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Psycho-spiritual counselling to enhance resiliency as transformative education: An auto/ethnographic inquiry of the interface between spirituality and positive psychology

Dominic Savio
Edith Cowan University

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**Psycho-spiritual counselling to enhance resiliency as transformative
education: An auto/ethnographic inquiry of the interface between
spirituality and positive psychology.**

Dominic Savio

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Edith Cowan University, WA.

September 2023

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis is original to me. Furthermore, it contains material not previously published by any other person expect where due acknowledgement has been made. Moreover, its content has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institute or university.



Dominic Savio, 29 September 2022.

Abstract

This thesis attempts to capture my lived experiences of psychospiritual counselling and to describe how my research journey has shaped me personally and professionally. As a priest engaged in psychospiritual counselling internationally for nearly three decades in diverse settings, I attempt to seek further clarity and make sense of my rich experiences in this research. Therefore, I endeavoured to investigate if and how building resiliency through psychospiritual counselling can be comprehended as transformative education.

Experientially speaking, as a priest and psychospiritual counsellor, I recognised that people leaned on their moral vulnerabilities and were blinded to spirituality as a source of inner completeness and the development of their resilience as transformative education. My literature review thus aimed to broaden my comprehension of psychospiritual counselling as transformative learning that builds resiliency for therapists and clients.

My three research questions attempted to answer how psychospiritual counselling is considered, the role of psychospiritual counsellors, and the strategies they utilise to enhance resilience as transformative education. I strived at resilience enhancement as transformative education by developing an integrative approach to psychospiritual counselling that combined positive psychology and spirituality.

My doctoral thesis is an auto/ethnographic design, and its philosophical foundations are interpretivism and critical constructivism. My data analysis of the four case studies revealed how participants' personal experiences within their socio-cultural worlds, multiparadigmatic viewpoints, and theoretical frameworks shaped and reconceptualised their constructs and practice of psychospiritual counselling as integrative, transformative, and self-transcending that enhanced their clients' resilience.

An essential suggestion for future research is to investigate if this research could apply to psychospiritual counsellors of other faith traditions and their understanding of spirituality as transformative learning that improves resiliency. Lastly, I examined how this research impacted not only my understanding of transformative learning but how it has transformed me.

Keywords: auto/ethnographic research, interpretivism, critical constructivism psychospiritual counsellors, psychospiritual counselling, spirituality, religion, transformative learning, reliance, critical self-reflection, critical-thinking, hegemonic, therapeutic, flourishing, wellbeing

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Glossary

Agape: A Greek term that describes the unconditional love of Christ for humans.

Altar: The ritual table Christians use in Church to make holy bread and wine at Mass or worship.

Baptised person: A person initiated as a Christian or member of the faith community or Church member in baptism.

Baptismal font: A receptacle or bowl used to hold water used to baptise a person.

Bible: The Bible or scripture is a library of books sacred to Christians.

Catholic: The term means “universal” and commonly refers to as someone who owes allegiance to the Pope.

Christian Formation: Akin to professional development, it refers explicitly to the Christian development of an individual academically and spiritually.

Church: The Church is commonly understood as a gathering or assembly. It also refers to a building and the institutional Church led by the Pope and his council of bishops.

Clericalism: The term refers to clerics who see priesthood through a narrow lens of power and authority rather than a calling to serve people with the compassion of Jesus.

Contemplative: I understand the term to refer to a person who reflects on life from a spiritual perspective.

Conversion: A term used in Christian spirituality to describe a radical turnaround or transformation in a person's maladaptive or sinful behaviour, usually because of a God experience or a spiritual emergency wherein the individual sees their lives as unworthy of the love of God.

Crucifix: The crucifix is an image or icon that depicts the final moments of Jesus' life, hanging on a cross.

Curia: The curia is the governing body of the Vatican or the Catholic Church.

Discernment: A spiritual term akin to critical self-reflection and critical thinking that aims at helping individuals ultimately experience transformation.

Dogma: A religious edict, rule and law based on scripture.

Dogmatic answers: Answers provided to adherents of a faith that are derived from religious laws or codes.

Embodied: A term that expresses how God's spirit dwells within someone and is made visible in their lives.

Eros: Eros is a term that describes love as sexual or a desire that is passionately sexual.

Holistic: Holistic is a term that conceives the body, mind and spirit as a unified entity that is complete and in which each element is connected organically to the others.

Incarnation: The incarnation, which to Christians is a singular and unfolding event, is the belief that Christ who became or took on human flesh is the self-communication or face of a loving God who is for, with, and in the believer within the context of a faith community (Gill, 1979; Kelly, 2010; Schneider, 2010).

Institutional Church: The Catholic Church is an organised body with the Pope as the head of its governance in the Vatican.

Immanent: I understand it to mean that which is within. E.g., God within me.

Kingdom: In Christianity, 'kingdom' connotes a spiritual realm, not a physical geographic governing area. E.g., The kingdom of God refers to the rule of God's love.

Mass goer: A Catholic who attends Mass either weekly or on Sundays. The Mass is a ritual wherein Christians break bread and spiritually relive the Last Supper of Jesus on earth before his death.

Metanoia: The Greek term metanoia means conversion or a complete turnaround.

Mission: In Christianity, a mission is a task or duty to spread the message of God using scripture, set a Christian example, or be a witness of God's love.

Mystical: A broad term that refers to a spiritual reality that is beyond the scope of the human faculties of sense and intelligence.

Neo-humanistic: A philosophy that broadens or universalises humanity to include all living things, both animate and inanimate, including the creation of the cosmos.

Novice Master: The spiritual leader of a group of individuals at the beginning stages of initiation into life within a spiritual community.

Non-thematic: Refers to God, the transpersonal, a Higher Power or force.

Numinous: Refers to God, transpersonal, a Higher Power or force.

Old Testament: The Bible consists of two parts, the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is the first part and consists of 39 books in Christian scripture.

Pastoral: Christian spirituality signifies spiritual care or concern, analogous to a shepherd's care for a flock of sheep grazing.

Prophetic: The word broadly means to allow one's life to be a message or a powerful witness of God's love to the world.

Psychospiritual counselling: By psychospiritual, I allude to a combination of the mind and the spirit in therapy.

Redemptorist congregation: They are a Catholic religious group of individuals who live in communities and draw their inspiration from their founder, Saint Alphonsus de Liguori.

Resurrection: The resurrection is the event that refers to the Christian belief that Jesus, after three days in a tomb, rose from the dead and returned to God in heaven.

Revelatory: The term signifies that which is revealed by God or a High Power or Being.

Sacraments: Sacraments in Catholic spirituality are rituals that signify God's love for humans and are the means through which a person's life becomes an expression of faith and love for Jesus.

Saint Paul: He was formerly known as Saul, the persecutor of the early Christian Community, and met Jesus on the road to Damascus and changed his name to Paul. He became responsible for the spread of Christianity to the non-Jewish-speaking peoples in the Roman Empire.

Self-giving love: A Christian theological expression that refers to Christ's death on the cross as an act of love that saves those who believe.

Seminary: A seminary is an institution where individuals aspiring to be priests receive formal training in theology and scripture.

Sin: In Christian spirituality, sin is an unethical or immoral act that ruptures a person's relationship with God, self, others, and the earth.

Spiritual accompaniment: It is the equivalent of spiritual counselling.

Spiritual emergency: A spiritual emergency is a turbulent and traumatic event that leads to personal transformation and spiritual growth.

Theology: It is the scientific study of God wherein a person seeks to understand faith.

Transcendent: A phenomenon that is regarded as beyond what humans are capable of experiencing.

Transpersonal: In this research, the term alludes to God, a Higher Power or Force.

Ultimate Reality: The term refers to God, a Higher Power, Being, or Force.

Vow: A vow is a solemn oath to God.

Wholeness: When I speak of wholeness, I refer to a person as a unity of body, mind and spirit, which also includes a person's emotions. Furthermore, I refer to a person being complete and, therapeutically I refer to healing that encompasses the body, mind and spirit.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my late mother. You've been the angel that has always watched over me.

To those whom I have had and have the privilege of spiritually accompanying in your spiritual emergencies, this thesis is a tribute to your faith and transformation.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
Glossary	vi
Dedication	x
Table of Contents.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose and organisation of the chapter	1
Background	1
My personal background	2
My Catholic-centric worldview	3
My professional background	5
Spirituality, Religion and the Transpersonal Paradigm	6
Spirituality	6
Transpersonal paradigm	7
Spiritual emergencies	8
Religion	9
Religion and psychology	9
Psychospiritual counselling	10
Solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT)	12
Humanistic psychology- An integrated approach to wellbeing.....	13
Positive psychology	13

Resiliency	14
Transformative Education	15
Education and spirituality	15
Critical self-reflection and perspective transformation	16
Critical thinking	17
Research Problem.....	19
Research questions	19
Aims of the research.....	20
Emergent research design.....	20
Research Paradigm.....	21
Personal Paradigm	21
Reflexivity and research paradigm	22
Auto/ethnography.....	23
Crisis of representation.....	24
Narrative approach – Writing as inquiry.....	25
Quality standards and the crisis of legitimisation	26
Data generation.....	27
Recruitment of Participants	27
Research Strategies	28
Reflective journals	28
Interviews	28
Constrained by limits.....	29
Data analysis	29

Grounded theory-inspired data analysis	30
Ethical considerations	31
A brief overview of the thesis	31
Chapter Summary.....	34
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	35
Introduction	35
Transformative Education	35
Education is about disseminating information	36
Critical reflection.....	36
Critical reflection from a multiparadigmatic view	37
Discernment.....	37
Jack Mezirow and Paulo Freire	38
Transformative learning	39
Transformative learning and meaning-making.....	40
Critical thinking.....	42
Reflective practitioners	42
Educators as reflective practitioners.....	42
Critical thinking combined critical reflection results in social transformation	43
Emancipatory learning is core to critical thinking.....	43
Psychospiritual counselling and Positive Psychology	44
Definition.....	44
Positive psychology is a new movement.....	45
Positive psychology and the rebalance of psychology	46

Theoretical underpinnings of positive psychology.....	47
Positive psychology and psychospiritual counselling	47
Concept of positive education in positive psychology	48
Positive psychology, altruism, and empathy	48
Transformative learning and positive psychology.....	49
Mindfulness and transcendence	50
Definition of mindfulness	50
Positive benefits of mindfulness.....	50
Mindfulness and self-transcendence.....	51
Counselling – an overview	51
Definition of counselling	52
Counselling and wholeness	52
Counselling implies self-transcendence and self-transformation.....	52
Authentic transformation.....	53
Approaches to counselling	54
Transpersonal approach: philosophy or way of life	54
Consciousness or the collective unconscious	55
Consciousness as embodiment	55
Psychospiritual counselling.....	56
Aims of psychospiritual counselling	57
Psychospiritual counselling as fostering 'agape'.....	59
The counsellor	59
Spirituality	61

Religion	63
Spiritual emergency	67
Spiritual interventions to trauma	70
Trauma: definition, research, personal reflection	72
Wellbeing and resiliency	72
Definition	73
Therapeutic Strategies in Psychospiritual Counselling-SFBT-EFT—Emotions	75
Critical Reflection on faith experiences	76
Emotion-focused therapy (EFT)	79
Emotions	81
Conclusion	83
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	85
Introduction	85
Research paradigms	85
Interpretivism	86
Critical constructivism	87
Praxis	88
Meaning- making	88
Auto/ethnography as methodology	90
Writing as inquiry	92
Narrative inquiry	93
Storytelling and research inquiry	94
Research strategies	94

Pilot testing the interviews	94
Reflective journals	95
Interviews	96
Semi-structured interviews	97
Data sources	98
Sampling and participant recruitment.....	98
Participant selection.....	99
Data Analysis	99
Grounded Theory Analysis.....	100
Coding	101
Sense-making process.....	101
Research quality standards	102
Crystallisation.....	102
Crisis of Legitimation.....	103
Ethical considerations.....	107
Conclusion.....	109
CHAPTER FOUR: Case Study 1: Dominic	110
Purpose and organisation of the chapter	110
Psychospiritual counselling - a transformative learning perspective	110
Life as a field hospital – my practice of psychospiritual counselling	111
SECTION 1	111
Panorama of my background.....	111
Trauma: my lived experience	113

My life as an artist	114
My role as a Therapist.....	115
Faith as a protective factor.....	115
The hopelessness of clientele situations	116
Therapist as wounded healer	116
SECTION 2	117
Journeying with my clients.....	117
Psychospiritual Counselling within Asian contexts	118
Counselling in Africa – Partnering with local communities	119
Peculiarities of clientele in Post-Christian Australia.....	124
SECTION 3	128
Psychospiritual counselling for enhancing resilience through transformative learning	128
Inner healing and integrative approach to therapy	128
Spiritual practice, charism and love of Jesus.....	129
My integrative therapeutic approach	129
Enhancing resilience: integrating psychology and spirituality.....	131
Forgiveness.....	131
Spiritual dissonance.....	132
Obstacles to transformation	132
Challenges to personhood.....	133
Abandoned by the Church	134
Psychospiritual counselling promotes transformative learning.....	135
Transformation of the Self.....	136

Summary	137
CHAPTER FIVE: Case Study 2: Chantelle.....	138
Purpose and structure	138
SECTION 1	138
Interviewing and introducing Chantelle.....	138
Therapist with a religious past.....	139
SECTION 2.....	142
Journey with clients as a therapist.....	142
Client reasons for psychospiritual counselling.....	142
Client understanding of self-reflection	143
The therapeutic journey.....	144
Journey starts with Self.....	144
Goodness of the human person.....	145
Self and therapeutic approaches	147
Contemplative listening.....	149
Contemplative stance: a process of double noticing	150
Resilience as re-birthing in the self-transformative journey	153
Resistance	154
SECTION 3.....	158
Theoretical underpinnings.....	158
The conceptual level.....	158
The four components of the conceptual	159
The reflexive level.....	160

