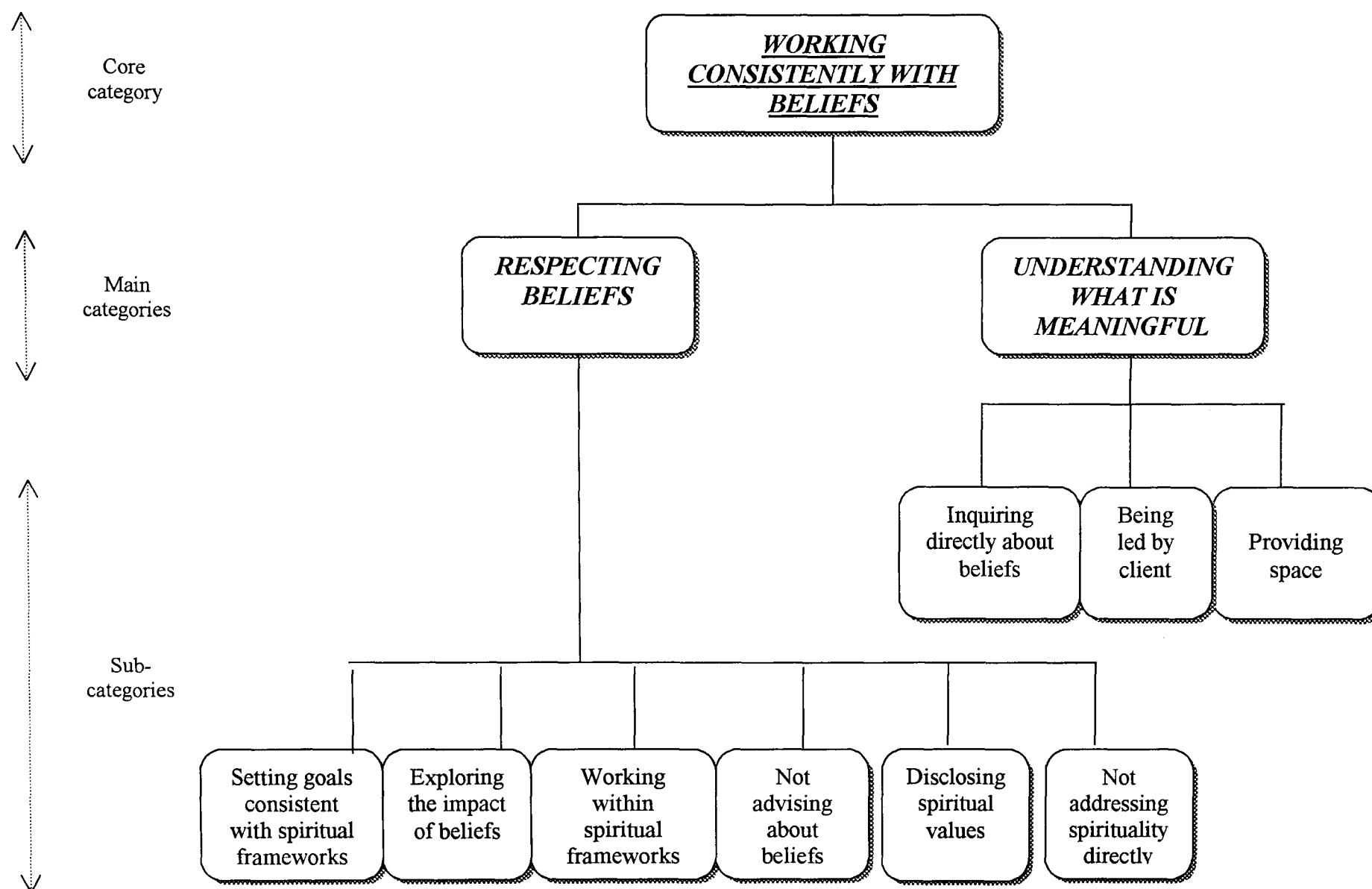
3.4.1 *RESPECTING BELIEFS*

This category was developed from the narratives, as a central rule for working with clients with religious or spiritual beliefs. In order to be able to respect the beliefs of the client, it was suggested that it is necessary for the psychologist to arrest their own judgement about the specific beliefs in question. Certainly it was emphasised that the psychologist's attitude towards the beliefs, including their perception regarding the validity of such beliefs, was inconsequential within their role as therapist.

> *- working with her, was a question of, suspending one's own, suspending my thoughts, ... About, (.) did I really believe Joe Smith's, dug up the book of Mormon, in up state New York in, 18 something or other. ... Seems slightly unlikely, but, ... That's not the issue. (Clive: 178, 1177-1185)*

It was emphasised that instead of adopting a critical attitude towards the clients' beliefs, it was important to develop an empathic approach, which attempted to appreciate the position of the client.

> *- we have to place ourselves, virtually in someone's shoes for a while, in order to be able to, to work with them, ... Really, and, and so, it's not about making judgements, it's about understanding and working with what is, what, what is, there, (Helen: 104, 741-746)*

It was highlighted that the attitude to others' beliefs, would be to regard these as helpful and significant. There would not be a desire for the constructs to change in any way during the process of therapy.

> *- I see it as very important for them, and useful. I wouldn't want them to, I wouldn't want, ever want them to change or to, ... That's where they're at, where they're at, and it works for them, at the moment. (Susan: 30, 341-345)*

3.4.1.1 Setting goals consistent with spiritual frameworks

The goals of therapy may be informed by the spiritual beliefs that are held by the client. This may be necessary, to ensure that the psychologist is working in a way that is consistent

with that individual's particular spiritual understanding. One narrative asserted that this process of setting goals in a flexible manner was not problematic in any way. It was merely important to ensure that the goals were appropriate and fitting with ethical and legal considerations.

> *- you have to take account of it, but, ... Yeah, but if you do take account of it, I don't think there any problems. ... It may alter my practice, or my goals, ... But the goals are agreed ones with the family. ... And if they come from a very orthodox religious, background, yes, that, that, that will be a different set of goals from, what I'd have with another family. But that's entirely up to them. ... And as long as it's, ethically and legally OK, ... Erm, I don't, I don't find that a problem. I don't find it a problem to be flexible in that way. (Peter: 84, 684-699)*

Another narrative however emphasised that in certain circumstances, there may be fundamental difficulties with acting in a manner that is consistent with a client's spiritual understanding. An example was provided, where a client's beliefs in an afterlife informed her decision of wanting to die. This situation highlighted to the participant, the extent to which beliefs may impact people's lives. It also illustrated the difficulties that may exist of respecting wishes based on spiritual beliefs, when those wishes relate to acting in a manner that is inconsistent with the standard goals of health service provision.

> *- It's also about, recognising, (.) that different people, do have, erm, (.) belief systems which guide their life entirely. ... Erm, I'm willing to respect those, and, and how, (.) gosh and how, difficult it is to find the line, up to which you're not, abusing people's rights to hold those beliefs, (Helen: 100, 548-553)*

This situation was also used to highlight the ambiguities that exist within the relevant legal constraints. These 'grey areas' ensure that decisions about the appropriate path for care under such circumstances are not straightforward.

> *- it depends where you cut the cake and what argument you take some of the time. ... So I guess, I guess ultimately, even within the legal framework, there are still grey areas, to be realistic, (Helen: 101, 581-585)*

The respondent concluded that several factors will need to be considered when deciding upon a suitable approach in such situations. In addition to the client's spiritual understanding, the legal implications, and the value systems both of the clinician and the

clinician's colleagues involved with the case, will significantly impact the conclusions that are drawn, and decisions that are made.

> *- you do use value systems, to decide which one is the, the, the, the, most appropriate or most useful one, to run with, ... And those value systems are influenced by a lot of things. I think they're influenced by, (.) erm, knowing how colleagues are thinking about a situation, knowing the legal side of the situation, knowing your own personal belief system, you know and trying somehow to get something that, that, that somehow treads the lines between, ... Sufficiently for the person involved at the other end as well. (Helen: 101, 594-604)*

3.4.1.2 Exploring the impact of beliefs

It was highlighted, that in circumstances where it was perceived that the client's beliefs were having a negative impact upon his or her functioning, these beliefs would be explored to gain more detailed insight into the processes through which this was occurring. This exploration would occur with regard to the particular problem that the client was presenting with, rather than being a general discussion of the individual's belief system.

> *- within the kind of, (.) err, boundaries of the, of the, of the problem that they were experiencing, how was, this, construction of spirituality affecting it, ... was their spirituality holding them within the thing that they were complaining about, or was it, ... dampening the effect of, of, of, it. I, I'd want to understand how it worked, within, the problem that they were describing. (Harvey: 147, 619-625)*

> *- if it was causing them, concern or difficulty or, whatever, then we would, explore it to unravel, where the difficulties were. ... But erm, I wouldn't be as, I wouldn't be, exploring it to ...... help them gain insight into, erm, their ideas of spirituality, (Susan: 34, 561-566)*

A deviant case was identified, in relation to the exploration of spiritual beliefs that are perceived to contribute in some way to the presenting problem. It was perceived by one participant that the discussion of the effects of strong beliefs was inappropriate, if this was not initiated by the client, as it would conflict with the need to respect those beliefs. Thus although the participant described originally being drawn to the examination of a client's beliefs, she subsequently withdrew from this type of questioning.

- she was very worried that her family would not go to heaven, ... and it was quite a fixed, belief. ... Erm, initially I caught myself trying to, sort of, inquire more about it and then I realised this is an, this is something, erm, we couldn't take it any further, it's her belief. It's, it's a religious belief. ... I need to respect that and I need to, take it for what she says (Kamini: 10, 499-507)

- when people have very, very strong religious beliefs, ... erm, and if that affected their emotional state, ... erm, I have erm, found it difficult, to work. It's like ... I couldn't work any further and then, and I, and I think, somewhere I realised that I, I need to respect their, their religious belief. ... But maybe, from my point of view I thought it's affecting their emotions too, but I, but I did not feel comfortable. (Kamini: 9, 459-470)

The decision to withdraw from such exploration of the client's beliefs, provoked much subsequent thought and consideration. The participant perceived that an opportunity to act therapeutically with positive effect had been lost.

- I have a feeling that, if we simply had a chance to explore in this person it could help them. ...... I often think about her, because this has left an unanswered, for me, an, left a question unanswered. (Kamini:15, 780-787)

3.4.1.3 Working within spiritual frameworks

It was highlighted that in certain situations, it seemingly may be difficult to work therapeutically in a manner that is consistent the client's framework of beliefs. One particular example was provided, where the psychologist perceived that it would be helpful to provide the client (a child) with a message, that superficially at least appeared to challenge the family's spiritual beliefs.

- father, simp-, said to me, 'Ah yes, it's in the hands of God, of Allah'. ...... but, then I had to, find ways of dealing with that because, that's different ...... that's a very different message that he was wanting to give his child, from the one I would want to give. (Peter: 79, 425-440)

Through carefully selecting and presenting evidence that did not contradict the family's spiritual understanding, the psychologist was able to convey the intended message, and facilitate a more helpful method of understanding the world. This example indicates that the

role of the therapist at times, may be to present information that does not conflict with beliefs that are held, but allows them to be understood in a more adaptive way.

> *- we came to a kind of compromise in a way, but I think that conceded that there was an issue of probability, that, erm, er, and, and, and that, things in the world are probable, and God is part of that. ... So for instance I mean we, we, the sun was, has risen in the sky, ev-, every, every day, for as long as, huh, ever. ...... Erm, so you can still believe in the power of God, but he, he, he works in certain consistent ways, which give rise to probability. (Peter: 80, 447-459)*

> *- it, worked very well, they accepted that. ... It's not detracting from the power of God or the omnipotence of, omnipotence, but, but it's accepting there's a kind of, there's an ordered way of, a genuine ordered way. (Peter: 81, 523-528)*

Further scenarios were provided, where the respondent perceived that the client's experience of religion was having a negative effect on their functioning. One participant suggested that he regularly encountered clients who had difficulties with guilt.

> *- the number of people that, talk, that talk about their upbringing, and their sort of, their spiritual, what they're talking about, is, is their, sort of, experience, of sort of religion as being, quite a crushing thing. Something that they're carrying lots of guilt with now, (Harvey: 146, 594-598)*

The therapeutic strategy that was described in this context, was similarly not concerned with confronting specific beliefs. Instead, it involved questioning the origins of the understanding and emotions that were deemed to be negative, and suggesting that these did not have to stem from a belief in God. The participant however experienced difficulty in communicating these ideas in detail.

> *- where spirituality or, or their, what they're construing as spirituality, has been damaging, and, I suppose making people, aware, or, or dis-, dis-, disentangling spirituality from, religion, and spirituality and religion from, (.) err, the, sort of actions of their, say their parents, or, err, (.) say that sort of, guilt, isn't connected with a thing which is kind of, all powerful like God, but is connected with, experiences of, of a particular faith, or something er-r-i, (.) I find, I'm having a lot of difficulty {laughs} articulating this. (Harvey: 147, 659-666)*

It was asserted that the underlying issue when working with spiritual beliefs that are contributing to the experience of distress, is of attempting to find a suitable method of

understanding, which relieves that distress. It is important that this understanding fits with the client. This process was deemed to be the art of therapy.

> *- she still went to mass, and she saw herself as a, good Catholic. ... But the Catholic church would say, "Urghhh". ... "You're a nasty, gay person." (.) My answer to that would be to leave the church, and to, say, "I don't want anything to do with this". But she, somehow or other, could, had found a way of, ... Of integrating the two. ... And that's the dilemma I think, with working with people who're religious, can you help them to find a way ...... through it, that makes, sense to them. ... And, that's the art, of, psychotherapy, (Clive: 179, 1250-1270)*

3.4.1.4 Not advising about beliefs

One particular context that was suggested to be beyond the role of a clinical psychologist, was if the client was seeking advice about the validity of their actual beliefs. It was emphasised that under such circumstances it was most appropriate to recommend that the individual discusses their concerns with the relevant religious leader.

> *- the real, problem, and there is a real, is, when it turns out, that it's, a religious, er, and I have, seen people, where I ended, had to say, "I think you ought to go and talk to your, minister or", because, the agony of, "can I really believe, these things?" ... And you're sitting there thinking, "well I don't".(Clive: 179, 1206-1211)*

In such conditions, it was highlighted that it would also be possible to explore the client's motivation for such inquiries, rather than merely dismissing the issue.

> *- I would feel uncomfortable about anyone asking me advice on anything, because that's not really, ... How I see, sort of our job. ...... if they were wanting more concrete answers then, they could speak to, er, ah, you know, it might be a priest or something, ... But, I would also, sort of ask them if they wanted to sort of explore, why they were asking those sorts of questions, (Claire: 130, 905-915)*

3.4.1.5 Disclosing spiritual values

The issue of whether it was appropriate for the therapist to disclose spiritual beliefs to clients was debated within the narratives. One participant highlighted that it is possible to disclose such information, through displaying objects with spiritual significance in the therapeutic setting. It was suggested that such disclosure was generally unsuitable, as it may lead to the client perceiving some form of expectation or demand.

> *- I mean how much of ourselves do we bring into therapy? ... And we were wondering about whether that's [having a prayer in the consulting room] imposing some sort of, erm, expectation or, demand, of the client. And just whether that was, appropriate, ... To do that. And I, my thinking was oh it's not appropriate. (Susan, 32, 480-486)*

An alternative context relating to disclosure of beliefs, was presented by another participant. This referred to the situation, where the issue of the psychologist's own spirituality was repeatedly being raised within therapy. It was suggested that under such conditions, it was appropriate to disclose spiritual beliefs.