The non-thematic level	161
Conclusion.....	167
CHAPTER SIX: Case Study 3: Jason.....	168
Purpose and structure	168
SECTION 1	168
Background	168
Jason as a therapist	169
Jason, a former priest psychotherapist and spiritual director	169
Psychotherapy akin to former priestly work.....	170
Psychological work and the world of spirituality	171
Therapist self-care	172
Approaches to therapy.....	173
Creating opportunities to explore the inner mind.....	173
SECTION 2.....	175
Journey with clients.....	175
Client choices	175
Healing the disconnect between heart and mind	176
Achieving healing of the whole person	177
Client self-sabotaging behaviours	179
SECTION 3	181
ISTDP as enhancing resilience as transformative learning	181
ISTDP aims at lasting transformation	181
Emotions and attachments are key to transformation.....	182

Human authenticity and transformation	185
Psychopathology and social isolation.....	188
ISTDP and transformation.....	190
Love and transformation.....	193
Conclusion.....	195
CHAPTER SEVEN: Case Study 4: Crystal.....	196
Introduction	196
SECTION 1	196
Introducing Crystal, the Anthroposophist	196
Crystal's professional background	196
Psychophonetics	197
Crystal's origins as a transpersonal counsellor.....	197
An ordinary human with a big life.....	198
Spiritual foundations in past lives	199
People trapped in materialism	199
Psychospiritual practice, valuing human life and spirituality.....	201
SECTION 2	202
Journey with clients.....	202
Healthy relationships as opposed to victimhood	202
Client self-absorption	203
Conversational Counselling.....	203
Client accountability, moral centre and growth.....	204
Client wish or intention	205

Crystal's understanding of transformation	206
Resources, critical self-reflection and transformation	206
Counselling as an empowering process	207
Working holistically using psychophonetics	208
Grounding methods	209
Training to work with symbols.....	210
Self-disclosure	211
SECTION 3	211
Anthroposophy	211
The human person in Anthroposophy	211
Modelling an Anthroposophical understanding of being human	212
The self in Anthroposophy	213
Crystal's study on the self and Anthroposophy	214
The central self that post-modernists deny	215
Affirmations an aspect of assertiveness.....	215
Reality is one	216
Conclusion.....	217
CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION.....	218
Introduction	218
1. How do psychospiritual counsellors experience psychospiritual counselling as transformative education that has the potential to enhance resiliency?	218
Transformative education	218
Spiritual emergencies and transformation	219
A holding place to voice stories	220

Transformation and self-transcendence.....	220	
A place of healing.....	221	
A collaborative journey.....	222	
A discovery of love.....	223	
Connection, integrity, and attachment.....	223	
Critical self-reflection as transformative.....	224	
Enhancing resilience.....	225	
Psychospiritual counselling as healing.....	226	
2. How do psychospiritual counsellors experience their role as transformative educators for themselves and their clients?.....	226	
Peeling off defensive layers.....	226	
Holistic transformation, modelling healing and wounded healer.....	227	
Transformation and the transpersonal: self-actualisation and self-transcendence.....	228	228
Therapeutic alliance.....	229	
Provide secure attachment.....	229	
Relationships and connections.....	230	
Empowerment.....	231	
Compassionate listening and healing.....	232	
Pain and transformation.....	232	
Connecting to self, others, and God.....	233	
Recognising clients as experiential experts of their lives.....	234	
Challenging faulty thinking.....	234	
Discovering authentic selves, reflecting on transformation.....	235	
Reconstructing meaning and transformation.....	236	

Role: Balancing the cognitive and non-rational in clients.....	237
3. What strategies do I/psychospiritual counsellors employ to enhance resiliency in clients and myself/themselves?.....	238
Compatibility: science and spirituality	238
Intervention strategies to achieve transformation and enhanced resilience ..	239
Modelling critical self-reflection as a strategy	240
Contemplative listening and stance a strategy.....	240
Strategy to enhance resilience	241
Striking a balance between the rational and spiritual	241
Drawing inspiration: transformative education	242
Strategy: Understanding clients' contexts	242
Self-disclosure as a strategy to educate clients.....	243
Strategies to ground clients.....	243
A time for recalling - concluding thoughts	244
Shared spiritual heritage, subjective view of psychospiritual counselling ...	244
Psychospiritual counselling	244
Re-conceptualising knowledge of psychospiritual counselling.....	245
Validating experiences of spirituality as a protective factor	245
Emotions precede an intellectual sense of wellness.	246
Participants modelled reflexivity	246
Psychospiritual counselling: fostering integration with the divine and others	246
Psychospiritual counselling, self-agency, transformation	247
Looking into the future: Suggestions for future research.....	247
With this is in mind I offer suggestions for future studies	248

Takeaways - what I have learned from doing this research	249
Conclusion.....	251
References	252
Appendix A.....	294
Appendix B	295
Appendix C	296
Appendix D.....	297
Appendix E	301

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose and organisation of the chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to my doctoral investigation, which was conducted as an auto/ethnographic inquiry, using an emergent research design. The study aimed to explore if and how building resiliency through psychospiritual counselling can be understood as a form of transformative education. Psychospiritual counselling employs counselling strategies such as emotion-focused therapy (EFT) and solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) which, when grounded in spirituality, religion and positive psychology, engage the client – and practitioner – in a process of critical self-reflection and critical thinking akin to processes experienced in transformative learning. In this chapter, I outline the research context – personal and professional – and, after identifying the research problem, outline the research questions and aims of the study. Subsequently, I summarise the chosen methodology including my use of auto/ethnography, narrative writing, and grounded theory strategies for the purposes of data analysis before discussing issues of research quality, the limitations of the study, data storage, and the ethical implications of this emergent inquiry. I conclude the chapter by providing a brief overview of the thesis chapters.

Background

The context of this qualitative inquiry is my Catholic priesthood, within which I engage in psychospiritual counselling. Since psychospiritual counselling employs critical thinking and critical self-reflection – both hallmarks of transformative learning - I am particularly interested in if and how psychospiritual counselling can be viewed as a form of transformative education. Before exploring the theoretical background of the study, I introduce the reader to my own life journey which has direct bearing on the autoethnographic inquiry central to this doctoral research.

We are not human beings on a spiritual journey, but spiritual beings on a human journey –

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

My personal background

I am of a mixed Portuguese-Indian heritage from erstwhile colonial Goa, India. My father was a career military officer and deeply Catholic. My mother was an aristocratic Kashmiri Hindu, who was ostracised by her family for civilly marrying a Catholic. Unfortunately, she died in a bombing raid shortly after giving birth to me. Her death was kept a family secret until I turned eighteen and learned what really happened to her. This event left me chronically traumatised at an interpersonal level (Wamser-Nanney, 2016). A family secret is not just the concealment of information but is an "intersubjective mediated process of meaning making" as families are socio-cultural units (Orgad, 2015, p. 59)

Shortly after this revelation, I left home and volunteered with Mother Teresa in the slums of Kolkata, simultaneously equipping myself as an educator. At twenty-five, I joined the priesthood as a Redemptorist. Looking back, I wonder if it was all to fill an inner void. My mother's death had painfully ruptured and disconnected my identity at deep levels wherein I felt unstable, overwhelmed, deeply anxious and honestly very confused, as her loss touched upon my innermost spirit. Transpersonal psychology refers to such an experience as a 'spiritual emergency' (Collins, 2007) – a term which I will further explore. At the time, I sought spiritual wholeness in the archetype, image, or motif of the 'Church as mother' (Ashton, 2007; Mills, 2014). In 2010, I explored this theme and some transformational crises related to priesthood in a painting I did of my collective unconscious. I titled it, "Nirvana: Seeing through the Heart." The painting reflected, in Jungian terms, my spirituality, which is fundamentally a yearning for wholeness, in which the conscious and the unconscious are fused and where completion, cohesion or transformation are achieved in the form of the wounded healer archetype (Ashby, 2013; Capretto, 2015; Saban, 2016). As a wounded healer, I recognise the unique therapeutic value of my own spiritual emergencies and recovery processes as a person and that of my clients (Zerubavel & Wright, 2012).



Figure 1: Nirvana: Seeing through the Heart

My Catholic-centric worldview

A worldview is what defines and determines our philosophy of life and within which we operate, offering us answers to the problems of existence and hope that, in Christ, we find our human fulfilment (Schneiders, 1998, p. 7). A Catholic-centric worldview is centred on God and holds that humans, created in the image of God, are the crowning glory of a creator God (Wishloff, 2004, p. 15). Implicit is the belief that my life is imbued with divine dignity, worth, sacredness, and a sense of justice and equality that transcends all barriers, whether religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, philosophical, or political.

I agree with Wishloff (2004, p. 15), who interprets a Catholic-centric worldview as expressing God's love that has birthed me into existence and permeates every facet of my life. Love is the lens through which I interpret a Catholic-centric worldview as one in which I not only live out my calling to flourish as a human but also where I am an agent of love and human transformation, living and being according to my conscience as a member of the human family (Amore Laetitia, 2016, para 303). I perceive the complexities of life and faith through the eyes and heart of Christ as a call of love that integrates the self, others, and the world. Christ and his values of inclusive love, empathy, selfless service, sacrifice, and non-judgmental and forgiving attitude are at the core of my understanding of a Catholic-centric worldview. In this sense, I believe that a Catholic worldview also encompasses orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

Orthodoxy (Catholic dogmas) is a faith community's evolving understanding or reflections of God's love, and orthopraxis (the practice of faith) is the living out of a faith community's experiences of God's love and their love of selves, others, and the cosmos. Hence, I believe that a refusal to love, to enter human solidarity and engagement in human upliftment, freedom and social transformation is a perversion of the message of Christ who never excluded anyone.

I interpret a Catholic-centric worldview as an invitation to live in human solidarity, dialogue, collaboration and relationship with each other about our truths by transcending ethnic, cultural, religious, economic, social and linguistic barriers that divide us, to list but a few. This solidarity as social beings also means cultivating a genuine love and a transformed attitude towards the world's poor, marginalised, and exploited at economic, social, physical, mental and spiritual and moral levels. I believe that the human person's dignity and the inviolability of life are at the heart of a Catholic ethos. St. Irenaeus stated, "the glory of God is the human person fully alive," which confirms my priestly or theological paradigm that God creates human beings to be self-actualised (Rosazza, 2014).

Central to a Catholic worldview is an attitude of gratitude, openness to embracing the vulnerabilities of self and others without judgement, the need for daily transformation of self, others and the world and the promotion of peace beginning with the self and extending to the world. I agree with Pope Francis' exhortation in *Amore Laetitia* (2016, para 305) and affirm that I do not interpret my Catholic worldview from an insecure, narrow, exclusive, moralistic, sectarian, judgemental, humourless, rigid, morally superior and absolutist perspective because I believe that such perspectives could be projections of my inner mind and are in essence antithetical to the teachings of Christ. I acknowledge that a Catholic-centric worldview is not a rigid adherence to dogmas and Church teachings but an openness of mind to acknowledge that laws and dogmas cannot define nor humanly grasp God's love. At best, they offer us a guided reflection on how best to live Christ's call to love self and others without resorting to spiritual violence that physically, psychologically and even spiritually violates, judges, punishes or discriminates against people who struggle with life's complexities.

As I understand from my reflections on Christ, I believe that the exercise of power is of service primarily to the most vulnerable and abandoned of our societies. I am convinced that the abuse of power - psychological, emotional, spiritual, sexual, cultural, racial, economical - in the Church violates the dignity of the human person without exception. Given our concerns about

global warming, a Catholic worldview stresses that creation is a gift of God and that each of us is called to recognise that we have a sacred duty to care for the earth and every living creature.

By way of summary, I view a Catholic-centric worldview as inspirational and transformative and an invitation to engage in critical thinking and reflection, or a combination of both, constitutes an end of transformative education if it is to become a "journey of personal development" (Settelmaier, 2007, p. 175).

My professional background

Professionally speaking, I am an erstwhile educator, a practising Catholic priest and a professional counsellor. Over a twenty-seven-year period my work has spanned Asia, Africa and Australia. As a priest, I trained as a Redemptorist, a Catholic religious fraternity whose mission is to offer professional religious development through preaching - particularly in biblical teachings - to those most abandoned. The abandoned, for me and for a vocal minority of Redemptorists who came under the spell of Liberation Theology, include groups that are discriminated against or marginalised across ideological divides – religious, economic, social, political, cultural and ethnic affiliations. As I understand it, Liberation Theology is largely influenced by Marxist dialectics, which is a philosophical discourse derived from the teachings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Rees, 1998). Liberation Theology sprang up in Latin America, where whole populations were subjected to economic oppression, political exclusion, and systemic human and civil right abuses. In such circles of the oppressed, Jesus Christ is primarily viewed as a ‘Liberator’ and not as a ‘Redeemer’ – the one who sought to heal the relational rupture between God and humans described in the Adamic story (Davis et al., 2004). This rupture was caused by sin, which I define as a refusal to love God, others, and self (Davis et al., 2004; Kirwan, 2012; Rees, 1998).

Presently, I am engaged in professional religious development, spiritual direction, spiritual counselling, preaching, pastoral care in hospitals, youth ministry (18-25 years old) and community faith formation within a demographically ageing and shrinking population in post-Christian Australia. A post-Christian society is basically secularist at micro and macro levels (Habermas, 2008, p. 17). At a macro level, it is apparent that ecclesiastical influence has waned in the cultural, political, economic and social domains or debates. The Church has

become virtually irrelevant in a relativistic, pluralistic, post-modern, empirical society such as Australia that has become disenchanted with religion as an institution (Habermas, 2008, p. 17; Hughes et al., 2012). Sadly, the Church now competes for individual allegiance - it is just a voice among many other competing voices. At a micro level, the privatisation of religious practises and faith has resulted in the Church's diminishing influence and role in the public domain (Habermas, 2008, p. 17; Hughes et al., 2012).

Post-Christian Australia has undeniably had a direct impact on my engagement with ordinary Australians. Apart from my primary Catholic congregational members, I pastorally accompany individuals in the wider community in psycho-spiritual counselling. Most of them are in the 18 to 35 age-bracket and are primarily university students, divorced Catholics, nominal Catholics, agnostics and atheists who are either disenchanted by or disengaged from the Church (Bouma & Hughes, 2014). Others include those abandoned by the Church because of its prohibitions on divorce, abortion, homosexuality or euthanasia.