> *- I will, volunteer information ... what I am, or what I do, or what are ... my beliefs. ... But if they sort of, have, if they express some erm, and it's not the, it's not just err, a general comment, ... but if it's something which is repeatedly coming up in the sessions, (Kamini: 12, 623-632)*

The participant emphasised that the procedure of disclosing her own ideas about spirituality, had the potential for enhancing the process of therapy. She provided particular examples where such disclosure had allowed the client to feel more comfortable with continuing to engage therapeutically. She hypothesised that without this information, there would have been blocks to further progress. However, she highlighted that the decision to discuss her own attitude to spirituality had not been straightforward, as she had felt uncertain about this step originally.

> *- I realised that if I did not ex-, explain myself adequately, ... he would not be comfortable with, that would be like err, it would not help him to feel comfortable with me, ... because I had my own doubts whether, this needs to be discussed any further, about my own views about religion. ... But then I realised with this gentleman, that I needed to do it, ... otherwise we would have not been going anywhere, (Kamini: 11, 593-604)*

- I was questioning, would it be therapeutically beneficial. Was it required in therapy? ... And, and, oh, we spent some time discussing my, my views. I think that put him, immediately comfortable. (Kamini: 12, 607-611)

3.4.1.6 Not addressing spirituality directly

One theme that emerged from the accounts, was that the task of therapy would not necessarily be adapted if the client followed a spiritual framework. It was not automatically considered that the approach should be altered and the particular details of the spiritual understanding discussed and focused upon. Instead, the approach would often continue in the manner that it would for clients who did not have spiritual beliefs.

- Now, for some people it's, it's sort of possible to do the latter, ... If they're still, (.) if their meaning is still somehow, rooted around, a belief system, and, and a religion, and, and some sort of, (.) framework to follow really. ... But it would, it wouldn't, it wouldn't, always go down that route. It, it might be more about, having a s-, constructing a story of who they'd been through their life, what they had had, to offer, ... What they might still offer. Erm, I wouldn't always address, directly, issues of spirituality. (Helen: 103, 708-719)

One participant emphasised that although he would not generally focus on spiritual beliefs in therapy, he would at times build them into the therapeutic work. He therefore indicated that he would pay particular attention to any indication that the client held spiritual beliefs, in order that these values could be utilised within the therapeutic process.

- I would have heard that, and I would be thinking, of how I might, build it in to what, what we're intending to do. ... Erm, but it wouldn't, come out, as a religion. That for me would be, just them laying out, what, elements they have, that I can work with. (Brian: 57, 1160-1164)

- If they hinted, towards it, [spiritual values] ... And sometimes people do, they er, they'll say things like, you know "I know what I did was bad, and I know that, I'm going to have to answer for it one day". You know, they'll, come out with things like that and you'll think, hello, ... There might, there might be a way, to make use of, of the dissonance that they're working, that's, created, (Brian: 56, 1146-1153)

3.4.2 *UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS MEANINGFUL*

In order to be able to work consistently with a client's spiritual beliefs, it is necessary to be aware of those beliefs, and their particular meaning for the individual. It was emphasised within the participants' accounts, that one part of the practising psychologist's role is to understand the areas of life that are particularly significant to the individual. Thus it was suggested that the process of understanding spiritual beliefs may be considered as one aspect of the method through which meaningful areas of life are understood.

> *- I guess I'm always looking for what has been meaningful in a person's life, and sometimes that's about, being of value to other people, and sometimes that's nested within, some other kind of, religious or, spiritual belief system, and sometimes it's not. So the important thing I'm working with is actually, not necessarily, though their spiritual belief system, ... But what for, for them has held meaning, in their life. (Helen: 103, 693-699)*

It was reported by respondents however that within this broad remit, there were a range of contrasting strategies employed, for considering the potential beliefs of clients. These strategies comprise the three subcategories that are discussed below.

3.4.2.1 Inquiring directly about beliefs

This subcategory relates to the process of assessing directly about spiritual beliefs, without the client having made prior reference to these. One participant described this as his standard practice.

> *- I always ask, well, almost always ask people if they've got any religious beliefs, (Clive: 165, 454-455)*

An alternative approach that was described was to take note of information that indicated that a client was more likely to believe in or follow a spiritual framework, and inquire directly about beliefs in such situations. One indication that was cited was working with a client from an ethnic minority background.

> *- the, religious practice is of course much a higher in ethnic minority groups, than it is with, with white families. ... So again then immed-, immediately someone comes from a Muslim or Hindu background, I would pay particular attention to that in a way that I may not with, erm, err, with a white family. Simply because we know what, only about err, is it five per cent of the population are regular church attenders, (Peter: 82, 577-585)*

Those respondents who reported engaging in the process of inquiring directly, emphasised the importance of exploring and understanding the background to the beliefs, and the meaning associated with them.

> *- if they do have them [religious beliefs], it's, critically important, that you understand, (.) what they are, that where they come from, and, what they mean. (Clive: 177, 1104-1106)*

A specific strategy that was suggested for understanding the particular significance of a spiritual framework, was that of establishing the level of practice or activity associated with the beliefs. The importance of being aware of any such behaviour was asserted.

> *- some people may be religious you know but don't, have a lot of err, formal practice associated with it, you know they're not regular church attenders or go to the synagogue or wherever. ... But others, it's clear that they, they do, ... They are. Erm I can actually, I actually ask about this, erm, but then you find you know, if it's someone who's, erm, very Christian and goes to church regularly, children belong to church groups, a-, a-, and, and so on. Erm, that, that, that's al-, always important to find out about. (Peter: 82, 559-568)*

One reason that was highlighted for understanding the spiritual beliefs of clients, was that these ideas would actually be part of the values held by the individual. It was suggested that they would therefore influence the discussions that take place within therapy, to a greater or lesser extent. Hence it was suggested, that it is helpful for the therapist to be aware of the impact of the client's spiritual understanding on the therapeutic process

> *- spirituality is a part of, the person, and so, in as much as spirituality and, a-, and, spiritual ideas, are a part of that person, it's going to affect, what goes on in the therapy. ... Er, and I, and, and I need to be aware of, of how much that is playing a part. (Harvey: 153, 982-986)*

3.4.2.2 Being led by the client

This subcategory refers to the process of using clients' comments about spiritual ideas, as a signal to inquire about and explore such beliefs. Those participants who adopted this approach, emphasised that they would not directly ask the client about spiritual beliefs, without prior reference to this. Instead, this would be something that the client declared without specific prompting.

> *- I wouldn't ask them specifically what religion they were, ... What's their spirituality. I have never. (Kamini: 18, 979-982)*

> *- They would, be the ones that would be, be, declaring, their, thought processes. This is what, I believe, this is where I am. ... I wouldn't ask them the question, "do you believe, in a, do you have a religion, do you have spirituality". (Brian: 59, 1283-1287)*

It was suggested that there was not a correct approach, regarding the decision of whether or not to explore spiritual beliefs. Therefore it was reported that it was important to follow the lead of the client regarding this issue.

> *- some of them, I mean, it's not right or wrong but some of them, are ready, or want to talk about it [spiritual beliefs] and discuss it, ... and, and sort of, think about it loudly. ... Some of them don't want to, ... which is fair enough. I respect their wish. (Kamini: 14, 741-749)*

When it was perceived that the individual did wish to examine or discuss their beliefs, this issue was understood to be clearly important to them, and needed to be addressed.

> *- If the client raised them [spiritual beliefs], then I would see them to have, to have, fairly major significance. ... For the client, and I would, treat them as such. (.) If the client wouldn't raise them then I wouldn't raise them, ... So it would be entirely theirs, almost entirely client led. (Susan: 33, 538-544)*

It was suggested that if the client did indicate that they wanted to discuss their beliefs, particular attention would be paid to the impact of those beliefs upon functioning.

> *- I will examining their, their spirituality, (.) and it's, influence, on their, o-, on their experience of life at the time. ... OK. If they gave me the signal, ... As I say, I don't, don't do this routinely, (Brian: 62, 1444-1450)*

One reason that was provided for not inquiring directly about spiritual beliefs, was the understanding that if the area was significant to the individual, this would be conveyed. It was emphasised by one participant, that this had been her experience when working with clients who held beliefs that were important to them.

> *- if it's important to them, it comes up. Not, in response to questions, from me, like ... "What is your spirituality?" or ... Err when they just going through their whole life, events and that, somehow, I, I've found people, if it's important they do, ... tell me. (Kamini: 18, 984-992)*

It was suggested that whether or not the psychologist engages in gathering information about beliefs, may be a function of the specialty they are employed within. It was proposed that within certain specialties such as child and family, the typical practice is not to inquire about the beliefs that are held.

> *- I think it's interesting that I don't, actually know, the spiritual, beliefs, of most of my clients. ... It may be a function of working in child and family, department. I think if you get into adult psychotherapy then you get more into that, because you get more information and you explore this, more often. But in child and family you, you don't. It's not a topic that, we get, to talk about. (Susan: 31, 396-402)*

3.4.2.3 Providing space

A further approach to the management of spiritual beliefs was described. This method was concerned with focusing upon the fundamental concerns of the client, including those relating to spiritual beliefs. It was commented that it is possible not to be aware of the particularly salient issues that underlie a client's presentation, and therefore ignore these.

> *- if the most significant thing with this, particular man, was about him being able to talk about, these, I call them existential issues, which I, I, firmly believe was the, what, was the key thing about what we did, ... Then what else, am I missing, with so many other people, ... That's, key to them, and it might be spirituality is key to them or it might be, that, the cultural issues, which I think also are related very much to spirituality. (Claire: 127, 730-739)*

This subcategory therefore relates to the individual strategies that were described, for the specific goal of identifying the client's fundamental concerns. One such procedure involved not adhering strictly to an agenda within therapy. It was emphasised that the process of setting therapeutic goals, may contribute to the neglect of issues that the client perceives as significant. Attempting to inquire about what would be helpful, was thought to not necessarily prevent key aspects from being overlooked. It was thought that the client may not initially be aware, or prepared to disclose, that which he or she perceives it would be beneficial to discuss.

> *- we get into, ... Quite easily of, trying to set goals, or trying to say well, "this is what you're here for", or, ... You know, or trying to even maybe (let), sort of clients, sort of, (.) decide what they're here for, er, when, quite often, they're not sure. ... And, and why would we assume they're going to tell us, sort of straight away anyway. So, there's something about, I've changed, I think, the way, just purely practical, sort of I don't, sort of, say to people, we're gonna to do this, this and this. (Claire: 127, 751-762)*

Another aspect of this approach involved considering the issues of difference that may be relevant to the client, prior to any reference to these. It was hypothesised that as a result, the client would realise the psychologist's openness to that issue, and be more prepared to discuss it.

> *- I think purely by thinking about it anyway, you're already, sort of a step ahead. I don't necessarily, I couldn't say that it works and, it happens, but I think if you are thinking about something then, ... I think a client is more likely to, bring it up or, be aware that, you're open to that idea. (Claire: 128, 792-797)*

A further element involved providing the client with openings to discuss different concerns. Underlying this technique, was the understanding that the client would not follow these openings, if they were not relevant.

> *- that, ga-, gave him an opening to talk about it. And it seemed, (.) er, but I think people, sort of, close you down, if they don't want to, ... Well, I suppose I have a belief, that that's the case but, it also might not, be true, of course. (Claire: 129, 832-836)*

Another participant alluded to adopting a similar philosophy towards therapy. It was asserted that it was important to provide the client with enough time to consider the issues that were raised, rather than focusing upon setting goals. This was regarded as part of the process of respecting the experiences that the client is bringing into therapy.

> *- it's about knowing that it's taken them a lifetime to get there, where they are in their lives. Not to, to, knock any of that down, to respect it, and to take time, and allow time, for them, to decide what it is, to work, in this way, and then to decide about change, or about working towards change, instead of hammering on a schedule (Helen: 107, 913-917)*

3.5 *FOCUSING UPON THE SENSE OF MEANING*

This story is also concerned with the practice of therapy. It considers the role of the client's sense of meaning within therapy. The core category of *'FOCUSING UPON THE SENSE OF MEANING'* was developed from the discussion of this area. Figure 4 illustrates diagrammatically the relationships between the core category and the main categories.

It was specifically suggested by some participants, that existential questions seeking understanding of the reasons for life, or querying whether any reason actually exists, were actually addressing a spiritual issue. Such questions were highlighted to be frequently occurring within therapy. It was an area that clients were at times eager to discuss.

> *- people are often, coming into therapy and saying, "What's it all about? Why is my life so rubbish?" ... That kind of, question, ... Err, or, "How am I ever gonna live, without this other person?" or, "Is it worth living?" ... They're, they're spiritual questions. (Harvey: 150, 809-817)*
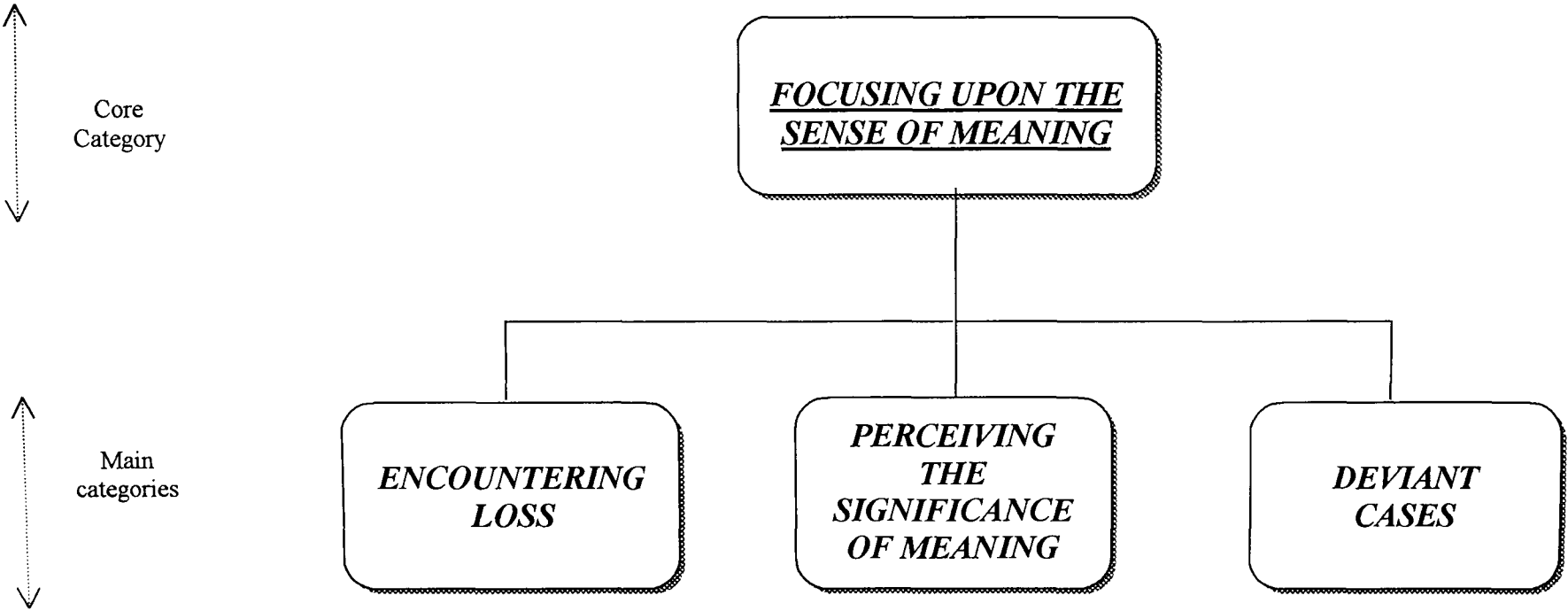
> *- [two clients] kept bringing up, "mm, well I don't know what the point of life is". And, it seemed, that's what they wanted to talk about ...... what I, I suppose I call existential but I suppose, ... In effect were quite spiritual issues (Claire: 123, 505-510)*

It was emphasised within the narratives, that concentrating upon existential matters is a very different therapeutic style, to focusing explicitly upon the symptoms that the client is experiencing. It involves paying less attention to setting goals for example, and places a greater focus upon the fundamental concerns that the client holds about his or her existence.