Spirituality, Religion and the Transpersonal Paradigm

Spirituality

I feel I am clutching at straws, trying to define spirituality, which is a multidimensional reality, power, or force. In Latin, "spiritus" means "soul, courage, vigour and breath (Lepherd, 2015, p. 256)." The term 'breath' is synonymous with the depiction in the Book of Genesis of the Creator God breathing life into the nostrils of man. For years I struggled to overcome my own irrational or arrogant Catholic view of spirituality as being a New Age concept or a "sociological extension of consumerism" that drives people away from Christ or God (Stark & Bonner, 2012, p. 7). Now I see spirituality as core to Judaeo-Christianity.

Admittedly, I have come a long way. I now recognise and embrace spirituality as "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through transcendence towards the ultimate value one perceives" (Stark & Bonner, 2012, p. 7). So, what does spirituality personally symbolise for me? Spirituality is first and foremost a universal human phenomenon that is an ungraspable, indefinable, relative, or subjective reality (Lepherd, 2015; Koenig, 2005). By nature, spirituality is an essential component of religion, but it is distinct from it. It reflects how some individuals structure their lives, at conscious and unconscious

levels. Admittedly, while it is a contentious term, I feel there exists an emergent consensus as to what constitutes spirituality. It has come to mean a connection to a spiritual power, others, the inner self or nature (Collins, 2008). I agree with Schneiders (2003) who views spirituality as achieving integration of the divine within or the development of the self's fullest potential to be fully human or fully alive, and so spirituality, at its core, is what gives meaning or value to a person's existence in his or her lifelong search for the spirit experienced as transcendent or immanent. I believe that the transcendence of spirituality goes beyond our psychosocial constructs of reality. At a more grounded level, I realise that spirituality is about how people are empowered by their lived experiences of the transpersonal, being centred in their own truths; it includes their personal authentic experiences of life in relation to others or the environment, which are not necessarily tied to organised faiths (Gardner, 2011; Schneider, 1989; Young-Eisendrath et al., 2000). In this sense, spirituality is what offers a person faith and hope without which a person may sink into dark despair or meaninglessness when his or her world begins to crumble (Gardner, 2011; Giordan & Swatos, 2011; Stark & Bonner, 2012). It is now recognised that spirituality is an important cultural or coping factor that touches on therapeutic relationships, processes or conclusions (Gardner, 2011; Giordan & Swatos, 2011; Stark & Bonner, 2012). I can honestly say that I have witnessed the liberating power of spirituality as a transformational tool for personal and communal growth by "the exercise of power to name reality, to place meaning on experience, and to interpret human phenomena" (Pelling et al., 2007, p. 28; Koss-Chioino, & Hefner, 2006).

Transpersonal paradigm

As a priest, my personal and professional paradigm is 'transpersonal.' McDermott (1993) defines "trans" as moving beyond self or ego to emphasise "the extraordinary, on the profoundly transformative and on alternate states of consciousness" (p. 209). My transpersonal paradigm finds echoes in St. Augustine's words, "For Thou has made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee" (as cited in Sheed, 1944, p. 1). Bergson (as cited in Barnard, 2011), defines transpersonalism, Carl Jung's 'Collective Unconscious', as the "continual, seamless, interconnected, immeasurable movement of our awareness, manifesting, simultaneously as both the knower and what is known" (p.7). Jung describes the 'collective unconscious' as a universal human phenomenon that every human being is naturally endowed with at birth and that the collective unconscious innately exists as archetypes that bring it into consciousness (Stark & Bonner, 2012).

Admittedly, for me, consciousness is an ineffable, blissful state of being in which I am infused with, illumined, fired up, energised by, immersed into, connected with and inseparable from a personal God as wholly other or numinous (Washburn, 2003, p. 55). This union is brought about either through mystical experiences, contemplative prayer, meditation, a sense of awe of creation, or the reverence of the spark of the Divine in others. I believe my experiences resonate with what Carl Gustav Jung called the ‘Collective Unconscious’ as is “a source of experience that has both prepersonal (phylogenetic) and transpersonal (telic, spiritual) inherent expressions” (Washburn, 2003, p. 2). Esbjorn-Hargens (2006, as cited in Young & Koopsen, 2011) speaks of consciousness as embodiment, embedded and enmeshed. This view is compatible with my faith, in a holistic and integrative sense, as for me Jesus is the embodiment or self-communication of God’s love, in human flesh (Gill, 1979). The transpersonal discourse on consciousness also includes recurring themes of “states of consciousness, highest or ultimate potential, beyond ego or personal self, transcendent and spiritual” (Strohl, 1998, p. 397).

Interestingly, transpersonal psychologists point out that while psychodynamic and developmental psychology explicate pre-personal and personal stages of identity formation, transpersonalism couches such experiences in mystical and spiritual jargon echoed in religious or spiritual traditions (Stark & Bonner, 2012). Collins (2008) states that transpersonal experiences not only impact on modes of knowledge but correlate with the emergent nature or transformation of a person’s way of being and doing. I view critical reflexivity as an essential ingredient of transformative and psycho-social self-development, critical self-reflection or self-questioning of prior assumptions, values, theoretical predispositions or value laden viewpoints (Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003). Such transformative experiences often result in inner psychospiritual upheavals that are commonly referred to as ‘spiritual emergencies.’

Spiritual emergencies

As a priest, I believe in the existence of a spiritual and transcendent reality beyond the limits of my own ego and I term this spiritual reality that I experience in the here and the now ‘God’ (Collins, 2008). As a priest, I have had the privilege of psychospiritual development, and I do recall that during moments of spiritual growth I would inexplicably undergo profound transformational crises because of my spiritual emergencies. In transpersonal literature, such

a transformational crisis is referred to as ‘spiritual emergency’ (Collins, 2008, p.1). Psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, who was one of the pioneers of transpersonal psychology, developed the notion of spiritual emergency (Collins, 2008). Going right back to my days in the seminary, I recall feeling overwhelmed, confused, anxious, and I remember feeling as if I were having a huge break down (Collins, 2008). Back then, my seminary director felt that I needed psychological assistance to deal with ‘de-adaption’ but my spiritual director, being a wise man, sent me to a psychospiritual therapist as he believed that it could be “an opportunity for deep healing and transformation” (Collins, 2007, p. 505; Lewis, 2008, p.56). Lynda (2002 as cited in Grof & Grof, 1989) states, “Some of the dramatic experiences and unusual states of mind that traditional psychiatry diagnoses and treats as mental diseases are actually crises of personal transformation...the term spiritual emergency...is a play on words, suggesting both a crisis and an opportunity of rising to a new level of awareness, or a spiritual emergence” (p.56).

Religion

According to Koenig, 2005, p. 44), religion is a community’s systemic or dogmatic approach to personalising its body of beliefs, values, morals, practises and cults through association or affiliations. It offers an individual authoritative answers to life questions, meaning, role, status, and place in the world and, crucially, it assists in identity formation within a socio-cultural setting (Young & Koopsen, 2011). Implicit in religion is the exercise of social, political or economic power by organised religion. Additionally, it seeks to foster a sense intimacy with the sacred, whether the transcendent is described as God, the ultimate truth or reality, or a higher power. Etymologically, the term religion is derived from its Latin derivative *re-ligare*, which means ‘to re-connect’ or ‘retie’ (Koenig, 2005; Lephherd, 2015; Lerner et al., 2008). For me, religion occupies the interface between society, the inner world and the transcendent. Hence, I agree with that religion and spirituality are inner resources that offer a new vision, purpose or meaning so that they acquire new skill sets to manage their distress and move forward in their lives.

Religion and psychology

According to Stark and Bonner (2012), religion’s relationship to psychology was initially poor. Freud dismissed religion as an illusion; however, Carl Jung viewed religion as an

expression of the 'Collective Unconsciousness' and a natural human expression of ultimate wholeness wherein an individual is connected with the self. William James (as cited in Stark & Bonner, 2012) took a kinder view of religion than behavioural psychologists, seeing it in experiential terms as 'the reality of the unseen.' For behaviourists, however, religion is conditioning that is characterised by reinforcement and punishment. Evolutionary psychology considers religion to be adaptively advantageous to a group's need for survival, or, and that religious beliefs arose from an innate tendency that is anthropomorphic (Koenig, 2005; Stark & Bonner, 2012). Maslow, a transpersonalist psychologist, viewed religion as favourable for wholesome psychological development: he held that self-actualisation and peak experiences are core attributes of religious experiences. Whatever our views about religion, I believe that religion for those who embrace it affects every facet of human existence (Young & Koopsen, 2011). Hence, psychospiritual counselling is best suited to help individuals to integrate and make sense of the transformative impact of spirituality and religion on their lives.

Psychospiritual counselling

To me, counselling is an invitation to experience undivided wholeness, as David Böhm explains, if it is to become a rich source of learning, healing, transformation and enlightenment or even a catalyst for self-actualisation (Clement van Pelt, 2005; Friedman & Hartelius, 2013; Spalding, 2008). In this sense, I identify with Bowden (2010) who offers a paradigm of therapy that embraces the notion of connection to the spiritual. This connection is described in a transpersonal sense as an experience of unity and possibility that transcends behavioural therapeutic intervention models, which are an "objective experimental branch of natural sciences" (Jones, 2010, p. 248; Spalding, 2008).

The American Counselling Association holds that, "counselling involves professional relationships designed to assist individuals, families, and groups toward mental health, wellness, educational, and career goals" (Kaplan et al., 2014, p. 2). Therefore, counselling at its very core is a helping relationship concerned with "facilitating a client's growth and self-understanding" in a wholistic and integrative manner (Pelling et al., 2007, p. 12). In this context, my preferred therapeutic approaches to bringing about personal change in psychospiritual counselling are emotion-focused and solution-focused therapies (Egan, 2014). I will briefly explain what spiritual emergency in the section is dealing with psychospiritual counselling. I recognise in a theological sense that in psychospiritual counselling the

transcendent is made present in the here and now. My practice of psychospiritual counselling is informed by my religious or spiritual praxis and research. I consider it vital for my clients' integrative and holistic health care in psychospiritual therapy as I model Jesus, the divine transformer and healer of the whole person- an integration of body, mind and spirit. I do model Jesus and my spirituality not only to alleviate emotional distress, anxiety, depression, caused by psychospiritual issues but to strengthen psychospiritual transformation in my clients. I have, from personal experiences in psychospiritual counselling, come to realise that when a person changes, it has a rippling effect across their interpersonal and professional relationships, their lifestyle choices and their attitude to environmental care.

The aim of psychospiritual counselling is to educate my clients in the art of self-efficacy and self-regulation through the positive reframing of their narratives through a spiritual lens. However, what is true for the client is also applicable to me. I believe that in the intimacy of a therapeutic relationship, a client can potentially stir within me an awareness of my personal struggles, fragility, woundedness, or a client can become a catalyst that spurs my own need for change. I believe that spirituality is vital to such transformation and that therapeutically, emotion-focused therapy (EFT) is one modality that assists in making it a reality for my clients.

Theoretically speaking, EFT is an evidenced-based humanistic or process experiential therapy. Its roots are firmly planted in affective neuroscience. It postulates that emotions are the fundamental building blocks of and the instruments for the organisation of self. It achieves the organisation of the self by transforming maladaptive emotions through the acquisition of new information (Greenberg, 2006; Paivio, 2013; Pos & Greenberg, 2007). I believe that emotions, which are states of arousal, are constructs of language and so are culturally conditioned (Bertrando, 2015; Fuller, 2007). Thus, if transformation or affective regulation is to take place then emotional schemes need alteration by exploring emotional experiences and stories connected to linguistic constructs that are culturally conditioned (Greenberg, 2006). Having now discussed EFT, in the next section, I will examine Solution- Focused Brief Therapy.

Solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT)

Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg were the architects of this post-modern, strengths-based, goal oriented, future-focused, evidence-based model of therapy (Connie & Metcalf, 2009; Quick, 2008). SFBT empowers clients to utilise their inner resources or strengths through a focus on exceptions, scaling, miracle questions, and so-called solution-focused dialogues for effecting positive behavioural change to problematic situations that they might perceive as uncontrollable (Crockett & Prosek, 2013). Nevertheless, SFBT is not problem-focused approach to wellbeing but focusses on solutions to problems (Clarke, 2014; Dierolf, 2014).

A significant minority of my clients seemingly consider themselves as 'conservatives' and are engaged in culture wars. They seem to fail to realise that they can come across as morally superior, beyond reproach and rigid and not in need of transformation cognitively, emotionally and spiritually. From my experiences in psychospiritual counselling, some of my clients seem to mask, repress, or suppress their pains by concentrating on theological issues, their failure to follow the commandments, dogmas or laws of the Church, spiritualise their problems and project their vulnerabilities onto others in their personal, professional or societal lives as a coping or defence mechanism. Crammer (1998, as cited in Maricutoiu & Crasovan, 2016) states that defence or coping mechanisms are psychological mechanisms individuals employ when encountering adversarial situations. I suggest that for some of my clients, their focus on the externals of their religious faith appears to act like a protective factor or a coping mechanism as they deny, suppress, repress, or block out their pains and unconsciously engage in self-sabotaging and destructive behaviours rather than seeing psychospiritual counselling as a journey of personal and wholistic transformation. Employing an integrative approach to psychospiritual counselling, I integrate SFBT by focusing on client strength, wellness, mental health, and spiritual empowerment by helping clients liberate themselves from their preoccupations with the past and embrace the present trust the future to God (Dierolf, 2014). 'Integrative' in the counselling field refers to "combining multiple theoretic therapeutic strategies to create a cohesive theory" (Hollanders, 1999, p. 483). I utilise EFT by empowering clients to develop a cohesive sense of self by courageously voicing their traumatic experiences, cognitively understanding their emotional responses in relation to their past, helping them to create space between their emotions of hurt and their reactions through a compassionate and forgiving understanding of self and others and experiencing healing and

holistic transformation by not only touching their pains and woundedness but allowing the love of Christ to touch and heal their traumas (Anguilar, 2018).