> *- I termed it as, sort of, existential, sort of issues, because I didn't seem to know, what else we were sort of doing, erm ...... it was very different, from what this man had originally, started, talking about, purely symptomatic and, you know and, getting back to work and setting goals, for his everyday life. ... And, we spent, the sessions, then, talking about, his beliefs about, why he was here and why he feels he's, let people down and, ... And about death. (Claire: 124, 565-576)*

One participant recorded that this style of working initially left her feeling uncomfortable, because of the lack of structure associated with it. There were also concerns about whether it would be a helpful approach. Nevertheless, this participant recorded that where she had

Figure 4

Core
Category

Main
categories

FOCUSING UPON THE
SENSE OF MEANING

ENCOUNTERING
LOSS

PERCEIVING
THE
SIGNIFICANCE
OF MEANING

DEVIANT
CASES

adopted this method of considering existential issues with a client, it had actually been highly effective in time.

> *- it felt very uncomfortable, for me because, erm, and the uncomfortableness was purely about, this was such a lack of structure, ... The actual content felt, initially I, I was just th-, thinking I don't know how helpful this would be to this man, but, ... we continued the sessions, you know, maybe another six months, and, I actually think that was the most useful, piece of work, I've done, with anyone. ...... And I spent quite a lot of time talking in supervision about this, client, because I couldn't understand, what was happening that was right, (Claire: 124, 584-597)*

It was suggested that it is not necessary however, to be engaged at this deeper level of a client's experience of life and what it represents, to work in a way that the client appreciates and benefits from.

> *- there's somebody else I see at the moment, ... and, she went to see a psychiatrist for two years, and he treated her, for her depression. He did a jolly nice job, she's very pleased with him, ... But nobody actually talked to her, about the meaning of her depression, ... And what, (.) it represented, for her. And they're, profoundly spiritual questions. (Clive: 185, 1536-1551)*

It was further asserted that some clients would prefer not to focus upon the broader questions of meaning and purpose, but would rather concentrate upon managing their specific difficulties.

> *- therapy at its best, is, that [a spiritual encounter], but a lot of the time, that's not where people are. They want to, ... Some, (.) help, with making life, function. (.) ... No I, err, I wouldn't suggest one can, (.) work, spiritually, with everyone. (Clive: 186, 1597-1602)*

3.5.1 ENCOUNTERING LOSS

This main category refers to the context of experiencing or being faced with loss. This was perceived to be a situation that frequently triggered questions about the meaning of life. Thus it was suggested, that reference by clients within therapy to existential questions regarding the purpose of existence, were often associated with that individual's experience of loss.

> *- I think a lot of people, that I see are talking about losses of various kinds, and it's, quite useful to, (.) that it, that, experience, can, (.) you know, I th-, I guess it can be usefully, (.) explored or understood in, the, the, the sort of frame of, of spirituality in one way or another. You know, whether it's the death of somebody and, and people thinking, "well what's life all about?" ... I mean that, that, existential thing. (Harvey: 150, 799-806)*

Individual participants revealed the difficulty they experienced themselves in maintaining a sense of understanding, when repeatedly faced with the death of others.

> *- one of the things I think we're get in these services, we get a lot of deaths. ... Erm, you know, over fifty people died last year. ... Patients, from, this side or t'other side, erm, and then you chuck into that your relatives and, I think it's o-, it ge-, it can get hard making sense of it. (Brian: 50, 766-772)*

One theory was that it is often only when people are nearing or confronted with their own death, that the issues of meaning and purpose become salient. It was suggested that until then people are often occupied coping with the demands of their lives, and that this level of activity may prevent extensive consideration of such thoughts.

> *- I think those [spiritual] issues are related more to issues about, erm, death and dying ... because that's, people, people are very busy, and, often don't think about these things until they, are faced with something like that. (Susan: 31, 413-417)*

Two deviant cases were identified however, of conditions that trigger consideration of the bigger questions about the purpose of life, but that cannot be incorporated within the framework of loss. One respondent suggested that it is the competing demands of life, that cause her to stop and consider the wider understanding of the world, and her priorities within that.

> *- you have a career, you have a job, erm, (.) it can be very stressful. It can be very time consuming, and striking a balance, with, your own life and the people in your own life is, is important and difficult. ... And actually, moving and striving to do that, leads me to ask the bigger questions again about, what life is, what life's about, what are we here for. (Helen: 105, 786-791)*

The other deviant case that was cited as provoking thoughts about meaning, was that of observing the start of new life that one has created.

> *- it's just an absolutely unbelievable experience. ... Yeah. Even though you know about it, and are prepared for it. ...... When you're there and it's yours, it's a real miracle. ... And that's something that you have to make sense of, cos I'm using the word miracle quite seriously now, (Brian: 50, 798-807)*

3.5.2 *PERCEIVING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MEANING*

Some respondents asserted that the problems that clients present with, will often be related to difficulties that the individual is experiencing with their sense of meaning, and thus be linked at one level to spirituality. However, the difficulties will not usually be understood or framed as such upon entry into therapy. Individuals may describe the difficulties in terms of problems with a particular situation, or as a specific type of mental health problem, such as anxiety. However, it was argued that such distress may be seen from a wider perspective, as relating to difficulties that the individual has with understanding who they are, or with managing life in general. This was perceived to be the broader, spiritual element of their presentation.

> *- it's the adults I deal with like the parents, err who are often in a lot of turmoil, ... And a, being very, basic about, their, personalised very unsatisfying err, marital relationship, err, but that's all part of err, a wider err, alienation perhaps or, ... Erm, (.) probably about, understanding themselves as an individual, the context in which, they're living, (Peter: 87, 858-866)*

> *- they [GPs] do get, a lot of people coming, they don't phrase it, you, you don't ... Get somebody going to a GP saying, "I'm having an existential life crisis, Doc." They come depressed, and they come, ... Anxious and, and so the spiritual, if you like, I think part of it, is about negotiating that, out of it, ... And becoming aware, that, of, (.) what's going on. (Clive: 184, 1496-1505)*

It was specifically suggested by one respondent, that jointly perceiving the key issue to be the client's fundamental concerns about their existence, rather than the more discrete symptoms that are presented, was the spiritual aspect of clinical work.

> - So the spiritual bit, it's something about, a mutual acknowledgement, that, (.) it's not a panic attack, it's not a, (.) it's not my depression, ... It's my, (.) whole sense of self, or my, what makes me, function. (Clive: 185, 1531-1534)

3.5.3 DEVIANT CASES

There were two deviant cases identified, which suggested that spiritual issues within therapy referred to a different phenomenon than existential questions. Firstly there was the perspective, that it is the process of facilitating a broader understanding of the 'greater scheme of things' with clients, that equates to addressing spirituality in therapy. This idea related to the conceptualisation that spirituality is holding a wider sense of awareness.

> - in terms of sort of, my own, construction of spirituality, ... it's particularly, characteristic, of, the people that I see, is that there often isn't very much perspective, on, (.) from their, position, of, (.) the greater scheme of things, and their relatively minor role in it. ... You know, paranoia, for example, is, is all about, people, believing that they're central, to the world. It's a very, ... Kind of egocentric, view. ...... so developing a kind of, wider appreciation ...... It might be useful, to people, (Harvey: 145, 542-563)

The other deviant case was concerned with a very separate issue. It was suggested that within therapy there are particular moments, when helpful steps are taken, which both client and clinician are aware of. These steps were understood as being an extension of the process whereby energy fields are created, which was one aspect of the respondent's ideas about spirituality. Thus in this case, spirituality was related to moving forward in the therapeutic process with the client.

> - I can think that erm, (.) that we can probably create our own, energy fields, or can we, we are part of generating energy fields, ... And you'll hear the sceptic in me, ... but there is something that happens when I'm with, erm, folk in, in the therapeutic experience, where I know that, a leap has been made, there's a step that you can't quite quantify, and you both feel it, ... A-, as well as know it. ... Erm, (.) and I think that's an extension of that. (Helen: 96, 303-319)

3.6 *PERSPECTIVE IMPACTING THERAPY*

This story explores the influence of the participants' spiritual beliefs and values upon the therapeutic process and outcome. From the accounts, the core category of *'PERSPECTIVE IMPACTING THERAPY'* was developed. Figure 5 illustrates diagrammatically the relationships between the core category and the main categories.

It was generally asserted that the beliefs, philosophies and understanding held towards life, that were understood by participants to be spiritual, would have an impact within therapy. It was acknowledged that it is not possible to remove one's sense of perspective when entering the consulting room.

> *- as a psychologist, I have to be prepared, just, in, in a, I, I always know, that my, personal philosophies are bound, to be there. You can't, you can't extricate, you can't go in, s-, sort of, squeaky cleaned and, and sterile, (Helen: 104, 725-728)*

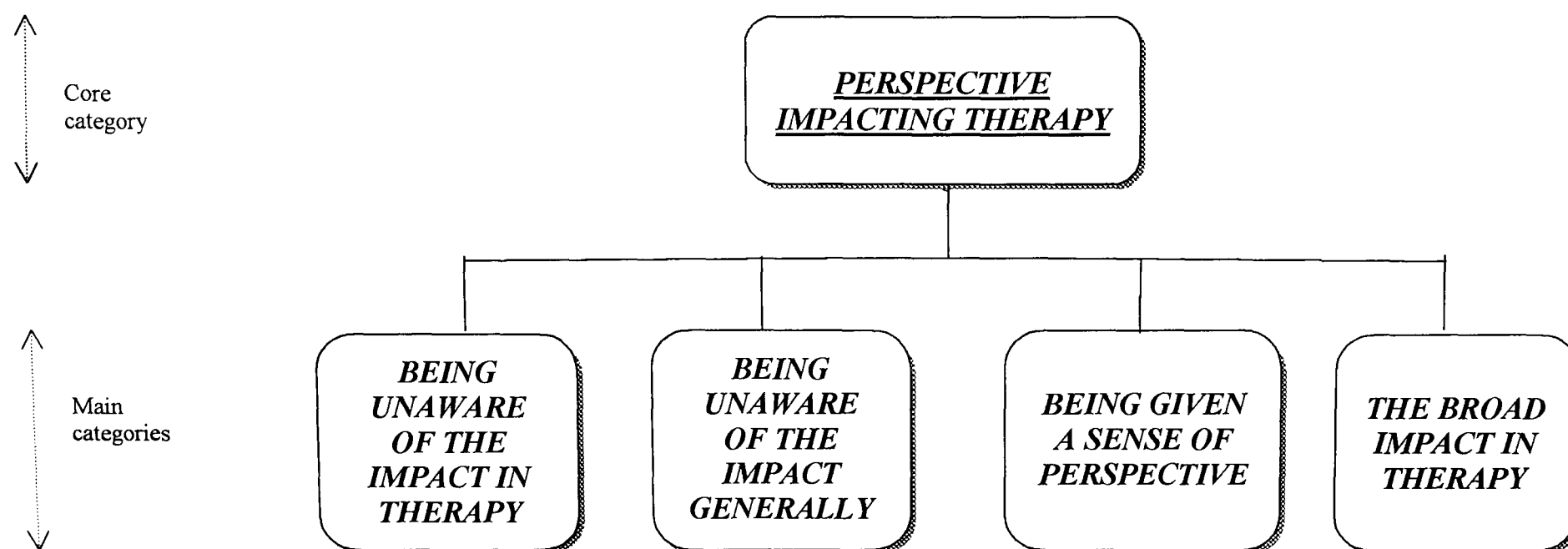### 3.6.1 *BEING UNAWARE OF THE IMPACT IN THERAPY*

It was suggested by several of the respondents, that they were not clear about the specific impact of their beliefs and philosophies upon the therapeutic process. Some reported not having considered this effect to any great extent. It was nevertheless acknowledged that their perspective towards spirituality would impact therapy in some way.

> *- I haven't, maybe, ever thought, (.) that my beliefs, affect how I am, ... In, sort of, therapy or, or how I am, sort of at work. I mean, I suppose they must, but, ... I've never really, thought about it, ... In those sorts of terms. (Claire: 133, 1079-1086)*

> *- Well contrary to what I know I should say, erm I think it [view of spirituality] has absolutely no impact whatsoever [on therapy]. ... But, what I know about everything else, and what I know about, sort of, cultural things and, how other things do, other things for me do have an impact in my life, impact my clients then, it must have an impact. ... It can't not, but I've never thought about it, (Susan: 29, 329-337)*

Figure 5

Core category

Main categories

PERSPECTIVE
IMPACTING THERAPY

BEING
UNAWARE
OF THE
IMPACT IN
THERAPY

BEING
UNAWARE
OF THE
IMPACT
GENERALLY

BEING GIVEN
A SENSE OF
PERSPECTIVE

THE BROAD
IMPACT IN
THERAPY

Another respondent purported to the difficulty of understanding the influence of her philosophies upon her practice of therapy. She reported that although clients had provided her with occasional feedback, she was unclear as to the validity of these comments, because of the possibility of other influences upon their perspectives. However, she hypothesised that it was feasible that her perspectives on life were emerging within therapy, in ways that she was not conscious of.

> *- once or twice I have caught, my clients telling me, 'Oh, this is Eastern philosophy'. Erm, maybe I thought I was doing CBT or whatever. But, I'm thinking, well maybe, that's sort of reflecting of me to them, ... and I only hope I'm not reflecting off in a very dogmatic fashion. ...... I'm not very conscious of it, ... but I think, because of all this feedback I've got, ... Erm, yet I'm not sure whether, 'cos me being X and it's very obvious, so, ... whether people think, you know, this ... automatically. (Kamini: 8, 398-416)*

It was hypothesised that the influence that psychologists have on the therapeutic process is greater than that which is generally assumed. One respondent questioned the notion that therapists merely facilitate the process by which the client decides the focus or destination of therapy. Instead, it was suggested that psychologists actually significantly impact this procedure, in ways that are not obvious, and of which they are unaware.

> *- I don't take people, to a place that's, totally my construct or fabrication. ... Erm, but there's, there's, there's, there's a sense of, you know, and I'm sure most of us though take, take people further than we think we do. D'you know what, d'you know what I mean? I mean, I'm sure, that in different ways, (.) in different subtle ways, we are, we are, more, influential, than we think we are being. (Helen: 104, 754-761)*

Despite being uncertain about the impact of their spiritual perspective on the process of therapy, several participants provided hypothesises about the influence. These are discussed below in the category, '*THE BROAD IMPACT IN THERAPY'*. A deviant case was identified however, where the participant was more confident about the manner in which his perspective influenced therapy. He asserted that his acceptance of evolutionary explanations of behaviour, which were important to him in providing a sense of meaning, had significant implications upon his attitude towards clients. This was specifically in terms of adopting a non-judgmental approach.

> *- if you have a client, that's erm, aggressive, or with other mental health problems, where there may be a biological element, you can't be judgmental about that. ... It's neither, evil, or not evil, n-. There may be a right or wrong element in terms of society, ... the task for them is to err, either subdue it or channel it constructively or, concentrate on their other skills. But it would be wrong to be judgmental. ... If you accept, you see it has big implications if you accept an evolutionary explanation. (Peter: 85, 735-750)*

3.6.2 *BEING UNAWARE OF THE IMPACT GENERALLY*

This category refers to not being aware of the impact of spiritual beliefs, philosophies or attitudes, upon one's experience of the world. Individual respondents described how this phenomenon had previously applied to them, but suggested that they had gradually with time become more conscious of their sense of meaning and their general attitude to life. This process of becoming aware had not affected the attitudes or beliefs they held, but had merely made this form of understanding more visible to them.

> *- Erm, I mean, the, sort of, any religious beliefs I had were submerged for a hell of a long time, {laughs} I tell you. Erm, but they still guided me. ... Yeah, because I haven't changed that much, I don't think, and my attitudes are still, still the same, ... Err, as I remember, from years and years ago. So I was, I've always been guided by this, but never quite known that it was guiding me, ... If you like, ... Erm, it's been a bit of an autopilot that's been running me, and all that happens now is I'm aware of it. (Brian: 67, 1742-1755)*

One aspect of being unaware is that the individual is unconscious of the extent to which their understanding or beliefs are influencing them.

> *- I never thought that I would, that it had, it, it has or is influencing me so much. But, I realise the more I'm sort of been reflecting and since I've been going to the course, ... how I catch myself, thinking in those ways, which was, I was not conscious. It's not, that it started at this time or something drastic has happened or significantly that, I have changed. ... I just became aware. It was always there and it's just that I am more conscious of, ... the way I, view things. (Kamini: 6, 277-289)*

It was suggested that this state of being unaware of the influence of our beliefs or attitudes is a general phenomenon, and that people's behaviour reflects underlying perspectives far more than is generally realised.

> *- I think we express our values, ... Much more frequently, than people believe. ... Or that we notice. (Brian: 55, 1085-1090)*

3.6.3 *BEING GIVEN A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE*

It was suggested that individuals are actually provided with a sense of meaning or perspective during childhood. This process was argued to occur, as a result of the belief systems and methods for understanding the world that are present within the systems in which children grow up and operate. This was perceived as a positive phenomenon, which provided children with a feeling of security.

> *-with, children and young people ...... their kind of meaning is almost given for them by, structures they work within; school, parents, there's a lot of belief systems impinging on young people. And actually, that's the way it should be because, it gives them a degree of security and a meaning, that, er, because they, may not have the intellectual and emotional processes to develop their own so, they have, meaning that's given, (Peter:87, 844-854)*

The tendency for children to willingly accept the explanations and understanding that they are presented with was also highlighted. Thus individual participants related that they originally adopted the beliefs that were present within the environment in which they grew up. One respondent reported that she had not been aware of this process, and was actually been surprised by the manner in which she understood the world, when she reflected upon it.

> *- we had a catechism and were indoctrinated, erm, you know {laughs} that's how you get, brought up in the Catholic faith ...... and you never question it cos you're only young, (Brian: 41, 299-303)*

> *- lot of it is, not, sort of, is not so, glaring. It's just, erm, sort of you're, you're, you're born and brought, you're brought up in that environment so, it just, it's just that it, it just happens and that you go on. I'm surpri-, sometimes I'm surprised with my way, my attitude to all. (Kamini: 5, 270-273)*

3.6.4 *THE BROAD IMPACT IN THERAPY*

Some participants hypothesised about the influence of their spiritual perspective on the process of therapy, despite being somewhat uncertain about this. The impact that was suggested varied widely between respondents. The effects when working therapeutically with clients included being non-judgmental.

> *- I'm not sure if this is, in any way, (.) an effect, but I mean I, I, I guess. I don't know if this, is an effect of religion or spirituality, but, being non-judgmental. ... I can do that. (Brian: 52, 886-890)*

Also being completely focused on the client and the moment.

> *- I don't know if that's about my philosophies, or just about working with older folk. ... (.) I think it's a little bit about my philosophies, erm, ... The here and now, is important in terms of my personal philosophies, and, I believe it's equally important in our therapeutic relationship, and, erm, (.) and so if I'm with somebody, I'm there totally with them, at that time, (Helen: 107, 918-929)*

Another participant suggested his perspective led him to adopt a humble approach towards the presentation of his therapeutic skills:

> *- there is a big part of me, ... When I'm not, very spiritually aware, that, wants to, you know, look like a, a good psychologist, ... Who can do really, clever things. ... And I think that that's how I initially, initially, maybe that's how I initially kind of engaged with people to some extent. ... But quite quickly, I think, that this humility part, ... Becomes useful. (Harvey: 152, 908-920)*

One participant highlighted a different type of effect, whereby her perspective on the world and on spirituality, had led her not to pursue the idea within therapy.

> *- I have been struck by the fact it [spiritual ideas] hasn't come up, ... obviously as a therapist I haven't, because it's not, it's not central to how I view the world, I haven't, asked it or pursued it, (Susan: 28, 277-282)*

4. Discussion

4.1 Overview

Within this chapter, there is a discussion of the findings, and a critical examination of the research process. The findings are considered initially in relation to the existing psychological literature. The implications of the findings for clinical practice, psychological theory, and mental health policy are subsequently explored. This is followed by a critical evaluation of the study, which considers the methodology of grounded theory, the specific procedure that was employed, and the impact of the study upon the researcher. Finally, potential avenues for future investigation are suggested.

This study aimed to develop a theoretical account of clinical psychologists' understanding of the concept of spirituality, and of the processes through which it is addressed within therapy. Eight clinical psychologists were interviewed in total, and the narratives that were obtained were analysed using the qualitative method of grounded theory. The findings comprised of five independent yet related 'stories' that were developed from the data. These five stories are discussed as a whole during this chapter, with each of the sections that follows drawing on aspects from the different stories. It was felt that this approach would provide a more integrated and coherent summary of the findings, than if each story was considered individually. It has been commented already, that the process of making sense of one's findings is interpretive in nature, and therefore is both artful and political (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). It is therefore acknowledged that this chapter represents one interpretation of the findings, and that additional interpretations are possible.

It is important to emphasise at this stage, that spirituality was understood within the study as a broad and diverse concept, and thus the results section was suitably complex. Inevitably therefore, there will be considerable intricacy to any account that attempts to interpret and summarise these findings. In order both to manage this conceptual density, and to aid the reader's contact with the data, the following section commences by presenting the paradox that was perceived to be central within the findings. The discussion subsequently proceeds by considering the results in more detail, to allow the reader to

understand the evidence that suggests this paradox, and thereby to demonstrate the integrity of the account.

4.2 Summary of the main findings

The paradox that is evident within the findings, concerns the position of spirituality within clinical psychology. Spirituality was regarded within this study as a remote concept. The findings indicate that there is very limited discussion of the phenomenon in the field of psychology, and that a certain confusion surrounds the term. This may be observed to be consistent with the broader indifference towards spirituality that has prevailed within mainstream psychological debate. Nevertheless, the findings also reveal that spiritual issues are prevalent within the therapeutic arena. Furthermore, spirituality was understood to have personal significance for each of the participants in this study. Therefore there would appear to be a significant discrepancy, between the focus that is placed upon spirituality within the profession of psychology, and the recognition that spirituality is afforded within therapeutic encounters and personal experience.

In the following sections, these two contrasting ideas are considered in turn. There are many reasons evident within the results, for the remote position of spirituality within clinical psychology. Initially, these explanations are explored in the light of the available literature. Subsequently, the manner in which spirituality was understood to be prevalent is examined. The findings illustrate a range of ideas concerning the presentation of spirituality within therapy, and these are compared with those that are highlighted in other research.

4.2.1 Spirituality: a remote concept

The explanations that were provided for spirituality being a remote concept, fall broadly beneath two headings; the complexity of the concept of spirituality, and the neglect of the topic of spirituality. These are considered in turn below.

4.2.1.1 The complexity of the concept of spirituality

The findings from this study illustrate the diversity that exists in the perspectives of only a small group of clinical psychologists, regarding the concept of spirituality. This diversity in comprehension was evident between the eight narratives, and also within the individual accounts. Through paying attention to the participants' description of both the concept in general, and its role within the process of therapy, the multiplicity of meanings that were available to individual respondents became apparent. Some participants were fully aware of the manner in which they shifted between definitions during their account, and alluded to this process. Others however appeared less conscious, and switched between meanings without making reference to this. This heterogeneity in understanding is emphasised in the literature. Nino (1997) comments that attempts at defining the concept of spirituality reveal numerous nuances of form and content. The findings indicate that a consequence of this ambiguity is the perception of spirituality as an elusive concept, which is difficult to coherently grasp and make sense of.

Helminiak (1996) argues that there are four dominant uses of the term spirituality, and the findings similarly indicate the presence of four conceptualisations, but these definitions do not coincide. In this study, spirituality was associated with a person's individual sense of meaning, beliefs in transcendent beings, the perception that life has inherent value, and an awareness of one's position within the world, and it is the latter two ideas that are not referred to by Helminiak. Furthermore, the conceptualisations that are listed here did not represent tightly specified definitions, but comprised a broad range of ideas, with different levels of emphasis. This would suggest that it is difficult to formulate the boundaries for understanding spirituality. Certainly it would appear that these findings support Samuel's (1998) assertion, that "spirituality is a vague thing" (p.349).

Nino (1997) comments that most people believe that they are able to draw upon their personal experience when considering the spiritual, and the findings of this study point to the validity of this statement. Each of the participants related spirituality to phenomena that were significant or at least relevant to their own experience. It would appear that individuals are able to do this, because of the multiplicity of meanings that are associated with spirituality. However, it may be argued that the process of drawing upon one's own

experience will further contribute to the confusion surrounding spirituality, as individuals are using their own narratives as the frame of reference for comprehending the concept, rather than a more detached description. Thus it is may be understood that there is a circular process operating, which acts to ensure that the notion of spirituality remains vague and complex. The diversity of definition allows individuals to draw upon personal experience when describing spirituality, which actually maintains or even enhances the diversity and complexity of the concept.

A further feature was highlighted by the findings, that may be seen to contribute to the complexity that surrounds the concept of spirituality. This relates to the conflict that is present, between the characteristics of the different definitions of spirituality. Many analysts understand spirituality broadly, for example, as relating to a wide range of belief or practices (Adams, 1995). Several participants in this study similarly emphasised the breadth of the concept, relating spirituality to an individual's sense of meaning or values, or to an individual's beliefs in something transcendent and beyond the physical world. These participants therefore asserted that there is great variety in the individual essence of spirituality between people. However, the psychological literature indicates that spirituality may alternatively be understood quite specifically, in terms of the impact on functioning (e.g. Haug, 1998; Duffy, 1998). This type of definition associates spirituality with a range of interpersonally positive attitudes and behaviour, such as respect and altruism. It was found that several participants in this study also aligned themselves with this definition, either explicitly or implicitly. Spirituality was regarded as having a positive influence on the participants' experience of life, and there were few references to negative effects. It may be argued that these two definitions of spirituality actually conflict with each other at one level however. If spirituality is a broad concept, relating to the individual's sense of meaning or beliefs, there is the potential for an individual's spirituality to be associated with attitudes and behaviour that are not interpersonally positive, for example selfishness. This conflict was highlighted by the participant who had previously considered the concept of spirituality in some detail. Thus it would appear that there are difficulties with integrating the different conceptualisations of spirituality into an overarching framework.

The findings also illustrate other difficulties associated with the concept of spirituality. These include the problems that exist when attempting to discuss the phenomenon

Participants reported that adequate phrases are not always available to convey the intended ideas, and that one inevitably resorts to using clichés instead. Nevertheless, the predominant explanation for the complexity surrounding the concept of spirituality, may be argued to be the diversity in definition that exists. The findings indicate that the multiplicity of meanings that are available creates significant difficulties, when attempting to coherently understand the term. Indeed, the contrasting nature of the definitions that are present, would suggest that it is not actually possible to integrate each beneath a global framework of spirituality. Attempts to do so may therefore lead to a sense of frustration, and the perception that spirituality is essentially a remote concept.

4.2.1.2 The neglect of the concept of spirituality

'The neglect of spirituality' is actually a main category within the first story of the results section. There are several ideas apparent within the findings, that may at least provide partial explanations for the neglect that was described. The first of these explanations suggests that the indifference that generally exists towards the notion of spirituality within psychological debate, is actually an extension of a wider, cultural tendency. For example, it was emphasised that although religion is a subject that people are aware of within Britain, there may be reluctance to talk openly about it, because of the sensitive and divisive nature of the topic. Other issues that were related to spirituality were indicated to be similarly avoided. One concept, that of the sense of self, was argued to be alien within British culture in particular. At the same time discussion of another relevant and related notion, that of a sense of meaning or purpose, was reported to potentially leave individuals feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed.

In order to consider these ideas from a broader framework, it may be useful to turn away from the psychological literature, and consider instead a very recent public debate. During his Reith lecture on 17 May 2000, H.R.H. Prince Charles actually provided support for the notion of spirituality as a culturally neglected concept. He specifically noted that it is "deeply unfashionable" (www.princeofwales.gov.uk, 18/5/2000) to talk about the spiritual dimension, and suggested that a greater emphasis ought to placed upon this domain, within the scientific realm. This consideration of the role of spirituality within scientific pursuit, is

returned to later in this chapter, in section 4.3.2. At this stage it is merely important to acknowledge the observation, that there is apparently is a wider, cultural backdrop, to the dissociation of spirituality and psychology in this country.

A separate explanation that is given within the literature for the neglect of spirituality, is the apparent prejudice among mental health professionals against formal or institutionalised spirituality. It is asserted that this bias is built on the assumption that spiritual practices are often the root of presenting problems, which therefore leads therapists to reject any such positions within clients (Prest and Keller, 1993). The findings do not support this argument however. The participants each reported that they were prepared to explore and discuss spiritual beliefs with clients, and only one participant described owning the perspective, of religious beliefs having a predominantly negative impact on the individual and their interaction with others. The findings would therefore appear to be more in line with Loewenthal's (1995) position, that it is a simplification to conclude that misunderstandings regarding spirituality are generally the result of professionals' negative attitudes to religion.

A more subtle process that is indicated within the findings as potentially contributing to the neglect of spiritual beliefs, is the adoption of a more neutral, respectful approach. The importance of maintaining respect for beliefs was emphasised to be a core concern of the participants. However, this seemingly helpful guideline actually served to prevent the consideration of spirituality in particular circumstances. One participant noted for example, that when working with a client with a strong spiritual conviction, the need to respect beliefs actually led her to withdraw from the subject. Adams (1995) argues that the adoption of a neutral position towards beliefs may equate to the therapist remaining silent on the issue, and the findings seemingly provide some limited support for this suggestion, within certain situations at least.

Further factors that were identified as contributing to the avoidance of spirituality, related to the organisation and structure of clinical psychology. The findings indicate that spirituality is not a topic that is given any particular attention during clinical training. This supports Shafranske and Malony's (1990) findings from the United States, that psychologists receive limited training with respect to religious and spiritual issues. It may be argued that this situation has significant implications for the approach towards

spirituality that is adopted by psychologists post qualification. Several participants within this current study highlighted, that as a consequence of the area not having been focused upon at any point throughout their careers, they had not considered the issue in any detail. It is understood within the literature, that it is psychologists' personal orientations towards religiousness and spirituality, rather than clinical training, that are the primary determinants of their clinical approach to these issues in professional practice (Shafranske and Malony, 1990). There is evidence of this effect within the findings of the present study. One participant for example commented that she did not inquire about clients' spiritual beliefs, as these were not significant to her perspective on life. Another participant reported that she had initially steered away from the subject of religion in therapy, because it was a divisive and sensitive issue in the culture that she grew up in. It would appear therefore that the absence of spirituality within clinical training, contributes to the neglect of the concept in the profession, including within therapy.

4.2.2 The prevalence of spirituality

The findings clearly indicate, that the extent to which spirituality is perceived to manifest itself within therapy, relates to the definition that is used to understand spirituality. Within this study, there were two dominant conceptualisations for spirituality, that were discussed in relation to therapy. The first of these concerned the spiritual beliefs of the client, including those related to a religious framework. Some participants spoke solely about this idea, when considering the management of spirituality in a therapeutic encounter. The remaining participants meanwhile also considered the other perspective, in addition to discussing spiritual beliefs. This perspective related to the client's sense of meaning, or sense of self. These ideas are considered in turn below.

Within the findings there are additional suggestions about the presentation of spirituality within therapy, that are not referred to in this section. These include the client's awareness of his or her surrounding environment, and the therapeutic 'steps' that are taken when a suitable fit develops between client and therapist. The exclusion of these ideas is justified, on the grounds that both suggestions were presented by only one participant. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge these ideas, if only to further emphasise the diversity of

definition surrounding spirituality, and the implications that this has for the discussion of spirituality within therapy.