Humanistic psychology - An integrated approach to wellbeing

Contemporary humanistic psychology, as opposed to earlier behavioural psychology, is integrated or balanced with new approaches to psychodynamics. However, this is a far cry from the reality of my experiences of psychology within the Australian context, which is primarily based on a disease model. A disease model pathologises human experiences as illusionary or defensive by focusing on their dark side, or at best by succeeding in promoting a self-interested ideology of victimhood that blames human flaws on environmental or genetic factors (Faller, 2001, p. 7). In this sense, humanistic psychology fundamentally lacks “faith, vision and morality (Schneider et al., 2001, p. xvii).” Why do I think so? I am amazed at positive human traits such as faith, hope, empathy, wisdom and knowledge, gratitude, human ingenuity, courage, perseverance, commitment and the positives of spirituality such as altruism or sense of responsibility (Faller, 2001; Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). For me, they not only make life worth living or enhance its quality, but they certainly are transformational values that build on a person’s positives qualities such as love, compassion, understanding, honesty, integrity, faithfulness, and confidence.

Positive psychology

Positive psychology, which does not dismiss the validity of mental health treatment, is the “scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues” (Faller, 2001, p. 9; Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 2006, a person’s wellbeing, satisfaction, flow or happiness, rest on the five pillars of positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and purpose and accomplishments. Interestingly, Seligman extended the concept of positive psychology to education. He coined the term ‘positive education’, which focuses on wellbeing, flourishing and optimal functioning by developing interactive, interpersonal relational skills or strengths that are transformative of self and others. For Seligman (as cited in Parks, 2014), critical reflection is instrumental in enhancing a person’s transformation: a person through constant reflection on his or her life and actions can positively improve his or her drive through a therapeutic alliance and a therapeutic relationship, application and commitment.

As psychospiritual therapist, I model transformative learning through critical thinking that involves a love of learning, an ability to make judicious judgments, developing an inclusive or respectful attitude of other thought processes, and understanding how perspectives are socio-culturally shaped, to name a few. Transformative learning aims to enhance the wellbeing and negate ill-being of the client in an integrative and holistic manner (Harris et al., 2007; Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011; Mather & Hulme, 2013; Walters, 2008). The goal of positive psychology is to build what is referred to as resiliency in order to enhance wellbeing.

Resiliency

As a priest engaged in psychospiritual counselling and as an agent of personal transformation, I have modelled resiliency to adult learners. Richardson (2002, as cited in Stark & Bonner, 2012) spoke of resiliency as a personal trait that is protective in nature; it is a process of drawing on inner resources to cope with adversity. Resiliency is the drive to overcome all manner of life's disruptions (Stark & Bonner, 2012). I feel that resiliency is not merely a buffering process of overcoming adversity, or 'bouncing back' at life (Hefferon et al., 2011; Webb, 2013). For me, it is a richer term linked to other life skill factors such protecting, persevering, adapting and letting go of negativity. But, more crucially for me, it signifies the utilisation of my inner resources, setting a goal for myself to return to an original state of intrapsychic regulation or reintegration after disruptions in my life (Hefferon et al., 2011; Stark & Bonner, 2012; Webb, 2013). I understand that this reintegration has a transpersonal dimension that is, for me, a source of strength at a social, religious, spiritual or ecological level (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Herrman et al., 2011)

At a transpersonal level, Jesus' passion, death and resurrection was and is for me an archetype of resiliency, and traits such as self-esteem, self-compassion, resourcefulness, hope, spirituality, cognitive flexibility, emotional regulation, hardiness, coping or cognitive appraisal are transformative realities that have helped me to endure or overcome suffering. I feel highly resilient given my exposure to trauma. Trauma is defined as "the exposure to life-threatening experiences (actual or perceived) where a person is faced with overwhelming feelings of helplessness and terror at the possibility of annihilation: life and death moments, accompanied by abandonment, isolation, hopelessness, shame, and invisibility" (Benamer & White, 2008, p. 2). My spirituality has helped me cope with trauma. I found it spiritually therapeutic working with Mother Teresa in the slums of erstwhile Calcutta. In touching those

who suffered, I touched my own wounds. I still recall the lyrics of a song, “We shall overcome...” (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Herrman et al., 2011; Mahoney, 2010; Rybak, 2013; Stark & Bonner, 2012). It has made me realise that spirituality not only enhances my resiliency but that it is a transformative educative experience of the power of suffering for good. I am aware that there are many who are critical of the power of suffering.

Transformative Education

Education and spirituality

As I reflect on spirituality and education, I recall my own educational experiences from my earliest days in school. Spirituality and moral formation, as meaning-making processes, were a vital part of imparting an integrated and holistic education that focused on my all-round transformation as a person. Or, as late Brother Jackie Kyle would say to us in school, “you are here to be the very best that God would have wanted you to be.” Tolliver and Tisdell (2006) were spot on to assert that authentic transformation must include “the rational, affective, spiritual, imaginative, somatic, and sociocultural domains through relevant content and experiences (p. 38).”

I was fascinated to discover that Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher, had a deep spiritual conviction and that Tobin Hart spoke of evolutionary consciousness rooted in spirituality (Tisdell & Tolliver, 2003; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006). I concur with Edmund Sullivan (1999 as cited in Waggoner, 2016) who bemoaned the loss of a spiritual basis in education, which has become overtly rational. Parker Palmer (as cited in Waggoner, 2016) shattered stereotypes of spirituality circulating in university circles by describing “education as a spiritual journey”. A University of California (Los Angeles) research team, while acknowledging student disinterest in organised religion, noted spiritual development among students that impacted positively on their self-confidence, intellectual giftedness and leadership skills (Waggoner, 2016). In short, for education to become transformative it needs to be holistic and integral. Having briefly explored transformative education and spirituality, I examine critical self-reflection and perspective transformation as understood by Jack Mezirow.

Critical self-reflection and perspective transformation

As a priest, I share in the prophetic ministry of Jesus, the message and the messenger, who is the personal embodiment of God's love within human history, through scholarship, preaching, psychospiritual counselling, or spiritually discerning with adult learners to act and take seriously critical reflection (Allen, 2014; Newlands, 2006; Philibert, 2011). I consider Jack Mezirow a prophetic figure who was greatly influenced by Paulo Freire. Mezirow (1998) explained that human beings make sense of their experiences by reflection, critical reflection and critical self-reflection. For Mezirow, critical reflection involves discerning the validity of theoretical predispositions that prop up my beliefs, propositions or life goals (Mezirow, 1997). Through critical reflection, I analyse or interpret an experience or an assumption from a multiparadigmatic point of view. I then assimilate it by generating new knowledge that creatively challenges and transforms me and my faith community (Fook & Gardner, 2007).

Therefore, as a Catholic priest I am engaged in transformative learning and spiritual emergence which is "a deep structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings and actions" (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 104; Mezirow, 1997) for myself and others. I recognise that meaning-making perspectives touch on the maturation or the evolutionary stages of my Ego, moral, ethical and discernment or reflective judgements (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). Therefore, my meaning-making perspectives are vital in acting out decisions I arrive at. As I reflect on my formative years, I realise that my views of reality were skewed and highly coloured by Catholicism. For example, I grew up enculturated into believing that Jesus was the only path to salvation. Accordingly, anyone that did not share my faith heritage was doomed to hell. I now refer to it as 'spiritual execution'. This warped theological stereotype was rudely shattered by my closest friends in Grade Ten, Robin Banerjee and Angshu Bhomick, who were Hindu agnostics, but who by any measure were the most morally upright human beings I have ever met. Interacting with Robin and Angshu as a major paradigm shift for me as I had grown up to believe that Hindus were pagans and evil and they were condemned to hell because they did not believe in Jesus.

Mezirow (1997) categorises three specific methodologies by which perspective transformation takes place. The first is psychotherapeutic, which is developmental. At 57, I no longer view the world through an exclusively Catholic deontological moral framework that categorises morality in black and white terms. Deontology alludes to actions in absolute black

and white moral or ethical terms (Powers, 2005). Rather, I look at life through the eyes of a pastor who journeys with people without judgement. I recognise that this is my ideal that I strive towards daily, and sometimes I struggle to be non-judgemental as a priest. However, I believe that in the developmental phase individuation is the key if personal transformation is to take place. Individuation is a process that alludes to personal freedom, the uniqueness of an individual that embraces the notion of personal responsibility to become whole (Jung, 2013, p. 212). I believe this is possible only if ‘the unconscious becomes conscious’ (Dirkx, 1998). Unfortunately, my theological training was paradoxically stunted in this area. Sadly, a transpersonal approach to formation was looked at with scepticism since it seemed to equate transpersonalism with New Age. The second method of perspective transformation takes place within learning circles. Paulo Freire’s (1970, as cited in Dirkx, 1998) learning circles, or popular education in the Latin American context, emphasise conscientization or consciousness by seeking political freedom and emancipation from socioeconomic oppression by critically analysing how social structures became self-enabling tools of oppression (Dirkx, 1998). The third category of perspective transformation incorporates learning techniques in which individuals radically alter how they consider their relationships and themselves.

Critical thinking

I often reflect on my memories of the late Jackie Kyle, a Christian Brother, and my grade 9-10 English, Mathematics and Religion teacher, who often began his classes by asking us three simple questions, “Who am I? What am I? Where am I going to?” He introduced us to Descartes’ “Cogito ergo sum” in faith education, and, in my ignorance, I thought that Descartes was a saint until I stumbled upon him again later studying Western Philosophy. In retrospect, for Jackie Kyle education was not just about disseminating information or stimulating imagination. To me, education was transformative for Jackie Kyle and not simply the creation of a false sense of consciousness. I realise that he was forming young minds that could reflect, critique belief systems, and arrive at realistic decisions that create a better world for self and others, through the prism of our shared Catholic faith (Bowell & Kemp, 2015; Carrington & Selva, 2010). Looking back, I admit that he had a transformative influence on my life, its values, meaning, purpose, moral choices, decisions and directions. He formed me into a critical thinker through the art of discernment. Discernment, an important concept in spiritual practise, is about the ‘what’ or ‘how’ of reflective decision-making processes, as

understood in Ignatian Spiritual Exercise (Plante, 2016). Saint Ignatius was the founder of the Society of Jesus, a Catholic Religious Order, whose primary work is education. Its four pillars are described as stages of discovery, detachment, discernment and direction (Plante, 2016a). Like others familiar with this practice, I have used it to shape, as much as possible, personal or vocational judgements of mine. Interestingly, in Greek the term *kritikos* means discernment and its origin, *krinein*, means to judge or to decide (Horvath & Forte, 2011; Thomas, 2009).

I believe that critical thinking and critical reflection are aspects of transformative education if it is to become a “journey of personal development” (Settelmaier, 2007, p. 175). Echoing such a view, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, President of UNESCO, once stated, “It [transformative education] is also about cultivating capacities of critical understanding, careful analysis, respect for others and forward-thinking capacities, which enable people to reflect upon and change their behaviour, values and life-styles (Thomas, 2009, p. 257). Brookfield (as cited in Thomas, 2009), alludes to this approach as “emancipatory learning.” However, in my opinion emancipatory learning as expounded by Habermas has been reduced to debunking traditional wisdom sources rather than integrating past learned experiences or knowledge with new insights gained by humanity so that it can flourish in an integrative sense, at personal and social levels (Kleinig, 2016; Price, 2016). So, I am reminded of how my encounter with Liberation Theology challenged my very existence and thinking of what it meant to be a Redemptorist by cautiously deconstructing my elitist notions of priesthood and a triumphalist Christ and Church, without discarding its 2000-year-old wisdom tradition or factual knowledge.

The revival of the philosophical propositions of Socrates, Aristotle and Kant in Britain and the US in the nineteenth century have birthed notions in educational circles that human beings are “autonomous, self-regulated learners and thinkers” (Horvath & Forte, 2011, p. 4). Furthermore, contemporary thinkers such as William Graham Sumner, John Dewey, Charles Sanders Peirce emphasised critical thinking in education. The philosopher Robert Enis (1987, as cited in Horvath & Forte, 2011) defined critical thinking as “reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do” (p.4). I do believe that spirituality and positive psychology are vital elements of critical thinking that is fundamentally transformative.

Research Problem

In my professional experience as a priest and psychospiritual counsellor, I have often found that my clients appear primarily concerned about moral failures rather than seeing their spirituality as a means to integrate the various dimensions of their lives. Too often, my clients seem to interpret lived experiences as mistakes or flaws rather than as opportunities to engage with their own humanity. They view their spirituality as distinct from their lives. This compartmentalisation of life is a challenge for psychospiritual counselling since its goal is to help clients view life as an organic whole and to develop resilience as transformative education. Psychospiritual counselling is an invitation to wholeness, communion, connection, oneness, solidarity, integration, inclusivity completion and harmony with others, self and the world at emotional, intellectual, psychic, morally and spiritual levels. People who are anchored in their humanity and who have a holistic view of life tend to demonstrate more resiliency when faced with life's challenges, that is, with the ability to bounce back (Richardson, 2002; Stark & Bonner, 2012).

Research questions

1. How do psychospiritual counsellors experience psychospiritual counselling as transformative education that has the potential to enhance resiliency?
2. How do psychospiritual counsellors experience their role as transformative educators for themselves and their clients?
3. What strategies do I/psychospiritual counsellors employ to enhance resiliency in their clients and myself/themselves?

Significance of the study

This research inquiry is significant for the following reasons:

- a. It aims to develop an integrative counselling approach that co-opts spirituality and positive psychology as keys to transformative learning for both clients and therapists engaged in psycho-spiritual therapy.
- b. It utilises critical self-reflection to foster transformative learning by increasing the cognitive, affective, spiritual and physical knowledge of both client and therapist engaged in psycho-spiritual counselling.

- c. It aims to assist in promoting self-care as an important ingredient for optimising resiliency, and by extension mental health, for therapist and client alike, if transformative learning is to be achieved.
- d. It seeks to explore ways to enhance transformative learning for emergent researchers engaged in psycho-spiritual counselling.

Aims of the research

- to examine how counsellors experience the role of psychospiritual counselling as a form of transformative learning for enhancing resiliency.
- to investigate how psychospiritual counselling can be viewed as a form of transformative learning within the context of my Catholic priesthood to improve my own psychospiritual counselling practice and to enhance my own resiliency.
- to identify transformative learning strategies employed by psychospiritual counsellors for enhancing resiliency.