This section on the prevalence of spirituality, concludes with a discussion of the impact of the participants' own spiritual values and ideas on the therapeutic process. This was an alternative area, in which spirituality was understood to infiltrate the therapeutic encounter.

4.2.2.1 The client's spiritual beliefs

The findings illustrate, that the frequency that spiritual beliefs were discussed or addressed with clients, varied widely between participants. There were several reasons provided for the presence and absence of dialogue regarding beliefs within therapy, including therapeutic style and specialty worked in. These ideas are explored more fully in Section 4.3.1.2, which is concerned with the implications of the findings for clinical practice. Nevertheless a more consistent theme of the findings, was the acknowledgement by participants, of the significance of beliefs when present. It was emphasised that beliefs actually provide individuals with a particular perspective towards their experience of life. Beliefs were asserted to provide a framework of understanding, which was used to gain explanations about the world in general, and interpretations about specific events and incidents. It was noted that this framework had the potential to be very fixed, to exclude the need for other explanations about phenomena, and to even guide the person's life in its entirety. These ideas afford support for similar acknowledgements within the literature, where it is emphasised that spiritual beliefs provide interpretative lenses for apprehending experience and explaining existence (Prest and Keller, 1993; Stewart and Gale, 1994). In this sense, it was noted that spiritual beliefs were a significant part of the person, and would necessarily influence the process of therapy. From this perspective it may therefore be concluded, that if spiritual beliefs are held by a client, they will be pervasive within the therapeutic encounter.

4.2.2.2 The client's sense of meaning

The findings highlight, that several participants perceived spirituality within therapy to relate to existential questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life and death. Such issues were noted to be frequently occurring, especially after loss, and had the potential to be usefully addressed within a therapeutic setting. This perspective of associating existential questions with spiritual concerns, was extended by some participants, whereby psychological distress in general was understood to be a spiritual issue. It was suggested that distress in its different forms, fundamentally occurred as a consequence of the individual's difficulties with his or her sense of self. It was further asserted that the difficulties would have a particular meaning for the individual, which could be explored. Using this understanding, spirituality may be regarded as being pervasive across all presenting problems, and thus across therapy in general.

The questions of meaning and the self have been considered in detail in parts of the psychological literature, without necessarily any reference to spirituality. Within these discussions however, the significance of these ideas for therapeutic work has been emphasised. Yalom (1989) claims in particular it is awareness of the harsh 'givens' of existence, for example the inevitability of death, that breeds anxiety about the meaning of existence. He argues that it actually the primal task of psychotherapy to explore these harsh 'givens', rather than dissociating oneself from these, and the accompanying anxiety. Kopp (1974) similarly argues that the most important struggles are the "painful journeys through the inner space of the soul" (p. 145), which take place as one considers questions of meaning and identity, and moves away from the familiar illusion of certainty. This literature therefore supports the findings of the current research, regarding the significance of questions of meaning and purpose within the therapeutic process, although alternative language not focusing upon spirituality has been used to illustrate this.

4.2.2.3 The psychologist's spirituality

The findings illustrate a broad range of processes, through which the spiritual values of the clinician may impact therapy. Participants described being uncertain as to specific nature of

the effects, and the suggestions were therefore made tentatively. Nevertheless, the influence of the participants' spiritual perspective was reported to potentially extend to facilitating a non-judgmental attitude, a humble approach towards one's skills, and a greater focus upon the presenting situation. One participant also reported receiving feedback, that her therapeutic approach on occasion actually reflected her personal philosophies. Acknowledgement of this influence is consistent with arguments from the constructionist paradigm, about the co-construction of the therapeutic narrative; discourse within therapy is understood to depend upon both that which the client brings to the consulting room, and the experiences and orientation that the therapist brings (Lax, 1992). The significance and prevalence of spirituality within therapy therefore, is argued to also relate to the role of the therapist within the clinical encounter.

4.3 Implication of the findings

The implications that have been drawn out from the findings, relate to three areas of clinical psychology; clinical practice, psychological theory and the application of mental health policy. These are examined in turn below. The discussion of the implications for clinical practice, focuses on approaches for addressing the spiritual beliefs of clients. The discussion of the implications for mental health policy meanwhile, focuses on the other broad area of client spirituality that was debated, that of a sense of meaning. The section regarding psychological theory does not adopt a specific focus, but considers the concept of spirituality generally.

4.3.1 Implications for Clinical Practice

It was noted in the Introduction, that clinical practice may be understood as consisting of essentially two core aspects (Dingwall et al., 1998). There are the body of general 'rules' that exist for acting therapeutically, and there are the improvisation skills that are creatively employed, to fit the broader rules to the specific case. These improvisation skills are required, because of the heterogeneity of therapeutic practice; unique situations are continually encountered, and therefore it is not possible to write rules that apply specifically

to each case. The findings of this study illustrate two central 'rules' that participants followed when addressing spiritual beliefs within therapy. The findings also highlight examples of the process of improvisation, in addition to several therapeutic dilemmas, that were experienced when the participant attempted to apply the general rules to individual cases.

This section shall initially be used to explore the two general 'rules' that were identified in the findings. These rules are the two main categories that were developed in Story 3, that is, 'Respecting beliefs' and 'Understanding what is meaningful'. These ideas are discussed in turn below. To begin with, the background to the rules are considered, and this is followed by a discussion of the ways in which these heuristics were interpreted by the participants. Strategies that were used to implement the rules are subsequently explored.

It is important to emphasise a note of caution, before proceeding further. It is clear that any act depends for meaning on the context in which it occurs, and that there is a danger when writing about therapy, to move towards oversimplification or manipulation of the processes described (Bugental, 1995). Bugental asserts that it is nevertheless valuable to consider the experiences of the consultation room, in order to understand more fully the subtle interplay that occurs within the therapeutic exchange. It is merely important to consider the issues tentatively, and draw conclusions carefully. As Dingwall et al. (1998) emphasise, the value of qualitative research in the study of clinical practice, lies in potential that exists to inform the decision-maker who is prepared to think through a solution, and analyse the particular details of the case that lies before him or her. Thus the following section takes the form of a discussion rather than a prescriptive guide, whereby different strategies are highlighted and their potential merits and costs are considered.

4.3.1.1 Respecting beliefs

The findings illustrate the significance that was placed upon respecting the spiritual beliefs of the clients by participants. It was emphasised that when working with a client with spiritual beliefs, it was important to suspend one's own thoughts and judgements about those beliefs, and instead empathise with the client's perspective. This general rule had

several implications for the practice of therapy. For example, in a particular scenario that was described, where a client was seeking advice about the validity of his or her beliefs, it was suggested that the psychologist needed to refrain from responding directly with opinions. Instead, the appropriate course of action was perceived to be a referral to the relevant religious leader, while at the same time possibly exploring the client's motivation for such inquiries.

The requirement to respect the spiritual beliefs of the client, may be seen to be part of the code of practice under which clinical psychologists operate. Section 3.1.2 of the Professional Practice Guidelines (Division of Clinical Psychology, 1995) asserts that 'In considering therapeutic goals, psychologists must ensure that they do not unreasonably impose their own values nor those of the institution in which care is being provided to clients'. Although this section, or any other within the guidelines, does not make explicit reference to beliefs of a spiritual nature, it may be understood that these are protected within this guideline, beneath the term 'values'.

The process of respecting beliefs within clinical psychology practice, is a standard that has actually been established and referred to for some considerable time however. Wulff (1997) comments upon the work of Swiss psychologist Theodore Flournoy (1854-1920), and specifically upon his identification of the 'principle of the exclusion of the transcendent'. This notion asserts that psychologists should neither reject or affirm the independent existence of the religious object, as this is a philosophical matter that is beyond their domain of competence (Flournoy, cited in Wulff, 1997). In later years Jung (cited in Dry, 1961) emphasised the same viewpoint, arguing that it was beyond the reach of human cognition, and thus outside the province of psychologists, to state whether or not religious experience stems from sources outside the human psyche.

The accommodation of this principle is not as straightforward as it initially appears however, as the principle may be interpreted in different ways (Wulff, 1997). At one extreme, all variations in conception of the transcendent figure are understood to be beyond the realm of psychology, and therefore have to be respected, no matter what consequences are evident. At the other extreme, spiritual symbols are viewed as historically conditioned expressions of the human imagination, and thus the nature of spiritual beliefs may actually

be explored and therefore worked with. From this perspective, it is only a position that denies the actual existence of the transcendent figure, that is acknowledged to be a violation of the principle (Wulff, 1997). This distinction has considerable implications for the practice of clinical psychology, given the emotional and behavioural responses that may arise from spiritual beliefs, or are actually justified by such. Loewenthal (1995) asserts that behaviour that causes intolerable distress to others, is frequently justified in religious terms. Therefore a helpful position regarding the approach that may be taken to such beliefs, is an obvious need for mental health professionals.

Within the literature, several authors have been forthright, in documenting the acceptability of questioning the form of client's spiritual beliefs. Gutsche (1994) reports that a colleague successfully challenged a client's conception of God as a punitive figure. Furthermore, Wulff (1997) himself argues that it is not the intention of Flournoy's principle, to prevent the study of the spiritual beliefs per se. It is not necessarily an area that is inviting for therapists however. Narramore (1994) argues that although religious resistances are fundamentally no different to other resistances that present in therapy, they do actually appear stronger, because of the power of religious symbols and language.

The findings indicate that participants in this current study, did generally perceive it to be appropriate to inquire about the form of spiritual convictions. Indeed, specific examples were provided where the client's conception of the transcendent figure was challenged, but in a way that did not question the existence of that figure. One example involved challenging a belief that Allah operated in a purely fatalistic manner, by attributing the order evident within the world to Allah. In essence therefore an additional perspective of Allah was provided to the participant, through the use of evidence that fitted and was consistent with the individual's belief. This procedure was reported to be helpful and adaptive for the client.

The findings also illustrate however, that other participants were less confident in questioning the nature of beliefs that were held. A specific example was recorded, where the participant withdrew from the discussion of spiritual beliefs, because of the understanding that these beliefs needed to be respected. This stepping back from the topic occurred, despite the perception that exploration of the beliefs would have been beneficial

to the client. Clearly the issue of consent is fundamental to this area, and on occasions clients will not be prepared to discuss their beliefs in any detail. However the participant suggested that in this instance, it was her decision to actively withdraw from the issue, after considering it initially. The question therefore remains as to whether it would have been appropriate and helpful to explore the area further.

Clearly this is a significant issue that requires greater attention within the profession, to establish a better understanding of the 'rule' of respecting clients' beliefs. It was suggested that the process of working consistently with beliefs, while actually helping the client to find a way through his or her difficulties, is actually the art of psychotherapy. Therefore it would not be possible to prescribe strategies for effectively working in this way, but greater emphasis on the issue would nevertheless highlight the complexities that exist, and prepare the clinician for these. Given the limited focus upon spirituality that was reported within clinical training, it is argued that this issue could be helpfully incorporated at this stage of a psychologist's career. If trainee psychologists were provided with a greater understanding of the intricacies of this rule of practice, it would allow them to develop the skills of improvisation, for applying this heuristic within the consulting room. If there is not greater attention paid to this issue however, it would appear that there is a danger of interpreting the need to respect spiritual beliefs as withdrawing from or avoiding the topic, given the power of religious language and experience that is described by Narramore (1994). If this were the outcome, opportunities to work effectively with clients' beliefs may be lost.

4.3.1.2 Understanding what is meaningful

The findings illustrate a desire by each of the participants to explore the beliefs of clients, in the context of explicit indication from the client of the significance of this area. The underlying aim that was described in this situation, was to establish the meaning of the beliefs, and the implications of those beliefs with regard to functioning. Thus the 'rule' that was apparent, was to gain an understanding of beliefs that were significant to the client. There was less consistency in approach between participants however, in situations where there was not a signal from the client that such exploration was wanted or would be helpful. Some participants indicated that they routinely inquired about the presence and

nature of beliefs, without waiting for reference to this area by the client. Other participants meanwhile reported that they responded to the lead of the client in considering this matter.

This disparity in approach was related to a distinction in participants' understanding of how spiritual concerns would be raised in therapy. One perspective argued that it is easy to miss concerns relating to spiritual matters, and thus strategies were introduced to allow these ideas to become visible. The other contrasting perspective assumed that such matters would be raised by the client, if they were significant.

There is no specific reference to the emphasis that should be placed upon spiritual beliefs in particular in the Professional Practice Guidelines (Division of Clinical Psychology, 1995), but Section 3.1.1 does refer more broadly to other aspects of the client's background that may influence psychological health; 'It is essential that psychologists pay particular attention to the influence of race, gender and culture in the expression of psychological difficulties and the professional response'. It may be asserted that spirituality is another issue of diversity that should be included within this heuristic, or it may be argued that it is already included beneath culture. If this perspective is adopted, it has implications for the approach that is taken towards beliefs. A review of the literature on religious counselling concludes that clients are often concerned with challenges or potential challenges to their values in therapy (Worthington, 1986). This finding would suggest that it is unlikely that issues relating to beliefs will always be automatically raised by clients in the therapeutic setting. Therefore in order to pay attention to these issues, it may be necessary for the clinician to prompt discussion of this area. This is not to say however, that if a client holds spiritual beliefs, these will necessarily be a focus for the therapeutic process. The findings of the study indicate that an awareness of the presence of spiritual beliefs, did not necessarily affect the approach that was adopted to therapy by the psychologist; that is, it was not always perceived to be necessary, for spiritual beliefs to be addressed directly.

Another issue that is significant to this area, concerns the therapist's awareness of the impact of their own perspective towards spirituality, upon the therapeutic process. Each of the participants acknowledged that their perspective would impact therapy, with some participants suggesting that this influence would be greater than expected. Nevertheless,

several participants indicated that they had not considered this process in any detail, and were not aware of the nature of this effect.

One explanation highlighted within the findings for this lack of awareness, relates to the difficulty of actually perceiving the impact of one's beliefs and values on one's experience of life. It was claimed that the influence is not obvious, and the individual may actually be surprised, when he or she becomes more aware of the effect. As Toren (1996) highlights, people do not and cannot have transparent access to their own history, and to the processes through which they become who they are. Therefore it will not be possible for the therapist to automatically be aware of the processes that influence his or her approach within therapy. This has implications for the management of spirituality, as psychologists are operating within a culture where this concept is largely neglected. The potential clearly exists therefore, for issues surrounding spirituality to be avoided without conscious effort.

This discussion implies that it would be helpful for psychologists to pay greater attention to their own values and perspectives, and the influence of these upon their approach to therapy. Such reflexive considerations would extend both to the personal values of the therapist, and the values that are present within the context in which they operate. Clinical supervision clearly provides psychologists with the opportunity to engage in the reflexive process, but perhaps it is appropriate for a greater emphasis to be placed upon the impact that therapists' values may have upon the therapeutic encounter within training. This would encourage psychologists, to begin the process of examining the potential contribution of their values to the therapeutic process before qualification. This may further lead to greater dialogue on issues such as the disclosure of the therapist's spiritual values within therapy; an issue that participants in this study held different views on, but that was perceived by one participant to be of critical importance to the process of therapy on occasion.

4.3.2 Implications for psychological theory

It was emphasised in the Introduction that there has traditionally existed a dissociation between psychology, with its scientific heritage and 'scientist-practitioner' model of operation, and spirituality. It was argued that this situation has gradually altered, such that

there is currently a greater level of dialogue regarding spirituality in its many forms, within the psychological literature. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that a sharp distinction continues to be commonly drawn between spirituality and scientific concern in general. In order to discuss the implications of the findings of this study for psychological theory therefore, it is prudent to initially consider the wider relationship between spirituality and scientific pursuit.

The distinction between spirituality and science was highlighted within H.R.H. Prince Charles' recent Reith lecture, and also within the public discussion that followed. In his speech, H.R.H. Prince Charles adopted the dualistic understanding that separates the human psyche into two aspects, the heart and the mind. He associated the latter with science and the former with the spiritual, asserting that "it is the heart that experiences God, not the reason" (www.princeofwales.gov.uk, 18/5/2000). This distinction was further emphasised in the media, with the public debate that followed the lecture being described as "an echo of the great ideological clash between Enlightenment rationalists and Romantics which began two centuries ago and has never quite died down." (Meek, 2000, p.3). Such summarisations contribute to the perspective that there is a clear distinction between rational understanding, which is assumed to be scientific, and other forms of understanding.

The perception of such a separation between spirituality and rationality (or the mind), may be argued to be unhelpful for the position of the former within clinical psychology. For if psychology is to be understood as the scientific study of the human mind and behaviour, the relevance of spirituality within the discipline is quite unclear, and open for debate (Heap, 1998).

A more helpful perspective towards spirituality however, is to acknowledge the distinction from science, but not isolate spirituality from the mind. In contributing to the debate initiated by the Reith lecture, Dobson (2000) asserts that it is necessary to recognise that a range of rationalities exist, which may be brought into greater balance, in order to counter the dangers associated with the dominance of scientific rationality. Spirituality may be argued to be one of these rationalities. As Adams (1995, p.207) suggests, there has recently, "been a debunking of science as the answer to everything, and a corresponding understanding that spirituality can be a rational and logical process" Within psychology the

scientific process is balanced by ethical considerations, which examine the potential impact upon the health and well-being of all relevant individuals. Such consideration emphasises the significance of individual human worth, which was associated by some participants to equate to spirituality, under the banner of humanism. Hence although psychology is secular profession, it does not rely merely upon scientific understanding to guide its theoretical development, but aspects of spirituality as well.

Furthermore, the findings clearly indicate that spirituality was perceived to be a facet of the mind, whether in the form of holding beliefs, having a sense of meaning, or having a sense of awareness. From this perspective as Lifton (1987) suggests, spirituality may not be dismissed as 'a question of personal belief', but falls under the remit of science as much as any other manifestation of the human mind. It is therefore vital for psychological research and theory to consider the area, in all its complexity. As Gutsche (1994) asserts, if the 'scientific' approach of maintaining the chasm between spirituality and psychology is maintained, we will be too far removed from our clients. Nino (1997) comments that although the momentum that has been established by the increasing body of psychological literature regarding spirituality is encouraging, there is now a need to build basic concepts and frames of reference. The findings of this study illustrate the extent to which such frames of reference are required, if spirituality is to become less of a remote concept to the profession.

4.3.3 Implications for the application of mental health policy

The findings of this study have implications for the broader political context in which clinical psychology operates, including the direction in which mental health policy is currently heading. During the past few years, the concept of clinical governance has been introduced as the government's framework for improving the quality of care within the NHS. There are several strands to clinical governance, including professional self-regulation, lifelong learning and the setting of clinical standards. The government's proposals for policy development are thus concerned with achieving health care interventions that are effective, equitable and of a high standard, and there has been general support from the Division of Clinical Psychology (Cohen, 1999). It has been noted

however, that the issue of setting clinical standards in particular is a difficult area within clinical psychology (Harvey, 2000). Roth (1999) comments that the evidence base may be used by policy makers to set standards for practice that are scientifically rigorous, but perhaps clinically questionable. He cites the concern that has been expressed by clinicians, regarding the way in which the list of 'empirically supported therapies', developed by the American Psychological Association, has been used to restrict practice within some organisations in the United States. This threat of narrowing the approach to therapy, together with other difficulties that are associated with poorly introduced evidence based practice (Roth, 1999), may have particular consequences for the focus that is placed upon spirituality within therapy.

The findings indicate that the concepts of meaning and of the self, were perceived by some participants to be incongruent with the model of therapy as treatment. Thus if therapy was understood to be concerned with prescribed approaches and interventions, spirituality was felt to be largely irrelevant, on a superficial basis at least. Furthermore, it was suggested that the use of the term spirituality did not fit with the language of the health service. One participant described the particular anxieties that she experienced, as she adopted an approach to therapy that focused primarily upon existential issues. These concerns related to the lack of structure of this approach, and also to questions about the extent to which the method would be effective. The participant nevertheless continued the work for over six months, and subsequently concluded that it was her most effective clinical contact to date.

These findings therefore highlight a particular dilemma that was perceived by some participants; a certain value was placed upon considering spiritual issues that were related to meaning, and yet this approach was understood to sit uneasily with more standard models of care. Evidence based practice, if poorly implemented, has the potential to privilege cheaper short-term treatments (for which there is a lot of research evidence) over longer-term methods (which have until recently been under-researched) (Roth, 1999). This therefore may lead to a greater emphasis upon structure and technique, and a tendency for psychologists to avoid engagement with more complicated and uncertain methods, that have nonetheless been demonstrated to be valuable. The response to this threat should not be a movement away from evidence concerned with the efficacy of therapeutic endeavour

however. Instead, there needs to be an awareness of the limitations of poorly introduced evidence based practice, which unnecessarily privileges shorter-term approaches with greater structure. If this awareness is not prevalent, the culture may further develop, where the spiritual issues of meaning and purpose are considered to be superfluous to the requirements of therapy.

4.4 Critical evaluation

The critical evaluation of the research process considers three broad areas. Initially the method of grounded theory is examined, in light of criticisms that have been made about the approach. Subsequently, the specific procedure that was followed during this study is considered. Finally, attention is paid to the impact that the research process had upon the researcher.

4.4.1 Critique of the choice of method

The broad range of available literature concerning the method of grounded theory, emphasises that this approach is not a unitary concept. Instead, it may be understood that there are actually several different versions of grounded theory. The original authors, Glaser and Strauss, have both published texts independently of each other (e.g. Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), which have highlighted discrepancies in their thinking about the precise nature of the method. This divergence in understanding has subsequently been considered in some detail in further papers (Corbin, 1998), and attempts have been made to move the debate forward by proposing alternative frameworks, such as methodical hermeneutics, for understanding the approach (Rennie, 1998). In addition, there have been those authors who have pressed for a social constructionist revision of grounded theory (Charmaz, 1990; Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994). Thus it is clear, that over thirty years on from the original introduction of the method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), grounded theory is viewed as a broad and divergent, yet valuable approach to qualitative research.

Much of the criticism that grounded theory has attracted in the past, and continues to receive, concerns epistemological considerations. Reicher (2000) for example summarises grounded theory as epistemologically conservative, in aiming to represent an inner psychological reality or relatively stable underlying mental structure. Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (2000) dispute this description as "a misleading caricature" (p.8) however, and note that the leaning towards essentialist assumptions by some grounded theory research, does not represent good practice. It would appear therefore, that the criticisms made by Charmaz (1990) and others, regarding the positivistic language of the original description of grounded theory, have been broadly integrated into an acceptance of an interpretive or social constructionist version of grounded theory. Corbin (1998) for example argues that the approach of Strauss and Corbin (1990) is not dogmatic, but accepts that researchers "pick and choose among methods, make claim to that which is relevant to themselves, and build from there" (p.127).

Such an acceptance of an interpretive position within grounded theory methodology, leads to certain challenges however. The first of these relates to the accusation, that the theoretical account that is developed is a less valuable scientific narrative, because of the constructive role of the researcher. Gergen and Kaye (1992) counter this criticism, by arguing that it is not the importance of the narrative that is lessened, but the site of significance that is changed. They argue that scientific representations need to be understood as products of the scientific community. From this perspective knowledge is not fixed and all-encompassing, but emerges as an on-going self-referential construction (Fruggeri, 1992). As Parker (1994) highlights, there is always a surplus of meaning, and additional observations that that could be included in an account. This is not to lessen the value of that which is included in a scientific representation that assumes an interpretive position. Instead, it merely acknowledges the fluidity of the account, by highlighting the perspective from which the knowledge has been developed, and the context within which it is presented.

A further challenge relating to the interpretive stance of grounded theory, concerns the extent to which the researcher is able to step away from his or her own assumptions about the data. Thus although it is acknowledged that the researcher will inevitably impact each stage of the research process, it is nevertheless regarded as fundamentally important, that

the researcher is able to move away from preconceived ideas about the phenomena being studied. Otherwise, as Silverman (1993) emphasises, grounded theory may be used as a mere smoke-screen for legitimising the implicit theories of the researcher. It is understood that in this present study, the systematic use of procedures to enhance validity and reliability (for example deviant-case analysis), served to prevent the intuitive processes of the researcher from dominating during the data analysis stage. It is believed that the employment of such strategies invoked the process of deduction and thus helped to validate the findings, preventing an overreliance upon the inductive process of inferring generalisations. Furthermore the maintaining of a field journal, in which a reflexive account of the research process was recorded, is understood to have allowed the researcher to set several biases aside. Hence although it is accepted that the researcher's perspectives and assumptions will inevitably have impacted the findings and conclusions of this study, it is nevertheless understood that this impact has been managed in part, through the researcher's rigorous engagement with the methods described above.

4.4.2 Critique of the research procedure

Four aspects of the procedure of this study are critically examined in the following sections. Firstly, the sampling of participants is considered, and a specific limitation in the strategy that was followed is highlighted. Subsequently, the characteristics of the researcher's relationships with the participants are described, and the potential impact upon the findings is considered. Finally, the issues of saturation and deviant case analysis are explored.

4.4.2.1 Selection of participants

There is a specific limitation of the research procedure, that relates to the process through which participants were sampled. The sample was predominantly one of convenience, as a large portion of the sample consisted of those who responded to an invitation to participate. It may be argued therefore, that this method of sampling provided access to psychologists who were already interested in the phenomenon of spirituality, and were hence more likely to address related issues within therapy. Silverman (2000) asserts that it

is important when selecting cases, to seek out negative instances that are not likely to support the developing account. It would thus have been helpful to extend the use of theoretical sampling to recruit additional participants with a more ambivalent attitude towards spirituality, or even a clear disregard for the concept. Practical constraints concerning time however prevented this strategy from being followed. It would therefore be appropriate for future research into this area to actively seek out such participants, in order to develop and refine the account further.

4.4.2.2 Relationship with participants

There are arguably further limitations to the study, that relate to the relationship of the researcher to the participants. One issue concerns to the extent to which participants were aware of the researcher's spiritual beliefs. At least three participants had some insight into the researcher's religious orientation, as a consequence of previous professional contact with the researcher. This information may therefore have influenced the narratives of these participants in some way, particularly with regard to their reported perspective towards religion. Certainly the one participant who described herself as holding a more negative attitude towards religion, highlighted after the interview that she was not aware of the researcher's position on this issue. However, it may be argued that participants would generally have assumed that the researcher had a particular interest in spirituality, even in the absence of specific information to confirm this, because of his choice to study that topic. Therefore it is unclear as to the extent to which this information would have impacted the narratives, or how this process may have been avoided.

An alternative consideration concerns the broader relationship between the researcher and the participants. As has already been stated, there had been professional contact between the researcher and several participants prior to the commencement of the study, because of the researcher's training position within the locality. Furthermore, it was likely that there would continue to be professional contact with some participants after the study, for the same reason. This therefore may have impacted the narratives that were obtained, as a consequence of social desirability factors for example. The relationship also represented a difference in terms of status and experience, between the researcher and the participants

As the researcher was a trainee clinician, and the participants were qualified clinicians, it may be argued that the participants would have been anxious to appear particularly competent and professional within their accounts. Again, this may have influenced the content of the narratives, with participants eager perhaps to demonstrate their management of spirituality within therapy.

The extent to which such factors are perceived to be limitations to the research process, depends upon the perspective that one holds towards the content of interviews. Whyte (cited in Silverman, 1993) argues that in dealing with subjective material, one is not trying to discover the true sentiment of the informant, as people can and do hold conflicting sentiments at any given time. The aim of research interviews therefore cannot be to develop a true narrative. Interview content shall inevitably be influenced by a range of contextual and situational factors, and it is not possible to account for each of these. An alternative approach to this study that could have been adopted, to avoid the inherent limitations of co-constructed narratives, would have been to study participants' transcripts of clinical interviews. Such an approach would have provided direct access to therapeutic encounters, and thus scenarios where spirituality was managed within the consulting room. This method would have not have allowed participants' understanding and attitudes towards spirituality to be explored however, and may therefore be more appropriate for a future study.

4.4.2.3 Saturation

The concept of saturation was described in the Method section, as the position when no additional data may be found for developing the categories. The level of saturation that was achieved within this study, varied between stories and categories. As the research was an exploratory examination of a broad subject area within a constraining time period, certain issues were discussed by only a few participants. The topic of existential concerns about the purpose of existence for example, was not debated to the extent that similar ideas were noted repeatedly. It could not be claimed therefore, that this aspect of the account reached a level of full saturation. An alternative approach to the investigation of this area, that may have led to a more saturated representation of the data, would have been to limit the focus of the study to particular strands of spirituality, for example the concept of a sense of

meaning. Such an approach would not however have allowed for an examination of the breadth of the concept, and thus again may be more appropriate for a future investigation.

4.4.2.4 Deviant case analysis

The technique of deviant case analysis was referred to in the Method section as the identification and integration into the account, of those aspects of the data where 'things go differently', that is, the data does fit with the emerging categories. Two different approaches were actually employed to manage deviant cases, because of the external constraints to the research process that existed. Some deviant cases were fully integrated into the account, with categories of all levels of abstraction being developed to accommodate the divergent data. One example of this procedure, relates to the manner in which participants constructed the concept of spirituality (the second 'story', that is section 3.3). A pattern was originally observed, where participants understood spirituality as an individual's sense of meaning, or beliefs in transcendent powers. These processes were therefore both developed as main categories. However, two deviant cases were subsequently identified, where spirituality was conceptualised quite differently. In both of these instances, spirituality was understood as holding a specific perspective of the world. In spite of this diversity in understanding, these cases were also developed as main categories, and thus were not labelled as deviant cases in the text, as they were fully integrated into the account along with the two dominant conceptualisations of spirituality. These four different definitions subsequently became subsumed beneath the higher order core category of 'Having a sense of perspective', to represent the way in which spirituality was understood by participants.

The alternative method that was utilised, led to lower level of integration of the deviant cases. In these instances, the cases were not used to develop the category titles and the dominant account, but were simply listed as examples of data that did not fit within the 'story'. These cases were thus labelled as being deviant in the text, and examples are present in each story. These deviant cases were not integrated or used to shape the account more fully, as a consequence of the time constraints that were present within this study.

4.4.3 Impact on the researcher

As the researcher within this study, I felt privileged to have access to participants' detailed and candid accounts of therapeutic encounters, which were both enlightening and intriguing. Furthermore, as the study continued and I reflected upon the process of the research, I became conscious of the impact that this process was exerting on myself. During this section I provide examples of the way that my experience of the project influenced both my theoretical understanding, and my research skills in the form of interviewing technique.

From transcribing and coding the initial discourses I became aware of two key processes, that I subsequently paid greater attention to when interviewing later participants. The first process related to the extent to which I used the interview guide to shape the discourse. As I coded the first interview, I became aware that I had closely followed the order in which the questions were arranged on the guide, to structure the interview. On occasions this had led to the participant being drawn away from an example she was describing, which actually re-emerged at a later stage in the interview process. I concluded from such passages that I had actually followed the guide too rigidly, and not allowed the participant to expand fully upon the issues that she regarded as significant. Hence in later interviews I attempted to adopt a more flexible style when using the guide, which provided the participant with greater opportunity to direct the discourse as he or she perceived to be appropriate.

The second process related to the way in which participants occasionally responded to prompts in ways which did not, to my thinking at least, fit with the question that had been asked. I initially noted my frustration at this process, but gradually became aware that such unexpected responses were providing a richer and more diverse data set. Furthermore, I began to appreciate that through focusing upon these instances, I was able to see beyond the own assumptions that I held regarding the questions that I was asking. Thus in later interviews, I attempted to place a particular focus upon responses that did not fit with my understanding of the question, in order to move away from my own assumptions about the area.