Emergent research design

I recall a sobering conversation with my research supervisor Elisabeth Taylor at Murdoch University that broadened my concept of auto/ethnography as “simply not an autobiographical study of the idiosyncratic self” detached from culture in the classical dualistic perspective that dominates Western rationalism (Afonso & Taylor, 2009, p. 4). In effect, after our conversation, I reflexively asked myself, “Dominic, how can the richness of your lived experiences within the institutional culture of the Catholic Priesthood, with a mixed heritage from colonial India, your travels, career in teaching, volunteering and psychospiritual counselling, become an integral part of your quest for truth in the context of research in transformative education? In other words, what methods or strategies do I already have in place so that I make my psychospiritual practice a source of transformative education?” So, as I begin mapping out my methodological approach using an emergent or open research design (Erlandson et al., 1993), I acknowledged the fact that the rationale and research questions might change as new datum emerge, new ideas are incorporated and older concepts are revised (Creswell, 2012; O'Reilly, 2012). Nevertheless, epistemology, which is the science of knowledge and ontology which is the science of the existence of things, will lie at the heart of this qualitative research inquiry (Forrester, 2010).

Research Paradigm

Filstead (1979, as cited in Ponterotto, 2005) defines a paradigm as a “set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world” (p. 127). Philosophically, there are three paths accessible to the discovery of truth: experience, reasoning and research (Cohen et al., 2013, p. 3). Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) elaborate, a paradigm concerns the researcher’s comprehension of what it means to be human (ontology), his or her relation as an inquirer to realities (epistemology), and how to generate knowledge (methodology) (p. 28).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 108), basic beliefs or alternative paradigms are broadly classified as: (1) the positive or post-positivist worldview that reality is constructed by the knower and is logical, deductive, objective or a grounded theoretical perspective; (2) the constructivist-interpretative paradigm that is fundamentally ethnographical; (3) The critical approach that advocates an emancipation from enslaving structures such as race, class or gender; (4) A poststructuralist paradigm focuses on social realities espoused by governments that run contrary to lived experiences of their citizens. A good example of these are governments that profess to be free of corruption but whose citizens experience them as being corrupt (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 30). “Research is a process of steps used to collect and analyse information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue” (Creswell, 2012, p. 4). At the outset, as a researcher, I recognise the instrumentality of the researcher is central to an emergent research design that blends epistemology, theoretical propositions emanating out of epistemologies, and specific techniques or methods (Hesse-Biber et al., 2008, p. 28). Moreover, in exploring the central phenomenon, I recognise that the “research design emanates from the research itself” (Creswell, 2012; Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 16).

Personal Paradigm

Central to my research inquiry as a cultural insider, a priest within the Catholic Church, was a set of spiritual beliefs inextricably tied to my personal paradigms or cognitive framework as a priest (Schwandt, 2001). The most fundamental article of faith of mine is the notion that I am configured to Christ or that I am another Christ. Linked to this faith conviction of mine is the belief that I am an embodied being, who is symbiotically related to the world (Cumming-Potvin, 2013; Erlandson et al., 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Contextualising the

term paradigm at a personal level, St. Irenaeus's wisdom saying, "the glory of God is the human person fully alive," confirms my priestly or theological paradigm that human beings are created by God to be self-actualised (Rosazza, 2014). For transpersonal psychologist Maslow, self-actualised persons evince high levels of "maturation, health, and self-fulfilment" that go against the grain of thought prevalent in society at large (Maslow, 1974, p. 88). Therefore, trying to understand my research paradigms is an acknowledgment of the many influences along my life's journey that have coloured my evolving concept of self or what constitutes 'truth' for me (Richardson, 1994). I recognise that my truths are not absolute as, "each phenomenon can be addressed from four perspectives (individual subjective, individual collective, collective intersubjective, collective intersubjective)", as expounded by Ken Wilber (Settelmaier, 2007, p. 179). This understanding of truth is a crucial ingredient if this qualitative inquiry of mine is to be authentic.

Reflexivity and research paradigm

Reflexivity flows from my belief that I am a relational being and consequently I do not consider myself as a priest to be a detached observer engaged in psychospiritual counselling. I recognise that my voice or personal history contain traces of other voices and are socio-culturally conditioned. A personal example of such an influence is the power of the Catholic moral voice within me. I am existentially deeply embedded in it, affected by it, and I cannot deny its pervasive influence over my life (Cumming-Potvin, 2013; Denison, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Etherington, 2004; Schwandt, 2001; Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003).

In a spiritual sense, reflexivity equates with discernment, which is the opposite of solipsism or "self-indulgence or narcissism" (Herald, 2017; Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003, p. 2). The basic premise of discernment is the recognition that the self is just a small part of a larger spiritual landscape and that an individual does not exist in splendid isolation (Etherington, 2004). In qualitative research, reflexivity is defined "as a critical approach to professional practice that questions how knowledge is generated and, further, how relations of power influence the processes of knowledge generation" (Brown & Macdonald, 2020, p. 19). This view on reflexivity is based on poststructuralist thought, which does not view the instrument of research as the primary subject of inquiry (Richardson, 1994). In autoethnographic reflexivity grounded in poststructuralist thinking, I as a researcher, with a cultural insider status, need to pay analytical attention to both transparency or methodological rigour of how the lens of my

Catholic heritage, culture, language, politics, ideologies, dogmas, theologies and moral prejudice shapes my narratives, discourses, interpretations or construction of knowledge. In this sense, my actions, observations and sentiments become data that generate new knowledge (Cumming-Potvin, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Dowling, 2006; Finlay, 2016; Gray, 2014; Schwandt, 2001; Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003). Finlay (2016) broadened the typology of reflexivity that transcends positivism or dualism to include notions of embodiment, relationality and intersubjectivity. Dualism holds that there are two worlds that are, broadly, physical and psychical (Baker & Morris 2002, p. 12). Philosophically speaking, positivism is an empirical view of reality that relies on structured observation and experiment as true and reliable forms of research that helps enhance social progress. Consequently, a positivist viewpoint rejects metaphysics and hence transpersonal experiences which it considers unquantifiable (Etherington, 2004). I decided, thereafter, that positivism was not a suitable paradigm for my study, but instead I embraced interpretivism, critical constructivism and the transpersonal paradigm.

Auto/ethnography

At a fundamental level, I understand that auto/ethnographic research is simultaneously an engaging inward and outward journey whose aim is the discovery of the truth of self and others within social contexts and realities. As an interpretative researcher, I realise that truth cannot be absolute as human behaviour is best understood contextually embedded with culture. Interpretative ethnographic research is qualitative in nature and, as a process or product, is descriptive of a group's 'way of life.' It is an account of people within a cultural group context that shapes its organisation, belief systems, meaning-making processes and behaviours. Essentially, auto/ethnography is about the "irreducibility of human experiences" of self and others (Burns, 2000, p. 393; Burton & Bartlett, 2005; Creswell, 2012; O'Reilly, 2012, p. 3).

Within my research context, I recognise that I am a cultural insider in the Church and, as such, I am the instrument of this interpretative ethnographic research inquiry. It is important for me to develop a sense of 'healthy detachment,' or critical reflexivity, if I am to be successful at interpreting meanings that I ascribe to my actions (Afonso & Taylor, 2009) and those of others. On closer examination of my own practice of psychospiritual counselling, I am aware

of my clients' evolving meaning-making processes, that are rooted in their social contexts and interactions.

I am now aware that this was not always the case for me as a youthful 'participant-observer.' As a participant observer, a person situated within a context and actively engaged in observational activities (Creswell, 2012), I relied solely on my theological insights, observations, or value judgements of clients. Being a young priest, I believed that my judgement was infallible. With time, it has gradually dawned on me that I needed to have adopted an inductive rather than a deductive approach to accessing knowledge of parishioners and their contexts. At a simplistic level, an inductive approach allows for theory to emerge out of data by minimising potential biases. In this sense, I prefer O'Reilly's (2012) description that an ethnographic inquiry is iterative-inductive, because it is impossible to be one hundred percent open minded. Admittedly, my information or truths about parishioners, which I now understand were at best partial or limited, needed to be enriched by additional data collection sources. The technique of accessing a variety of data sources has traditionally been referred to as "triangulation", which perceives data from various viewpoints (Wolcott, 1997; Richardson, 1994; Burns, 2000; O'Reilly, 2012). In post-modernism and post structuralism, crystallisation is an attempt to interpret the richness, complexity, or depth of a phenomenon by adopting two or more data collection techniques, which enhance validity. Such a fluid and flexible approach adds depth to understanding human behaviour.

Crisis of representation

Admittedly, post-modernism has made me aware that I need to wean away from a fanatically held socially constructed Catholic-centric worldview that I struggle with, and the belief that it possessed a "universal and general claim as the 'right' or privileged form of authoritative knowledge" (Richardson, 1994, p. 517). Post-modernists view truth as a multi-faceted or multi-dimensional reality which, like a crystal, changes, evolves and grows. In my ministry as a psychospiritual counsellor, I have come to realise how complex are my clients' lives. They are multilayered and what I grasp is, at best, a tiny glimpse of the truth of their existence and their lived experiences. All I do is scratch the surface. I can say with all honesty that the more I know of people the less I know of them (Richardson, 1994).

By extension, within a post-modernist context, I distrust even the methodological approaches of this emergent research design. I will certainly incorporate concepts of poststructuralism, knowing fully well that “language, subjectivity, social organisation and power” are interrelated realities that have and will continue to shape my experience of self or its development in a non-dualistic sense.

Narrative approach – Writing as inquiry

I have chosen to adopt a narrative research approach to contextualise or explore the relational aspects of my experiences in psychospiritual counselling within the culture of Catholic priesthood. Narrative inquiry is a core element of qualitative research. By its nature, it is inclusive and respectful, not just of differences in opinions but also of meanings ascribed to their narratives. Being a communicator at this interpretative level is akin to me being an artist who defies the conventional rules of art to explore and create new art (Beuving & Vries, 2015; Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Therefore, for purposes of this research inquiry I have engaged and collated stories that capture the richness of the lives and professional experiences of the psychospiritual counsellors I have interviewed.

As I continue to engage in auto/ethnographic research, I realise that language, social organisation, notions of self and power are intertwined realities. My discourses have been shaped by my personal lived experiences as a cleric and have been enriched by others within and outside my Catholic world. Another image that comes to my mind is that of a surveyor. As an artist, I love getting up onto high ground and taking in scenery. Sometimes, during such moments, I sit and reflect on the experiences of my priesthood. I ruminate and interpret epochal moments both consoling and desolating that, for better or worse, have made me the person (mysterious and complex) that I am. Some of those memories still drive me to tears of happiness, while there are others that I would love to forget. However, I courageously try to make sense of them all. But at a deeper level I notice, much like becoming aware of the distinct details of a landscape I survey, influences, experiences or insights from realities outside myself that I am part of. For example, when I say “I am a priest” I am admitting that I cannot detach my identity as a person from my priesthood. In this continuously evolving and yet embodied sense I feel reconnected, remoulded, regenerated and reinvented at social, educational, cultural, psychological, emotional, physical and transpersonal levels. I allude to these spontaneous or random states as ‘resurrected moments’ in which I engage in making

'life over death' choices, in a spiritual sense. A good example of such a resurrected moment is when I chose to forgive rather than be trapped in a tomb of resentment. This spiritual expression paints a better picture of what I understand autoethnography to be as a 'bricolage' (Afonso & Taylor, 2009; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Jones, 2005; Richardson, 1994, p. 518).

My lived experience of psychospiritual counselling is a bricolage in a sense. It informs me that there is no right formula or structure to work from. However, its aim is the transformation of the whole person. So, I realise that, from an emic or insider perspective, our worlds or situations at the best of times are highly in flux, volatile, changing, erratic, complex, chaotic, spontaneous and unpredictable. Consequently, these factors impact on a person's cognition and behaviour (Fraenkel et al. 2012). Therefore, for a cultural insider, a bricolage is the best suited emergent research design with regards to fieldwork or analysis (Berry, 2006; Green, et al., 2006).

Quality standards and the crisis of legitimisation

I realise that trustworthiness in qualitative research, no matter what its paradigmatic or epistemological underpinnings, is its emphasis on quality. Research quality standards are achieved by employing various nuances, such as validity, credibility, criteria, dependability, trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Morrow, 2005). Therefore, it is important for me to ascertain credibility by asking, "What is the subject of my research, its audience to whom I communicate its applicability, and whether the findings and its methodology can be validated?" I would need to ask myself, "What are the truths of my potential participants? How compatible are these constructs of reality to what I have attributed to them in my inquiry?" Furthermore, I must bring both my participants' experience of phenomena and the context of those experiences into the equation, if I am to offer thick descriptions that must essentially include interpretations of his or her world as a social, cultural or historical reality (Erlandson et al., 1993; Fossey et al., 2002; Freeman, 2014). Hence, if I am to make my qualitative inquiry credible or reflexively accountable then I need to understand how I as a researcher, my data, and my readers interact with each other. It is vital as a researcher to put on the table what I bring to this qualitative inquiry, from the perspective of my profession and experience (Flick, 2007; Patton, 1999). The traditional criteria of establishing validity and reliability are firmly embedded in the positivist paradigm that measures and quantifies things. Erlandson et al. (1993) explain that Guba and Lincoln

have offered alternative ways to arrive at trustworthiness and credibility, rather than validity and reliability traditionally offered by empirical or scientific methods. These are established through immersion, acute observation, triangulation/crystallisation, referential adequacy of materials, peer debriefings and member checks. Erlandson et al. (1993) furthermore explain that several factors enhance credibility, such as the length of time spent by the inquirer in the research, evidence of consistency in making observations, examining methodologies and sources of triangulation, regular audits and having a detached sense of involvement and knowing guarding against making a hasty landing with regards to concluding the research. Another important component of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is transferability. Transferability is made possible by the researcher offering thick descriptions that enable a reader to determine where the information he or she is reading is contextually applicable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2013; Morrow, 2005).