The development in my theoretical understanding occurred, as I noticed for myself aspects of the research process, that are alluded to within the literature. For example, an idea that

became prominent in my thinking, was the creative nature of grounded theory research. As I attempted to conceptually code the transcripts, the validity of Strauss and Corbin's (1990) assertion, that analysing data is making interpretations, became apparent. There appeared to be numerous ways in which the individual statements could be coded, and it was necessary therefore to actually step out and attempt to devise an appropriate code that fitted the process in question, rather than searching for the 'correct' code. This statement from an editorial from The Lancet (1995, p.1451) seemed particularly pertinent at this stage; "A leap of faith will always be needed. Information does not, and cannot, provide all the answers."

4.5 Future Research

This was an exploratory study of an area that has not been considered in great detail within clinical psychology. It has highlighted several pertinent issues that future research could focus closely upon and explore more thoroughly. One group of issues concerns the management of spirituality within therapy, which could be addressed by further investigation of the perspectives of clinical psychologists. For example, the understanding that psychologists hold towards the specific notion of respecting spiritual beliefs could be examined. The aim of such a study would be to investigate both the circumstances under which participants perceive it to be appropriate to explore beliefs, and the extent and manner in which participants perceive it to be suitable to work with beliefs. This was an area within this study that produced interesting findings of direct relevance to the practice of therapy, and therefore further exploration would clarify the relevant questions further.

An alternative approach, would be to focus upon clinical psychologists at a specific stage in their professional career. For example, the perspectives of newly qualified psychologists could be investigated, regarding the relevance of questions of meaning and purpose within therapy. Such a study may highlight the areas of training that consider such existential concerns, and the confidence that this training provides emerging clinical psychologists with, for addressing such broad issues. Alternatively, the extent to which newly qualified psychologists are aware of the potential impact of their own values on therapy could be explored. The findings of this study indicate that it was those participants who were most

recently qualified, who reported the least detailed consideration of the influence of their perspective towards spirituality upon therapy.

A further avenue could be to discuss with clients who hold spiritual beliefs, their impressions of the therapeutic encounters they have experienced. Such a study could investigate the extent to which psychologists do actually raise the area of beliefs, or are prepared to explore issues surrounding the client's sense of meaning. Furthermore, it may suggest the circumstances in which clients are prepared to raise and discuss their beliefs themselves.

Finally, it may be helpful to examine the process of therapy directly, to closely investigate instances where spirituality is addressed by clinical psychologists. As the practice of psychology is an interactive and discursive process, it would be possible to use a qualitative method such as discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1995), to conduct this research.

4.6 Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the paradoxical position that spirituality has within clinical psychology. The concept of spirituality was regarded as difficult to coherently comprehend, and was reported to be rarely discussed within the profession. In this sense it was a remote concept. Nevertheless, the findings also emphasise that the phenomenon of spirituality is prevalent within the therapeutic arena. The client's sense of meaning was reported to be a significant issue within the presentation of psychological problems generally, and spiritual beliefs, where held, were understood to play a clear role in the client's experience of therapy. Furthermore, spirituality was emphasised to have personal significance for each of the participants in this study. Thus the findings indicate, that spirituality is an important consideration for many clinical psychologists in the private arena of their consulting rooms or their individual lives, but is afforded far less focus within the more open forum of professional dialogue.

The diversity that was evident in the way that participants understood the concept of spirituality, ensured that the findings of this study were broad and complex. Nino's (1997)

recommendation for research to gradually build standard frames of reference is therefore endorsed, in order that the concept may be more coherently and uniformly understood. Such a development would ensure that the notion of spirituality was more readily available. and thus would potentially allow the issue to become more firmly established within the field of psychology. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that there is a threat to the emphasis that is placed upon spiritual or existential concerns within therapy, in the form of the model of therapy as treatment. It is suggested in the findings that this is a dominant model within the health service, but it is somewhat incongruent with ideas of meaning and purpose. Furthermore, it has been argued that if developments in mental health policy, such as evidence based practice, are poorly implemented, this may increase the focus upon short-term, structured therapy in the future. This has the potential therefore to draw psychology away from broad concepts such as spirituality once more.

The final area that was explored within this study, was the way in which spiritual beliefs were addressed in therapy. The findings illustrate that the participants were concerned with respecting and establishing the meaning of spiritual beliefs, when they were present. These 'rules' of therapy were interpreted in a range of ways by the participants however, leading to different approaches for managing beliefs, with shifting degrees of emphasis. Some participants perceived that it was possible to work in a way that was consistent with the client's beliefs, while also allowing a more adaptive form of spiritual understanding to be developed. This was described as the art of therapy. Another participant understood that the requirement to respect beliefs entailed not challenging the client's spiritual understanding in any way. It is suggested that a greater focus should be placed upon such issues within clinical training, to facilitate greater understanding of the intricacies of such rules as maintaining respect. This would subsequently allow psychologists to develop the skills of improvisation, for applying these rules artfully within the diverse experience of clinical practice. This would therefore encourage psychologists to work more closely with clients' spiritual understanding, rather than staying withdrawn from them.

5. References

Adams, N. (1995). Spirituality, science and therapy. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 16*(4), 201-208.

Albany, A.P. (1984). Clinical implications of religious loyalties: a contextual view. *Counseling and Values, 28,* 128-133.

American Psychiatric Association (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders,* (4th edn.). Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association.

Barker, C., Pistrang, N. & Elliott, R. (1994). *Research methods in clinical and counselling psychology.* Chichester: Wiley.

Batchelor, S. (1998). *Buddhism without beliefs: a contemporary guide to awakening.* London: Bloomsbury.

Belzen, J.A. (1999). The cultural psychological approach to religion: contemporary debates on the object of the discipline. *Theory and Psychology, 9*(2), 229-255.

Brown, J.F. (1998). Clinical training dissertations: some fundamental design issues that we seldom talk about. *Clinical Psychology Forum, 116,* 30-33.

Bugental, J.F.T. (1995). Context and meaning in writing case reports. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 35*(2), 99-102.

Charmaz, K. (1990). Discovering 'chronic illness': using grounded theory. *Social Science and Medicine, 30*(11), 1161-1172.

Charmaz, K. (1995). Grounded Theory. In J.A. Smith, R. Harre & L.K.Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology* (pp. 27-49). London: Sage.

Cohen, L. (1999). Meeting with the department of health. *Clinical Psychology Forum, 126,* 47-48.

Corbin, J.M. (1998). Alternative interpretations: valid or not? *Theory and Psychology, 8*(1), 121-128.

Cupitt, D. (1980). *Taking leave of God.* London: SCM Press.

Cupitt, D. (1992). *What is a story?* London: SCM Press.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Introduction: entering the field of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-19). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Dingwall, R., Murphy, E., Watson, P., Greatbatch, D. & Parker, S. (1998). Catching goldfish: quality in qualitative research. *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy, 3*(3), 167-172.

Division of Clinical Psychology (1995). *Professional practice guidelines.* Leicester: Division of Clinical Psychology.

Dobson, A. (2000, May 19). Upsetting the natural order. *The Guardian*, p.23.

Dry, A. (1961). *The psychology of Jung: a critical interpretation.* London: Methuen.

Duffy, T. (1998). Spirituality, the counsellor and the church: can they journey together? *Changes, 16*(4), 309-317.

Elliott, R., Fischer, C.T. & Rennie, D.L. (1999). Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 38*, 215-229.

Elliott, R., Fischer, C.T. & Rennie, D.L. (2000). Also against methodology: a reply to Reicher. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 39*, 7-10.

Epstein, M. (1995). *Thoughts without a thinker: psychotherapy from a Buddhist perspective.* New York: Basicbooks.

Fruggeri, L. (1992). Therapeutic process as the social construction of change. In S. McNamee & K.J. Gergen (Eds.), *Therapy as social construction* (pp. 69-85). London: Sage.

Gergen, K.J. & Kaye, J. (1992). Beyond narrative in the negotiation of therapeutic meaning. In S. McNamee & K.J. Gergen (Eds.), *Therapy as social construction* (pp. 166-185). London: Sage.

Glaser, B.G. (1992). *Emergence vs forcing: the basics of grounded theory analysis.* Mill Valley: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago: Aldine.

Gutsche, S. (1994). Voices of healing: therapists and clients journey towards spirituality. *Journal of Systemic Therapies, 13*(3), 3-5.

H.R.H. Prince Charles (18/5/2000). *www.princeofwales.gov.uk*

Hall, M.E. & Hall, T.W. (1997). Integration in the therapy room: an overview of the literature. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 25*(1), 86-101.

Harvey, P. (2000). "What is the DCP doing about Clinical Governance?" *Clinical Psychology Forum, 137*, 43-44

Haug, I.E. (1998). Including a spiritual dimension in family therapy: ethical considerations. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 20*(2), 181-194.

Hayes, S.C. (1984). Making sense of spirituality. *Behaviorism, 12*(2), 99-110.

Heap, M. (1998). Letters. *The Psychologist, 11*(1), 7-11.

Helminiak, D.A. (1996). *The human core of spirituality: mind as psyche and spirit.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Henwood, K. & Pidgeon, N. (1992). Qualitative research and psychological theorizing. *British Journal of Psychology, 83*, 97-111.

Henwood, K. & Pidgeon, N. (1994). Beyond the qualitative paradigm: a framework for introducing diversity within qualitative psychology. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 4*, 225-238.

Henwood, K. & Pidgeon, N. (1995). Grounded theory and psychological research. *The Psychologist, 8*(3), 115-118.

Holloway, I. (1997). *Basic concepts for qualitative research.* Oxford: Blackwell Science Ltd..

Hutchby, I. & Wooffitt, R. (1998). *Conversation analysis: principles, practices and applications.* London: Sage.

Jarman, M., Smith, J.A. & Walsh, S. (1997). The psychological battle for control: a qualitative study of health-care professionals' understandings of the treatment of anorexia nervosa. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 7*, 137-152.

Joanides, C.J. (1996). Collaborative family therapy with religious family systems. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy, 7*(4), 19-35.

King, E. (1996). The use of the self in qualitative research. In J. T. E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences* (pp. 175-188). Leicester: BPS Books.

King, M., Speck, P. & Thomas, A. (1999). The effect of spiritual beliefs on outcome from illness. *Social Science and Medicine, 48*, 1291-1299.

Koch, S. (1992). Psychology's Bridgman vs Bridgman's Bridgman. *Theory and Psychology, 2*(3), 261-290.

Kopp, S.B. (1974). *If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!* London: Sheldon.

The Lancet Editorial, (1995). Leap of faith over the data tap. *The Lancet, 345*, 1449-1451.

Lax, W.D. (1992). Postmodern thinking in a clinical practice. In S. McNamee & K.J. Gergen (Eds.), *Therapy as social construction* (pp. 69-85). London: Sage.

Lifton, R.J. (1987). *The future of immortality and other essays for a nuclear age.* New York: Basic Books.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Beverly Hills: Sage.

Lindgren, K.N. & Coursey, R.D. (1995). Spirituality and serious mental illness: a two-part study. *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal, 18*(3), 93-111.

Loewenthal, K.M. (1995). *Mental health and religion.* London: Chapman & Hall.

Lukoff, D., Lu, F. & Turner, R. (1998). From spiritual emergency to spiritual problem: the transpersonal roots of the new *DSM-IV* category. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 38*(2), 21-50.

Maltby, J., Lewis, C.A. & Day, L. (1999). Religious orientation and psychological well-being: the role of the frequency of personal prayer. *British Journal of Health Psychology, 4*, 363-378.

Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative researching.* London: Sage.

Matthews, D.A. (1998). Religion and spirituality in the care of patients with chronic renal failure. *Dialysis and Transplantation, 27*(3), 136-140, 172.

McCourt, J. (1998). Letters. *The Psychologist, 11*(4), 161-164.

McMinn, M.R. (1984). Religious values and client-therapist matching in psychotherapy. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 12*(1), 24-33.

Meek, J. (2000, May 18). *The Guardian*, p.3.

Moorey, S. (1996). Cognitive Therapy. In W. Dryden (Ed.), *Handbook of individual therapy.* London: Sage.

Morse, J.M. (1997). Recognising the power of qualitative research. In J.M. Morse (Ed.), *Completing a qualitative project* (pp. 1-8). London: Sage.

Myers, J. & Baker, M. (1998). Religiously committed clinical psychologists, talking. *Clinical Psychology Forum, 117*, 30-32.

Narramore, B. (1994). Dealing with religious resistances in psychotherapy. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 22*(4), 249-258.

Nino, A.G. (1997). Assessment of spiritual quests in clinical practice. *International Journal of Psychotherapy, 2*(2), 193-212.

Pargament, K.I. (1997). *The psychology of religion and coping.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Parker, I. (1994). Qualitative research. In P. Banister, E. Burman, I. Parker, M. Taylor & C. Tindall (Eds.), *Qualitative methods in psychology: a research guide* (pp. 1-16). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Perakyla, A. (1997). Reliability and validity in research based on transcripts. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: theory, method and practice* (pp. 201-220). London: Sage.

Peters, E., Day, S., McKenna, J, & Orbach, G. (1999). Delusional ideation in religious and psychotic populations. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 38*, 83-96.

Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1995). Discourse analysis. In J.A. Smith, R. Harre & L.K.Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology.* London: Sage.

Prest, L.A. & Keller, J.F. (1993). Spirituality and family therapy: spiritual beliefs, myths, and metaphors. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 19*(2), 137-148.

Rachel, J. (1996). Ethnography: practical implementation. In J. T. E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences* (pp. 113-124). Leicester: BPS Books.

Reicher, S. (2000). Against methodology: some comments on Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 39*, 1-6.

Reinertsen, A.M. (1993). The private God in the group: the God-image in an object-relations view. *Group Analysis, 26*, 5-25.

Rennie, D. L. (1998). Grounded theory methodology: the pressing need for a coherent logic of justification. *Theory and Psychology, 8*(1), 101-119.

Ross, J.L. (1994). Working with patients within their religious contexts: religion, spirituality, and the secular therapist. *Journal of Systemic Therapies, 13*(3), 7-15.

Roth, T. (1999). Evidence-based practice: is there a link between research and practice? *Clinical Psychology Forum, 134*, 37-40.

Samuels, A. (1998). 'And if not now, when?' Spirituality, psychotherapy and politics. *Psychodynamic Counselling, 4*(3), 349-365.

Schwandt, T.A. (1994). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 118-137). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Seymour, E. (1998). *Towards a pagan / magickal approach to counselling.* Unpublished MA dissertation. Bristol: University of Bristol.

Shafranske, E.P. & Malony, H.N. (1990). Clinical psychologists' religious and spiritual orientations and their practice of psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy, 27*(1), 72-78.

Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting qualitative data: methods for analysing talk, text and interaction.* London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook.* London: Sage.

Smith, J.A. (1995). Semi-structured interviewing and qualitative analysis. In J.A. Smith, R. Harre & L.K.Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology* (pp. 9-26). London: Sage.

Stewart, S.P. & Gale, J.E. (1994). On hallowed ground: marital therapy with couples on the religious right. *Journal of Systemic Therapies, 13*(3), 16-25.

Stevenson, C. & Cooper, N. (1997). Qualitative and quantitative research. *The Psychologist, 10*(4), 159-160.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Thorne, B. (1998). *Person centred counselling and Christian spirituality.* London: Whurr.

Toren, C. (1996). Ethnography: theoretical background. In J. T. E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences* (pp. 102-112). Leicester: BPS Books.

Turpin, G., Barley, V., Beail, N., Scaife, J., Slade, P., Smith, J.A. & Walsh, S. (1997). Standards for research projects and theses involving qualitative methods: suggested guidelines for trainees and courses. *Clinical Psychology Forum, 108*, 3-7.