Finally, authenticity is crucial for assessing this research design within a social constructivist epistemological framework. With my background in Liberation Theology and for my participants, if psychospiritual counselling is to be a transformative experience, then authenticity must be expressed in ontological, educative, catalytic and tactical spheres (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Data generation

As stated earlier, in the overall scheme of data generation and with an interest in exploring meanings, I acted as bricoleur (Forrester, 2010). Therefore, as this emergent research design evolved, I conducted the research in the following way.

Recruitment of Participants

For the purposes of this research inquiry, I recruited participants who, like me, are psychospiritual counsellors. Whilst I had intended to include other Christian denominations and even other faith persuasions, all but one participant in this study were drawn from my Catholic faith. I had access to five participants; however, in the end I decided only to use the data of three for the purpose of this thesis.

All participants were engaged in semi-structured interviews. My reason for doing so was to enhance participant competency so that they could give informed consent. The aim of such

an exercise was to gauge if the research inquiry was compatible with their interests, and if so how they could freely decide to enrol in it. Their decision occurred after they have considered all the relevant information that I had provided to them (Christopher, et al., ; Wendler, 2011; Wendler & Grady, 2008).

Research Strategies

Reflective journals

Reflective journaling allows me to holistically integrate my experiences, ideas, methodological inquiries, conceptual frameworks, interpretations, and analysis with an emergent research design, in a manner that allows for credibility (Ortlipp, 2008). Writing autobiographically has assisted me to critically examine the assumptions that underscore my professional world as a psychospiritual counsellor (Ellis et al., 2011).

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 5 psychospiritual counsellors, at a mutually acceptable time and place of their choosing. Each interview was for the duration of an hour. I conducted semi-structured interviews that explored the psychological and social worlds of these “adult learners.” The process of interpretation was exercised by both the participants and the researcher. It was important to acknowledge participants as experiential experts of their existence (Gillham, 2005; Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008). I developed an interview schedule that consisted of questions that allowed for plenty of associations. I attempted to balance flexibility with structure, with the aim of eliciting rich data and novel insights from interviewing my potential psychospiritual counsellors (Willig, 2013; Forrester, 2010; Gillham, 2005). With this in mind, I had a purposive sample, that is, a group for whom the research question is significant (Smith & Osborn, 2008). As Erlandson et al. (1993) explains, it aided me to comprehend or illuminate on themes that emerged within specific cultural conditions and contexts of this particular investigation. Furthermore, in relation to this qualitative research inquiry, my interview schedule consisted of five prepared but open-ended or non-leading questions that I in pilot tested with parishioners prior to interviewing my potential participants (Forrester, 2010). The questions needed to be pertinent to elicit rich information. According to Patton (1980), there are various categories of queries, such as

experience, opinion, feeling, knowledge, sensory and background, that are vital to garner a wide spectrum of data. Another technique that I employed was ‘funnelling’ so that I could explore a participant’s perspectives and concerns. Funnelling is a technique in qualitative research that aims to elicit a participant’s generalised perspectives of an issue or, more specifically, his or her response to concerns (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Constrained by limits

Observation is a skill. It prepares a naturalistic researcher to increase the trustworthiness and authenticity of his or her observation of the setting, in which the research investigation is being carried out. At the outset of my study, I had intended to conduct observations of the counsellors in their natural contexts to fulfil the requirement of ethnographic observation. For auto/ethnographic investigators, observation is a complex concept that goes beyond verbal and non-verbal observations of the participants. Non-participant observation was to take place in the working environments of my participants engaged in psychospiritual counselling. It is important to note that I was fully aware that it was highly improbable and unethical to sit in on confidential therapy sessions. I thought at the time that meeting psychospiritual counsellors in their places of work would offer me a window of opportunity into their worlds (Erlandson et al., 1993; Smiley, 2015). However, it was not to be: the Covid pandemic with its restrictions and lockdowns denied me the ability to direct observations of my clients. Moreover, my participants were also extremely busy individuals and only agreed to be interviewed on the proviso that I did not reinterview them and that, if I needed clarifications, I contact them via email. Hence, the limits set by participants affected my capacity to build rapport with some of them. Another limiting factor was the tragic loss of handwritten journals, memos, and hard copies of transcripts in the Sydney floods of 2019, which did affect the quality of my data analysis.

Data analysis

As my chosen research design indicates, the main source of data generation was through interviewing psychospiritual counsellors bound together by similar psychospiritual interactive experiences or processes in trying to practise counselling as a form of transformative education. As a researcher, I needed to qualitatively and systematically generate transferable ideas or in-depth data using an interpretivist epistemology. Malterud (2012) describes data

analysis as “a systematic and essentially taxonomic process of sorting and classifying the data that have been collected” (p. 546).

I entered this process aware that the spiritual or religious worlds of both my participants and I are dynamic, evolving, in flux and interactive (Malterud, 2012). I do not hesitate to state that we are constantly interpreting and acting within the value frames of the worlds we belong to or the events that take place. Therefore, in this emergent research design, I favoured a more naturalistic approach to data analysis. Data needed to be grounded in the lived experiences of my and my participants’ subjective, social or historical lifeworlds.

Grounded theory-inspired data analysis

A grounded theory approach to data analysis that is multifaceted and flexible is a complimentary inductive or discovery approach that I employed to build a substantive theory grounded in the data to better analyse psycho-social phenomena, rather than using a positivistic approach whereby theory definition precedes the data collection and analysis. A theory is a construct or an overarching framework used to give a definite structure to a concept (Creswell, 2012). However, I felt that in an emerging theory I needed to have a sense of theoretical sensitivity that informed the analysis of data that I generate. To achieve this end, I wrote my memos, procedurally collecting data, constantly reflecting on what I observed and how I understood it conceptually, knowledge, from the birthing of a research design to its very end (Creswell, 2012). I categorised my data and developed a theory based on the data.

Coding is a tool to cross examine or scrutinise data for categorising them into meaning units, as described by Malterud (2012). Forrester (2010) explains that coding is done on a computer using software packages such as QSR NVivo. He speaks of three broad stages of coding: open, axial and selective theoretical. I engaged in open coding first and consequently aimed to identify overarching themes, rather than using a theoretical straitjacket. My theory was grounded in the data and hence data-driven rather than theory-driven (Creswell, 2012). This enabled me to make a comparative study on the available but emerging data, grounded or rooted in the contextual lived experiences of all the respondents individually and collectively. By constantly comparing data, which is a pillar of grounded theory, I was able to paint a more refined picture of meanings ascribed to their worlds, as expressed (Creswell, 2012; Forrester, 2010; Malterud, 2012; Olson, 2008).

Ethical considerations

All research in Australia must be conducted in compliance with National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2018). Ethics is defined as “the branch of philosophy which addresses questions about morality” (Wiles, 2013, p. 13). Researchers recognise that they do not operate in an ethical vacuum, and so, professional guidelines, disciplinary norms, ethical and legal regulations are a moral imperative to guide their actions (Wiles, 2013). In this research, I ensured the physical and psychological wellbeing of participants by providing for anonymity and I also assured them of confidentiality (Erlandson et al. (1993). I have safeguarded confidentiality by guaranteeing that access to information about participants in any report or publication is restricted, and as a rule the collection, storage and dissemination of data protects the dignity of participants (Loue, 2000; Miller, 2012; Oliver, 2003). I discussed with participants how their disclosure or data was to be used and reused - perhaps by others - in the future (Mauthner & Parry, 2009). I realised that I needed their informed consent, as participants are not objects to be used and their values and choices as autonomous beings are to be respected (Loue, 2000). While it is appropriate to explain and inform participants about procedural aspects of the research, its aims and objectives, it is also wise to “daily renegotiate and expand the basis for informed consent as new opportunities for collaborative activity emerge” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 155). I realised that for an emergent design to be credible that I also had to write ethically by acknowledging the sources that contribute to my research inquiry (Creswell, 2012). Considering the possibilities of ethical concerns emerging while undertaking research, my supervisors offered me guidance and support in negotiating potential ethical dilemmas that may have emerged (Miller, 2012).

A brief overview of the thesis

This research inquiry consists of eight chapters: the introductory chapter, literature review, and the methodology chapter followed case studies of Chantelle, Jason, Crystal (pseudonyms) and my own. The thesis concludes with the discussion chapter.

In Chapter One, the introduction, I present an outline of my entire research inquiry. I investigate my personal and professional background, followed by a spirituality, spiritual emergency and religion section. In the following passage, I explore psychospiritual

counselling and my theoretical underpinnings in Emotion-Focused Therapy and Solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT), followed by Positive Psychology. In the following section, I discuss resiliency, followed by transformative education, critical self-reflection, and critical thinking. After that, I concentrate on the research problem, research questions, and significance of the study and its aims. In the next segment, I clarify the emergence of research design, paradigms, auto/ethnography, and the crisis of representation. Afterwards, I investigate 'writing as inquiry' followed by quality standards, the crisis of legitimisation and research strategies. In the next part, I explore data analysis and grounded theory. Lastly, I examine ethical considerations.

In Chapter Two, the literature review, I examine transformative education and its two key components, critical reflection and critical thinking. I then explore psychospiritual counselling and positive psychology, followed by a discussion on counselling and its approaches. Afterwards, I focus on psychospiritual counselling and psychospiritual counsellors in relation to spirituality, religion, spiritual emergencies, and spiritual interventions to trauma. Following this, I discuss wellbeing and resilience and my theoretical underpinnings in Emotion-Focused Therapy and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.

In Chapter Three, I familiarise the reader with relevant elements of my research methodology. This chapter consists of seven main sections: following a discussion of the research paradigms and the notion of an emergent research design, I provide an in-depth description of auto/ethnography as my chosen methodology, followed by a section on writing as inquiry. I clarify the techniques employed in the research strategies section before exploring issues of data sources and data analysis. Finally, I describe the relevant research quality standards and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four is my own case study, investigating how my holistic psychospiritual practice enhances resilience as transformative learning through critical self-reflection, critical thinking, and discernment. I outline my background formation and therapeutic approach. The first section investigates my experiences as a priest and psychospiritual counsellor, faith as a protective factor in my life as a wounded healer, clients, self-actualisation, and burnout. In the second section, I focus on my integrative therapeutic approach and themes, such as my journey with my clientele, abandonment by the Church, psychospiritual counselling as

transformative, discernment, life as a field hospital, empowering clients, evolving personhood, transformation of the self and obstructions to the transformation of the self.

In Chapter Five, Chantelle's case study, I explore Chantelle's view of how psychospiritual counselling is transformative learning that enhances resiliency through critical self-reflection and critical thinking. After introducing Chantelle, I outline her understanding of the journey of the self and explore the concept of contemplative listening and the contemplative stance in spiritual accompaniment. I discuss the psychological aspects of Chantelle's practice, client resilience and resistance, and spiritual accompaniment before examining Chantelle in her role as a therapist and the theoretical underpinnings of her practice by examining the conceptual, reflective, and non-thematic.

In Chapter Six, Jason's case study, I investigate how Jason's psychotherapy practice is akin to transformative learning. I commence by describing Jason's background, view of psychotherapy and his notions of emotions in the context of attachments, transformation, and healing. The subsequent section focuses on the recovery of the whole person, wholeness, therapy, and change before moving onto the transformation of emotions and how love can serve as transformation. Finally, I explore Jason's perspectives of clients in the context of freedom, transformation, mental health, therapist self-care and partnership in therapy clients.

In Chapter Seven, Crystal's case study, I explore how Crystal's psychotherapy practice can be seen through the lens of humanistic psychology, anthroposophy, psychophonetics, or the expressive arts. I introduce Crystal and her understanding of conversational counselling from a humanistic and transpersonal perspective. I then dedicate a section to anthroposophy, concerning spirituality, self, and understanding the human person. Lastly, I devote a section to psychospiritual counselling, Crystal's journey with clients, and a section on the role of self-disclosure in therapy and spiritual emergency.

Chapter Eight, the discussion chapter, incorporates my reflections, insights, discoveries, and determinations regarding my research questions, aims, significance, and limitations. I revisit my literature review, methodology and case studies to critically explore and discuss my enhanced learning and comprehension of psychospiritual counselling to model critical self-reflection and critical thinking and thereby seek to improve resiliency as a transformative experience.

Chapter Summary

This thesis describes not just my journey but also the journey of my participants as we travelled through psychospiritual counselling to achieve the personal transformations desired by this form of self-reflection. In this chapter, I introduced the aims of the research, the research questions, and I provided an overview of the methodology chosen to address the research problem. I concluded the chapter with an outline of the thesis structure. There is a large amount of literature on the research topic, and therefore, in the next chapter, I present a review of the body of knowledge relevant to this study. Please join me and travel with me on the journey towards enhancing resilience, as transformative learning is associated with critical self-reflection and thinking of this phenomenon.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of the literature review is to gain more profound insights from research about how psychospiritual counselling as transformative learning enhances resiliency. Hence, this chapter aims to introduce the reader to pertinent aspects of the literature that underpins this research project.

Therefore, I begin by setting the stage by reviewing some of the literature on trauma, emotions, well-being, and resilience as integral to spirituality and religion, vital to healing, wholeness, and transformation. Furthermore, my explorations of spiritual emergencies set the stage to delve deeper into my theoretical underpinnings in psychospiritual counselling, which incorporates positive psychology and spirituality to promote individual wholeness and transformative learning through critical self-reflection and critical thinking.

Transformative Education

Core to this research is transformative learning, which refers to changes in an individual's being and meaning-making processes within psychospiritual counselling. Additionally, the goal of therapy through critical self-reflection and critical thinking is the transformation of the whole person. Hence, education is instrumental in bringing about transformation. According to Alexander et al. (2010, p. 1038), education's goal is to promote the transformation of the human person to flourish as a person within socio-cultural settings. Paulo Freire (1981, as cited in Alexander et al., 2010) describes this transformation as a global phenomenon that impacts upon the individual and changes culture or community. Formal and informal learning, grounded in life and experiences, are both an intentional and unconscious method of obtaining learning through interchanges with others (Dirkx, 1998; Jackson, 2012). Consequently, transformative learning is an individual's conceptual framework or road map and presents an account of how learning transpires (Dirkx, 1998). I agree with Dirkx (1998, p. 1) that transformative learning captures an individual's values and vision, which enhance an individual's capability to adapt and engage with society through a critical mindset that consciously seeks personal and societal transformation. Learning, as a constructed reality,

signifies comprehending the present contextually as linked to the past, rather than a blind or passive internalisation or assimilation of societal norms or values (Dirkx, 1998, p. 2).

John Dewey (1963, as cited in Jackson, 2008) stated that education did not need to be qualified or categorised as being to the right or the left but that it was necessary to be simple and grounded in life. I believe that education divorced from existence is an ideology, whereas education rooted in life becomes transformative, beginning with the individual and extending to society. In the following section, I provide an overview of transformative learning espoused by Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow and then broadly explore transformative learning.

Education is about disseminating information

Historically, traditional education modalities focused on transmitting knowledge (Geller, 2014). Nevertheless, according to Rubinstein (2013), education is transformative and is not about creating a false sense of consciousness wherein students are alienated from social reality. Geller (2014) states that education is about understanding a person's potential to transform self and society. Hence, transformative learning seeks to alter perspectives through critical thinking, which involves a love of knowledge and the ability to make prudent judgments. Additionally, transformative learning aims to develop an inclusive attitude toward other thought processes and understandings of perspectives as beings that are socio-culturally shaped (Bamber & Hankin, 2011).

Critical reflection

From my reading of Hoggan et al. (2016), I realised that Mezirow considered the critically reflective process as a vital element of testing or significantly altering the truth of conceptual beliefs to maintain a sense of inner coherence concerning one's worldview. Furthermore, Mezirow explained that human beings make sense of their experiences through reflection, critical reflection, critical self-reflection, rational discourse, and communication, which he deemed indispensable elements in transformative learning (Calleja, 2014; Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1998). Hence, for Mezirow, critical reflection involved discerning the validity of theoretical predispositions that propped up an individual's belief system (Mezirow, 1997). My readings of Mezirow have challenged structures or institutions, for example, the Church, that have propped up my beliefs and life goals as a priest. Flowing from this is the realisation that

critical reflection needs to consider multiple viewpoints, a theme I discuss in the following section.

Critical reflection from a multiparadigmatic view

In critical reflection, I analyse an experience or an assumption from a multiparadigmatic point of view (Fook & Gardner, 2007). I then assimilate it by generating new knowledge that creatively challenges previous assumptions and transforms self and community. For instance, my notion of what it means to be a person or priest needs is challenged by other philosophical or spiritual modalities. In particular, Taylor et al. (2012) explain critical reflection eloquently, saying, "Transformative research involves a process of examining critically our personal and professional values and beliefs, exploring how our life worlds have been governed (perhaps distorted) by largely invisible socio-cultural norms, appreciate our own complicity in enculturating uncritically our students into similar lifeworld, creatively reconceptualising our own professionalism, and committing to transform science education policy, curricula and/or pedagogical practices within our own institutions" (p. 373-387). What is true of education is true of all of life, as I shall next explain.

Discernment

In Ignatian spiritual exercise, discernment akin to critical thinking is about the 'what' or 'how' of reflective decision-making processes (Plante, 2016). Saint Ignatius, who wrote the spiritual exercises, was the founder of the Society of Jesus, a Catholic Religious Order whose primary work is education. Its four pillars are described as stages of discovery, detachment, discernment, and direction. Like others familiar with this practice, I have used discernment to shape my personal or vocational judgements. Interestingly, in Greek, the term *kritikos* means discernment and its origin, *krinein*, means to judge or decide (Horvath & Forte, 2011; Plante, 2016a; Thomas, 2009).

Critical reflection applies to all of life. Pope Francis' transformational address to the Vatican governing body, known as the Curia, reminds me of the importance of critical reflection in life. He warned them about the dangers of spiritual Alzheimer's, the spiritual hardening of souls, and an arrogant feeling of being immortal (Ohlheiser, 2014). Furthermore, Pope Francis chastised the Curia for having a superior attitude that focused on the moral failings of others. Consequently, His Holiness invited Catholics engaged in culture wars on such hot button

issues as homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, and divorce to reflect equally on global poverty and climate change brought about by globalisation. Correspondingly, Thomas Rosica responded to media queries and said that the Pope's transformational words were applicable universally and were an invitation to all to reconceptualise leadership if it were to become genuinely transformational (Rolheiser, 2014). Likewise, Stevenson-Graf (2019) illustrates that at the core of transformative learning is the individuals' unique interpretations of experiences, which, if critically analysed, potentially challenge prior perceptions leading to personal transformation. Furthermore, transformative learning enables individuals to develop new perspectives of life, contest ingrained ideas, amend previously held positions and arrive at justifiable decisions (Stevenson-Graf, 2019). For that reason, Taylor et al.'s (2012) expression "creatively reconceptualising our own professionalism" (p.373-387) is an invitation to me to critically reflect on psychospiritual counselling as a form of discernment that is akin to transformative learning.

Jack Mezirow and Paulo Freire

Dirkx (1998, p. 4) explains that Mezirow's comprehension of transformative learning is founded on rational and developmental psychology and at its core is critical self-reflection and transformed perspectives. Dirkx (1998, p. 4) explains that Mezirow's comprehension of transformative learning is founded on rational and developmental psychology and the belief that critical self-reflection and transformed viewpoints are at its core. According to Taylor (2012), Mezirow asserted that individual autonomy lay at the heart of all transformative learning developmentally, allowing for revised meaning-making processes that orient future actions. Crucially, Mezirow held that education critically examines an individual's 'problematic' belief system, ideals, or emotions, tests their assumptions, rationally discusses these normative notions, and collectively arrives at decisions (Mezirow & Taylor, 2010, p. 20). According to Mezirow and Taylor (2012), personal experiences are central to this concept. From my lived experiences, I agree with Mezirow that, at the heart of transformative learning and education, are lived experiences without which knowledge becomes sterile, robbed of its creative and transformative potentiality.

Furthermore, as an erstwhile educator and a psychospiritual counsellor, I consider Jack Mezirow a prophetic figure greatly influenced by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher (Dirkx, 1998). Paulo Freire, a Christian, was sympathetic to Marx, and critical

consciousness or conscientisation is a central principle of liberation theology (Dirkx, 1998, p. 2; McLaren & Jandrić, 2018, p. 7). Dirkx (1998, p. 2) defines critical consciousness as an individual's capability to analyse, query, challenge or confront systemic issues to usher in personal or societal transformation, especially addressing inequality. Liberation theology, with its roots in Latin America, was the oppressed individual's or community's faith reflections on the gospel wherein Jesus is seen as a social, cultural, political, economic, and spiritual liberator. Moreover, liberation theology played a formative role in my priestly development and work, and the 'option for the poor' and commitment to the poor became a way of life in the seminary and in my priestly life afterwards (McLaren & Jandrić, 2018, p. 7). According to McDade (1992), Paulo Freire realised that the dispossessed passively accepted the domination of their oppressors at social, political, economic, and educational levels. Furthermore, he acknowledged that they did little to liberate themselves but silently suffered their way into submission (McDade, 1992). Correspondingly, the powerful in Brazil co-opted every institution, including the Church, to further oppress the poor and Paulo Freire ran foul of the powers to be and eventually exiled himself to Chile (McDade, 1992). Still, Paulo Freire offered the poor alternative discourses that provoked them to comprehend their contextual situations differently and revisit their meaning-making processes through fresh eyes (Freire, 1997). Consequently, it is vital to understand an individual's meaning-making system, whether global, situational, or contextual (Aten et al., 2011).

I entirely agree with Paulo Freire, given my work with the poor and the marginalised, that their passivity or subjection to institutional exploitation was partly their responsibility. Undoubtedly, I understand that Paulo Freire did not romanticise the poor with whom he dialogued respectfully, aware that transformative learning was a person's choice in the final analysis. In this sense, transformative learning is aligned with positive psychology as it highlights human potential rather than human failure.

Transformative learning

Transformative learning refers broadly to "processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualises and interacts with the world" (Hoggan et al. 2016, p. 2). Taylor (2007), on the other hand, paints a larger picture of transformative education as uniquely adult, grounded, idealised and situated in ordinary human communication. Additionally, according to Hoggan et al. (2016), Piaget's notion of

assimilation and accommodation alludes to transformative learning, but Mezirow spoke of it as an interplay between critical reflection and integration. Therefore, I agree with Hoggan et al. (2016) that integration invites people to embrace emerging possibilities to self-actualise continually. Hence, from a personal perspective, integration allows for a dynamic transformation of the whole person at an ontological level.

Additionally, transformative learning embraces the individual's capacity to reconstruct meaning as it seeks wholeness and self-actualisation (Michael, 2016). According to Michael (2016), transformative learning includes interactions with the world: self, cosmos and the Transcendent. In this sense, transformative learning is holistic and transcends mere cognitive change.

Furthermore, Dirkx (1998) emphasises that the self is at the heart of all learning and an evolving reality integrated at cosmic, material, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social levels. Similarly, the self is a part of a cultural web of relationships that is challenging and liberating, as Paulo Freire explained (Dirkx, 1998). Hence, I agree with Mälkki (2010) and Vaughan (1993) that transformative learning recognises that our educational system needs to rediscover its soul rather than focus exclusively on the intellect. In this sense, education needs to incorporate values, ethics, mysticism, spirituality, and transcendence as part of its commitment to our holistic wellbeing and transformation. In addition, transformative learning recognises that an individual is a part of a societal web, wherein language and culture foster cohesion, uniformity or even stability. Therefore, society needs a mechanism to realise that assumptions need to be challenged by healthy dissent; otherwise, they become tools of control to maintain an elusive sense of social harmony (Hoggan et al., 2016).

Transformative learning and meaning-making

I agree with developmental psychologists that meaning-making perspectives, consciously or unconsciously acquired through socialisation, impact upon an individual as transformative learning that transcends pure data gathering (Michael, 2016). According to Mezirow (1997, p. 6), meaning-making perspectives touch upon a person's maturation, moral and ethical convictions, the process of discernment and reflective judgements (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). Therefore, I believe that meaning-making perspectives are paramount in making determinations. Psychospiritual counselling, as an aspect of transformative learning, seeks to

motivate clients to cultivate new meaning-making attitudes of the self as an ever-evolving transformative being that is mature, integrated with the cosmic, material, physical, emotional, spiritual, social or cultural web of relationships (Illeris, 2014; Mälkki & Green, 2014). Additionally, transformative learning involves a radical change in feelings, thinking, and behaviour. Thomas Kuhn (1990) termed it a paradigm shift in how individuals interact with the world (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 104; Mezirow, 1997). Furthermore, meaning-making for me, a Catholic priest engaged in psychospiritual counselling, seeks to explore my clients' assumptions at emotional and mental levels. I employ three specific methodologies of perspective transformation.

Jack Mezirow (1997) categorises assumptions into cognitive, emotional, and reflective levels. In addition, Mezirow believes that transformation took place through the two dimensions of critical reflection: habits of the mind and points of view. The first, habits of the mind, impact upon interpretations as belief systems, feelings, value judgements, and attitudes. The second, points of view, are easily changeable (p., 5). The first process of perspective transformation is through critical reflection by which these assumptions or constructs are critically reformulated (Dirkx, 1998). Therefore, at 57, I no longer view the world through an exclusively Catholic deontological moral framework that categorises morality in black and white terms. Deontology theoretically alludes to actions in absolute black and white moral or ethical terms (Powers, 2005). Instead, I look at life through the eyes of a pastor who journeys with people without judgement. However, individuation is the key if personal transformation is to occur in the developmental phase.

Moreover, individuation in contemporary thought alludes to personal freedom, trust in self, authenticity and the uniqueness of an individual that embraces the notion of personal responsibility (Jung, 2013, pp. 191-288). Like Boyd, I believe this is possible only if the unconscious becomes aware of hidden aspects of the self or ego, such as the shadow, anima, and animus (Dirkx, 1998). What is crucial is that these aspects of the self are in constant dialogue with each other if perspective transformation occurs.

The second method of perspective transformation takes place within learning circles. Accordingly, Paulo Freire's (1970) learning circles or popular education in the Latin American context emphasised conscientisation or consciousness. Learning circles sought

political freedom and emancipation from socioeconomic oppression by critically analysing how social structures became self-enabling tools of oppression (Freire, 1998).

According to Mezirow (1998), the third category of perspective transformation includes learning approaches such as the women's movement. Mezirow believed that social activities were powerful instruments to foster social change by transforming cultural paradigms or references. Transformation is achieved through social action that challenges deep-seated cultural thinking patterns (Mezirow, 1998).

Critical thinking

The philosopher Robert Ennis (1987) defined critical thinking as “reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do” (Horvath & Forte, 2011, p. 4). According to Taylor and Cranton (2012), critical thinking, which is never a neutral term, is the art of reasoning that is a masterpiece of judgements, reflections, creativity, and intuitions needed to articulate an idea or to logically resolve a problem whose end is transformation (p. 234). On the other hand, critical thinking alters an individual’s perspectives to develop a reflective attitude about existence, courageously critiques belief systems, and finally helps persons make prudent life decisions. Therefore, I view critical thinking as an indispensable element of psychospiritual counselling that seeks an individual’s holistic transformation.

Reflective practitioners

Psychospiritual counselling, in essence, encourages critical self-reflection and critical thinking, which is crucial to enhancing resiliency as transformative learning. I included this in the review because I view therapists as individuals who model transformative learning as a way of life.

Educators as reflective practitioners

According to Liu (2015), educators began to be reflective practitioners when they asked questions about what to teach and what techniques were best suited. This quality was considered vital for teachers to move beyond a dogmatic, curriculum-focused approach to education and engage students in critiquing their socio-politico-cultural assumptions. The aim was to enable students to integrate learning with life. Elaborating further, Dinkelman (1999,

as cited in Liu, 2015) defines critical reflection as a "deliberation about wider social, historical, political, and cultural contexts of education, and deliberation about relationships between educational practice and the construction of a more equitable, justice, and democratic society" (p. 137). In retrospect, as a priest, I engage in psychospiritual counselling and endeavour to assist clients, through critical reflection, in integrating faith and life.