Woolgar, S. (1996). Psychology, qualitative methods and the ideas of science. In J. T. E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences* (pp. 11-24). Leicester: BPS Books.

Worthington, E.L. (1986). Religious counseling: a review of published empirical research. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 64*, 421-431.

Wulff, D.M. (1997). *Psychology of religion: classic and contemporary.* New York: Wiley.

Yalom, I.D. (1989). *Love's executioner, and other tales of psychotherapy.* London: Penguin.

138

Appendix 1: Letter of ethical approval

Healthcare
NHS Trust

Community Hospitals   Mental Health   Community Health   Learning Disability

Research & Development Office
Brandon Mental Health Unit
Leicester General Hospital
Gwendolen Road
Leicester LE5 4PW
Tel: 0116-225-6307

13th August 1999

Mr Jon Crossley
Trainee Clinical Psychologist
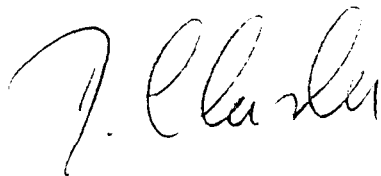c/o Centre for Applied Psychology
University of Leicester

Dear Jon

Re:"Clinical Psychologists' understanding of the processes through which spiritual issues are addressed within a therapeutic setting"

Thank you for submitting the above project proposal. This was discussed in detail at the meeting of the Trust Research & Development Group on 9th August, 1999. The outcome of these discussions was that, as the study does not involve any issues of patient contact, confidentiality etc, the project did not require ethical approval.

Therefore, this letter acts as confirmation that you have full Trust Approval to conduct the study, assuming that you have full clinical and managerial support for the conducting of the necessary interviews. May I wish you every success with the project, and remind you that on completion, it is expected that a brief report on the study is submitted to the Trust.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Regards,

Dave Clarke
[R&D Manager]

140

Appendix 2: Initial interview guide

Interview Guide

1) Participants' construction of the concept spirituality
- How would you describe spirituality?
- Describe the range of values, practices or beliefs that you consider to represent spirituality?
- What values, beliefs or practices do you consider to be spiritual?
- How do you differentiate between spiritual and religious issues?
- What relationship do you perceive exists between spirituality and religion?

2) Participants' attitudes towards spirituality, both within and beyond a therapeutic setting
- What potential impact do spiritual values, beliefs or practices, have upon an individual's functioning?
- Which spiritual issues are important to address within therapy?
- What value do you feel exists in addressing spirituality within therapy?

- How would you describe your personal spiritual values or beliefs?
- How important are your personal spiritual values or beliefs?

3) Participants' understanding of the processes through which spirituality is managed within therapy

3.1) Specific
- What emphasis do you place upon considering the clients' spirituality within therapy?
- To what degree do you explore the clients' spiritual values, beliefs or practices?
- What impact do you consider the clients' spiritual beliefs have upon the therapeutic process and outcome?
- What impact does the client's spirituality have upon your approach to therapy?
- How does your approach vary with the spiritual orientation of the client?
- What impact do you consider your beliefs or attitudes regarding spirituality have upon the therapeutic process and outcome?
- How do you work with clients who have spiritual values markedly different from your own?
- Can you provide specific examples of cases where you explicitly addressed spirituality within therapy?

3.2) General
- How do you consider your perspectives differ from those of your colleagues?
- How much consideration have you given to ways of managing spirituality within therapy?
- How has your approach to this area changed over time?
- How much training have you received in this area?

4) Demographic information
- Age, specialty worked in, theoretical orientation, and length of time spent practising as a clinical psychologist.

Appendix 3: Final interview guide

Interview Guide

1) Demographic information
- Length of time practising as a clinical psychologist, specialties worked in, clinical training course, theoretical orientation, clinical interests, age.

2) Participants' construction of the concept spirituality
- What is your understanding of the term spirituality?
  - What does it mean to be spiritual?
  - What values or beliefs or ideas do you consider to be spiritual?
- Would you differentiate between spiritual and religious issues? How?
  - Do you perceive a relationship to exist between spirituality and religion?
  - Could you describe this relationship?
- How would your perspective compare to those of - your colleagues?
    - the general population?
- Are there other ways in which the term spirituality may be understood?
- In which circumstances would you use the term spirituality?
  - When do you talk about spirituality?

3) Participants' attitudes towards spirituality within a therapeutic setting
3i) - What potential impact do spiritual values have upon an individual's functioning?
  - Are there any particularly significant effects (positive or negative)?

3ii) - Do you feel there is any value in addressing spirituality within therapy?
  - What? Why?
- What are the spiritual issues which may arise in therapy?
  - What is a spiritual issue?
  - Can you provide some examples?
- Are there particular circumstances where spiritual issues are likely to arise?
- Which spiritual issues is it important to address in therapy?

4) Participants' understanding of the processes through which spirituality is managed within therapy
- What emphasis do you place upon considering the client's spirituality within therapy?
- How does your approach vary with the spiritual orientation of the client?
  - How do you work with clients who have spiritual values markedly different from your own?
- How do you decide whether to address spirituality within therapy?
- How do you address spiritual issues within therapy?
  - Can you provide specific examples?

5) Participants' understanding of the impact of spirituality within therapy
- What impact do you consider the clients' spiritual values have upon the therapeutic process and outcome?
        - What impact does the client's spirituality have upon your approach?
- What impact do you consider your perspective on spirituality has upon the therapeutic process and outcome?
        - In which ways would this effect manifest itself?

6) Therapist's own spirituality
- How would you describe your personal spirituality?
        - How important are these values / beliefs / ideas?
        - Do such values affect your life in any way? How?

7) Contact with the concept spirituality.
- What have you previously read or heard about spirituality within therapy?
- How much consideration have you given to ways of managing spirituality within therapy?
        - How has your approach to this area changed over time?
        - What training have you received in this area?

8) General
- Is there anything significant that you'd like to add, that has not been covered in the interview?
- How has the interview seemed?

145

Appendix 4: Summary of the interview guide

Interview Guide (Summary)

Each of the following areas will be covered at some stage during the interview.

1)   - Your construction of the concept spirituality
        - Your understanding of the relationship between spirituality and religion

2)   - Your professional attitudes towards spirituality
        - Your personal attitudes or beliefs regarding spirituality

3)   - Your understanding of the processes through which client spirituality is managed within therapy
        - Specific examples of cases where you explicitly addressed spirituality within therapy

4)   - Training you have received and consideration you have given to this area

5)   - Demographics (age, specialty worked in, theoretical orientation, length of time spent practising as a clinical psychologist)

Appendix 5: Letter of invitation

Letter of Invitation

**Invitation to participate in a study about the way spiritual issues
are addressed in therapy**

You are invited to participate in a study exploring how client spirituality is incorporated into clinical practice by psychologists. Very little research has examined this area, and thus it is expected that the information gathered will be useful for the ongoing development of clinical psychology practice and training.

Please read the attached **Participant Information Sheet,** which provides more information about the research. If you are willing to take part, you will be interviewed for approximately forty-five to sixty minutes. Any information that you provide will remain confidential, and you will be free to withdraw from the study at any point.

I shall contact you within the next fortnight to discuss whether you are willing to participate in this study.

Jon Crossley (Principle Investigator)
Trainee Clinical Psychologist

149

Appendix 6: Information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

A study of the way spiritual issues are addressed in therapy

Purpose of the study

Very little research has examined the way clinical psychologists address spiritual issues in therapy. I am therefore interested in interviewing several psychologists, to discuss their understanding of the processes through which spiritual matters are explored in a therapeutic setting. The information that is gathered will be useful for informing and stimulating the debate on how client spirituality may be appropriately incorporated into clinical practice.

Participant Involvement

Participation will consist of a single semi-structured interview, which is expected to last between forty-five and sixty minutes. The interview will be audio-taped and later transcribed for analysis. This will enable the content of the interview to be explored as fully as possible. The interviews will be arranged to take place at a time and location that is convenient for the individual participants.

Interview questions will focus on three general areas:
- understanding of the term spirituality
- personal and professional attitudes to spirituality
- the way spirituality is addressed within therapy

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Every effort will be made to ensure participants' anonymity. All names, and any other identifying information will be excluded from the interview transcripts. Tapes will be stored securely and listened to by the researcher only. Interview transcripts will form a separate Appendix, which will only be available upon specific request.

Consent

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time, without being discriminated against in any way.

If you require further information, I may be contacted at the following address:

Jon Crossley (Principle Investigator)
Trainee Clinical Psychologist
Department of Clinical Psychology
Centre for Applied Psychology
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
0116 252 2466

Appendix 7: Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

A study of the way spiritual issues are addressed in therapy

I have had the nature of the research explained to me, and have had the opportunity ask questions and discuss the study.

I understand that participation will consist of a single semi-structured interview, which will be audio-taped and later transcribed.

I am aware that interview transcripts will form a separate Appendix, which will only be available upon specific request.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, without being discriminated against in any way.

I appreciate that all information provided will be treated confidentially, and that all tape recordings will be stored securely.

I agree to take part in this study, as laid out in the **Participant Information Sheet**. I agree to be interviewed, and for the interview to be audio-taped and transcribed.

Signature of participant .... **Date** ....

Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) ....

Signature of researcher .... **Date** ....

Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) ....

Appendix 8: Example of line-by-line coding

776	Brian	And I knew that, and I knew all about this academically, I found myself *Irrelevance of academic knowledge to behaviour*
777		doing it,
778	Jon	Right=
779	Brian	=Yeah. And then he disappeared, and I needed to communicate with *Seeking an impossible contact*
780		him,
781	Jon	Right.
782	Brian	In some sort of way/and I think that's, that's, that's, that's where, where *Communicating after death*
783		you can sometimes talk, to, to people./I've never seem him as a star in
784		the sky, *Predicting and preventing critical evaluation*
785	Jon	No,
786	Brian	As some people do, {laughs}
787	Jon	Mm-mm.
788	Brian	You know, they, erm,/but I think that was a way of sort of *Communicating after death*
789		communicating. And I guess if you go and stand by a grave and talk to
790		someone, to, a mound, on the ground, {laughs}/ *Acting irrationally*
791	Jon	Yeah.
792	Brian	You've got to somehow make sense of it in your head. {laughs} *Needing to understand irrational behaviour*
793	Jon	Yeah. *Spirituality justifies irrational behaviour*
794	Brian	/And making sense of it, re-, religion actually, or, or, spirituality, actually
795		gives, gives you a rationale./You can now talk to the lump in the
796		ground. / *Acting irrationally*
797	Jon	Right. / *Understanding irrational behaviour*
798	Brian	Yeah,/and you, and, you can accept that you won't get an answer./
799	Jon	Yeah. *Spirituality justifies irrational behaviour*
800	Brian	Yeah, but, so it, it, it justifies if you like, behaviour which otherwise
801		would have the men in the white coats coming along. {laughs}/
802	Jon	Right. *Spirituality provides understanding*
803	Brian	Yeah, erm, and so I suppose, I, I suppose yeah, I, I mean it's, it is a
804		means of, of making sense, you know./And, and we've, you know one
805		of the things I think we're get in these services, we get a lot of deaths.
806	Jon	Yeah. *Frequent contact with death*
807	Brian	Erm, you know, over fifty people died last year.
808	Jon	Right= *Frequent contact with death*
809	Brian	=Patients, from, this side or t'other side, erm, and then you chuck into
810		that your relatives and/I think it's o-, it ge-, it can get hard making
811		sense of it./ *Gaining understanding is difficult*
812	Jon	Mmm. *Conclusion causes feelings of guilt*
813	Brian	Some of them, you know, you, would be able to think, b-, but with
814		feelings of guilt,/"well they had it coming," {laughs}/but others, you
815		know, *Death is deserved*
816	Jon	Yeah= *Death is unfair*
817	Brian	=It's just, bloody cruel. They've had a crap life and then, you know,
818		something else happens to them.
819	Jon	Mmm. *Death is unfair* *Spirituality doesn't provide explanations*
820	Brian	Erm, and so there's an unfairness about it./So, it's, it's not as if you can,
821		explain, it, by spirituality/but there's just somehow a, more of a, a
822		harmony./It's a way of understanding. *Spirituality provides harmony*
823	Jon	Right= *Spirituality provides understanding*
824	Brian	=A way of making sense./
825	Jon	And it sounds like, particular incidents, when they happen, will, cause
826		you maybe to think about, h-how, will create a need, to make sense of
827		something,

Appendix 9: Example of focused coding

781		quantitatively, different, from, the, the sort of, you know, making
782		somebody who's paranoid aware that, well maybe people aren't looking
783		at you. {laughs}
784	**Jon**	{laughs} Right]
785	**Harvey**	We're just, {laughs} maybe, I don't know. There, I think that's,
786	**Jon**	Yeah.
787	**Harvey**	Yeah?
788	**Jon**	Erm. (.) so spirituality could, come into therapy, erm, (.) it sounds like
789		though, without being labelled as spirituality.
790	**Harvey**	Yeah.
791	**Jon**	Erm, a-, as, a goal, that you might, that you'd want because, you feel,
792		the awareness, is useful for everyone? (.) Or is, is healthy?
793	**Harvey**	It does, I mean it does sound, when you, when you, put it back like that,
794		it does sound, quite arrogant, {laughs} (.) that erm, (.) forcing this, belief
795		upon people. And on, and a-, at, at, another level, I'm also aware that
796		some people, are better off, (.) better able to cope, (.) and, and millions,
797		and perhaps, the majority of, the human race, do, go through life,
798		without ever thinking, about themselves as being a par-, a small part of
799		a massive, (.) thing, and that that just isn't in the construction of many
800		people.
801	**Jon**	Right.
802	**Harvey**	You know, I think that you know you, go and, talk to your, average, I
803		don't know, (.) err, share, dealer in, London stock exchange,
804	**Jon**	Right.
805	**Harvey**	And they'll probably go through the whole of their life, potentially, they
806		could go through the whole of their life, without, ever needing to (realise
807		it), you know, sort of, err, Beckham and, err, and, and, erm, {laughs}
808		Posh,
809	**Jon**	{laughs}
810	**Harvey**	Erm, I'm sure that they never, you know, they, and they're quite happily,
811		seem to be quite happily going through their lives, without, having to, be
812		aware in this way.
813	**Jon**	Right=
814	**Harvey**	=I'm so I'm not necessarily, I mean, a-, and I think th-, but I do think
815		there are times, when it's useful.
816	**Jon**	Yeah.
817	**Harvey**	Wh-, if it's a, pro-, if it's, is becoming a problematic thing, by that I
818		suppose it means, I mean that, somebody's that is coming, to, see me
819		saying that life isn't right,
820	**Jon**	Right.
821	**Harvey**	And if that, part of that life, not being right, is connected with, with, with
822		a lack of awareness of their sense of, (their do-), their sense o-, a lack
823		of awareness of, where they are in the world=
824	**Jon**	=Yeah]
825	**Harvey**	[And what they are. Then yeah, it's worth doing it.
826	**Jon**	Right]
827	**Harvey**	[But for other people it just won't be, and, for some people it might be
828		actively a bad thing, you know, that. They might be too spiritual,
829		{laughs} huh,
830	**Jon**	Right]
831	**Harvey**	[Some people might be too aware of their, {laughs} maybe

Handwritten margin annotations:
- (lines 781–783) On a continuum
- (line 785) Uncertainty
- (lines 793–795) Qualifying his position
- (lines 796–800) Having a narrower sense of awareness is adaptive
- (lines 802–803) EXAMPLE
- (lines 805–806) Throughout life
- (line 809) EXAMPLE
- (lines 813–815) Adaptive having a wider sense of awareness
- (lines 817–818) Condition - psychological difficulties
- (lines 821–822) Linked to narrower sense of awareness
- (line 824) Helpful to widen client's awareness
- (lines 827–828) Adaptive having a narrower sense of awareness