Critical thinking combined critical reflection results in social transformation

According to Mezirow (1998), transformative education is emancipatory when critical thinking brings about social transformation by identifying, redefining and reframing a problem. Furthermore, Donald (2002, as cited in Thomas, 2009), advocates that critical thinking needs to be reflective and analytical if it is to be socially transformative. Therefore, I believe that critical thinking or critical reflection or a combination of both constitutes an end of transformative education if it is to become a "journey of personal development" (Settelmaier, 2007, p. 175). Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, President of UNESCO, stated, "It [Education] is also about cultivating capacities of critical understanding, careful analysis, respect for others and forward-thinking capacities, which enable people to reflect upon and change their behaviour, values and lifestyles" (Thomas, 2009, p. 257). Reflecting on Mezirow (1998), I recognise that critical thinking has challenged my deep-seated and inherited assumptions that have influenced my core perspectives of life (Mezirow, 1998). Moreover, I believe that critical thinking involves the ability to creatively problem-solve, think holistically, make critical judgements, analyse, and take affirmative action to bring about radical transformation. Crucially, emancipation is the *raison d'être* of critical thinking, which I demonstrate in the next section.

Emancipatory learning is core to critical thinking

Hooks (2010) states that critical thinking is inseparable from our humanity and needs to be evidence-based, rational and fundamentally problem-solving. According to Hooks (2010), Paulo Freire held that humans were birthed by asking questions. Admittedly, the revival of the philosophical propositions of Socrates, Aristotle, and Kant in Britain and the USA has birthed notions in educational circles that human beings are "autonomous, self-regulated learners and thinkers" (Horvath & Forte, 2011, p. 4). Furthermore, influential thinkers such as William Graham Summers, John Dewey and Charles Sanders Peirce gave critical thinking

a new emphasis in education. Similarly, citing Brookfield, Thomas (2009) alludes to this approach as emancipatory learning. Emancipatory education incorporates past learned experiences and new insights gained by humanity to flourish in an integrative sense at personal and social levels (Kleinig, 2016; Price, 2016). However, in my opinion, emancipatory learning, as expounded by Habermas, has been reduced to debunking and even rejecting traditional wisdom sources as archaic or redundant rather preserve what was good in the past. To illustrate my point, I refer to altruism and empathy, which I consider transformative values. Moreover, I believe religion preserved and promoted values as crucial to transformative learning to transform nations wherein human welfare and wellbeing became the bedrock of just and equitable societies.

Psychospiritual counselling and Positive Psychology

My research topic, auto/ethnography, examines the interface between positive psychology and spirituality. Additionally, positive psychology and spirituality ideas underpin my theoretical counselling framework. In the preceding chapter I demonstrated that in my psychospiritual counselling practice, EFT and SBFT are core approaches and strategies I use to enhance resilience as transformative learning, whose foundations are in my philosophical understanding of the transpersonal. Besides being a protective factor against psychological distress, spirituality and religion improve an individual's wellbeing from a transpersonal perspective. In contrast, positive psychology endeavours to explore wellbeing from a scientific paradigm. In my opinion, they are compatible and interdependent realities that complement each other. The following section examines positive psychology as enhancing resilience as transformative learning, beginning with its definition.

Definition

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) define positive psychology as an empirical study of how subjective experiences, combined with an individual's quest for meaning and traits, become a catalyst for a flourishing life instead of one that is empty or barren (p.5). In addition, Faller (2001, p. 9) defines positive psychology, which does not dismiss the validity of mental health treatment, as the "scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues" (Faller, 2001, p. 9). Moreover, positive psychology focuses on positive subjective experiences and cognitive constructions (Snyder & Lopez, 2005). At an individual level, positive psychology

is about an individual's qualities, such as a person's capacity for honesty and ability to hope rather than give in to despair or be altruistic (Snyder & Lopez, 2005). According to Snyder and Lopez (2005), positive psychology is about traits that make an individual a contributing member of society or a good citizen.

Consequently, positive psychology embraces human characteristics such as faith and hope. From my readings, positive psychology incorporates other attributes such as empathy, wisdom and knowledge, gratitude, human ingenuity, courage, perseverance and commitment, and the positives of spirituality such as self-sacrifice and a sense of responsibility (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Snyder & Lopez, 2005). In the next section, I expand on two concepts, altruism and empathy, which are not just human characteristics but qualities of effective counsellors.

Positive psychology is a new movement

Martin Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi conceptualised positive psychology as a field of knowledge that went beyond self-analysis and focused on action (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006). Moreover, positive psychology was regarded as a "new movement", in contrast to psychology that focused exclusively on mental health as a curative phenomenon. In doing so, developmental psychology had neglected to embrace other conditions or processes that empowered individuals to function optimally and flourish coherently (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006; Schrank et al. 2014). I view spirituality and religion as empowering factors that enhance individual wellbeing. In addition, Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (2006) explain that Seligman offers a corrective paradigm that held that human nature's flaws lie at the feet of environmental or genetic factors. In this sense, Seligman sought to recalibrate such an outlook with a more integrated or balanced manner that embraced human nature by focusing on psychology's calling to social betterment. Consequently, Seligman stated that humanistic psychologists such as Maslow, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, and Victor Frankl were at the vanguard of such an approach. However, in all fairness, positive psychology is not dismissive of mental health treatment as a science and recognises the need to address mental health appropriately (Peterson, 2006; Smith, 2006). Hence Seligman thinks that a person's wellbeing, satisfaction, flow, or happiness rest on the five pillars of positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, purpose, and accomplishments.

Positive psychology and the rebalance of psychology

Thanks to Martin Seligman, positive psychology sought to rebalance psychology that overly concentrated on mental health disorders while forgetting to nurture or improve individuals' overall wellbeing in psychological distress (Acacia & Seligman 2019). The twin aims of positive psychology were to understand how individuals flourish and to design scientific methods to validate positive psychology (Acacia & Seligman, 2019). Faller (2001) and Smith (2006) think that therapy needs to move away from an obsession with fixing what is broken and, instead, nurture what is best in an individual.

Additionally, research states that the contemporary disease model approaches to mental health pathologize human experiences as illusionary or defensive by focusing on their dark side (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006; Snyder & Lopez, 2005). Furthermore, such approaches promote a self-interested ideology of victimhood that blames human flaws on environmental or genetic factors. In this sense, humanistic psychology fundamentally lacks an anchorage in belief, an all-encompassing vision of life, and a moral foundation (Snyder & Lopez, 2005). However, I have personally witnessed and journeyed with individuals whose situations are so traumatic and extreme, what I refer to as evil, that I hesitate to focus on the shortcomings of contemporary mental health approaches or praise the advantages of other therapeutic models.

According to Seligman et al. (2006, p. 775), terminologies such as self-actualisation, individuation, peak experiences, fully functional or positive mental health are attributed to Maslow (1971), Rogers (1961), Allport (1961), and Jahoda (1958), and are treated as by-products of symptomatic release ill afforded by rushed clinicians dealing with a high volume of mental health presentations. Moreover, Seligman et al. (2006) cite research into Well-being Therapy (WBT), a multidimensional model dealing with mental health presentations, which indicates that it develops environmental mastery, personal growth, self-acceptance, personal autonomy and meaning. According to Seligman et al. (2006), therapists combine and complement WBT with cognitive behaviour therapy to address irrational cognitions, disturbing feelings, and relational dysfunctionalities. In brief, Seligman offers to strike a balance between positive psychology and psychology. Next, I explore Seligman's theoretical basis for positive psychology.

Theoretical underpinnings of positive psychology

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2014, p. 776) highlight three critical pillars of positive psychology. First, both label and assesses wellbeing and positive psychology, seeking to scientifically define and assess happiness as a positive emotion, flow, or engaged life and meaning. Taken together, they seem to nurture optimal life satisfaction measured by using the Authentic Happiness Inventory, which creates an overall wellbeing score (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Classifying human strengths is the second category, duplicating psychiatry and clinical psychology efforts that strived to organize mental disorders by creating the Values in Action Institute (VIA) Inventory of Strengths. This assessment tool listed strengths that were trialled in over forty countries, and the results did not reflect significant differences in the strength profiles. The third category is positive emotions such as happiness, satisfaction, pleasure, and the impact on various human experience dimensions.

Moreover, research proposes that negative or positive emotions narrow or broaden thought-action repertoires (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2014). Consequently, positive emotions magnify resilience and the human propensity for creativity by surpassing negative sensations (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2014). Having described the three pillars of positive psychology, I then explore its co-relationship to my psychospiritual counselling practice.

Positive psychology and psychospiritual counselling

From my experiences as a client and psychospiritual counsellor, I focus on "enhancing human strengths" and seek to reduce negativity or dissatisfaction (Harris et al., 2007, p.3). In addition, Linley (2006, as cited in George and Tomlinson-Clarke, 2015, p. 257) advocates that counselling psychologists need to familiarise themselves with strength-based counselling models to enhance their therapeutic efficacy. EFT and SFBT are core to my psychotherapeutic practice. Furthermore, George and Tomlinson-Clarke (2015, p. 257) state that therapists must realize that resiliency cannot be brought about by wishful thinking but by encouraging clients to challenge structures that inhibit resiliency. Additionally, therapists must engage in capacity building, for example, self-efficacy and regulation or spirituality, across the continuum of a client's lifespan. Interestingly, while forgiveness interventions have emerged as crucial in counselling efficacy as they enhance spirituality and positive relationships, positive psychology per se has not incorporated forgiveness as essential to wellbeing (Harris et al.,

2007; Smith, 2006). In summary, positive psychology endeavours to enhance individual resiliency and, therefore, the term positive education in the next section.

Concept of positive education in positive psychology

Seligman extends the concept of positive psychology to education to counter depression, enhance inner wellness, and promote creative thinking (Seligman et al., 2009). Moreover, Seligman coined the term positive education, which focuses on wellbeing, flourishing, and optimal functioning by developing interactive and interpersonal relational that transformative self and society (Seligman et al., 2009). Similarly, Seligman considers wellbeing as harmonious to enhanced learning as he considers education as more than the imparting of technical skills (Parks, 2014; Seligman et al., 2009). Hence, for Seligman, critical reflection is instrumental in enhancing a person's transformation or maturation as an individual and a member of society (Parks, 2014). In summary, positive psychology as science offers a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of mental health that transcends a disease model. Hence in the next section, I explore mindfulness.

Positive psychology, altruism, and empathy

Snyder and Lopez (2005) describe altruism as a motivation to extend concern for and help that benefits others. Nonetheless, philosophers and psychologists have queried whether benevolence is intrinsic to our humanity and question whether its origins are genuinely self-transcending or ultimately an act of self-benefit, no matter how subtle (Synder & Lopez, 2005). Nevertheless, Mansbridge (1990, as cited in Synder & Lopez, 2005) says an emerging consensus among biologists and psychologists holds that altruism is fundamentally egoistic (Snyder & Lopez, 2005). In contrast, a body of philosophical and psychological works have focused on other-directed, genuine emotional responses as the source of altruism or unlimited love (Post, 2008; Snyder & Lopez, 2005). I believe that altruism, viewed without judgement, is an unselfish choice that is transformative of the self and the other and, by extension, of society.

In addition, Synder and Lopez (2005) explain that empathy relates to knowledge of someone's inner state, feeling with another, seeing through another's frame of reference, and endeavouring to comprehend what someone is feeling and placing oneself in another's situation. According to Jeeves (2013), evolutionary psychologists and neuroscientists

perceive empathy as a cognitive skill that is a recent evolutionary phenomenon and point out that primates' prefrontal cortex has evidenced recent disproportionate expansion in their evolution. Nonetheless, Frans de Waal, an evolutionary psychologist, warns against a purely reductionist view of altruism as he holds that morality is at the centre of our nature as humans, which distinguishes us from primates and alerts us to the danger of transposing much of our thoughts onto primates (Jeeves, 2013). Moreover, Tillman (2008) holds that in animals, from a sociobiological perspective, altruism is hard-wired behaviour as animals lack the intentionality that is characteristic of humans.

In psychospiritual counselling, agreeing with Post (2008), I attempt to appeal to the human capacity for altruism and empathy to give clients a sense of purpose and meaning and restore human dignity rather than engage in individualism and self-obsession self-absorption. Watts (2017) stresses that spirituality or religion appear to foster an intuitive or embodied way of thinking. Agreeing with Watts (2017) and Van Kaam (1975), as a psychospiritual counsellor, I help clients embrace an embodied and transformed way of perceiving and experiencing lived realities. Furthermore, in psychospiritual counselling, I explore with clients what it means to be spiritual and socially embodied beings, transformed to serve others in love as Christ did (Wilhoit, 2008).

Transformative learning and positive psychology

According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2014), the entire trajectory of positive psychology is to usher in transformative learning rather than focus on the darker and damaged aspects of human psychology. Subsequently, Seligman coined 'positive education' to enhance students' sense of well-being (Mather & Hulme, 2013). Brunwasser and Gillham (2008, as cited in Mather and Hulme, 2013) say that Seligman's research team's 'Penn Resiliency Program' reduced depression, hopelessness and anxiety besides improving students' engagement in learning. Moreover, according to Dewey (1916), education is not purely an instructional pursuit (Mather & Hulme, 2013). Furthermore, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) state that learners can build on new concepts, which is integral to transformative learning if education is grounded in social constructivism. Furthermore, learners can comprehend their connection to the past, present, and future and become a catalyst for change (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). In summary, transformative learning is the human

capacity for wholistic change in individuals and society. Hence in the following section, I explore critical reflection, which is integral to psychospiritual counselling.

Mindfulness and transcendence

My research topic examines the interface between positive psychology and spirituality. EFT and SBFT are the core of my psychospiritual counselling practice, wherein I focus on empowering clients to enhance resilience as transformative learning. Additionally, mindfulness is integral to my practice as I endeavour to help clients develop relational coherence in physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions of their lives that aim at personal transformation. Froom (1964, as cited in De Silva & Deegalle, 2021, p. 146) expressed that mindfulness disengages the individual from excessive self-preoccupation or the development of inflated ego and redirects the individual to ground and balance its existence as 'being' rather than in possessing. I begin by defining mindfulness.

Definition of mindfulness

Turner (2009, as cited in Rybak, 2013), defines mindfulness as a state of internal attunement characterised by a sense of openness, acceptance, and serenity. According to Rybak (2013), mindfulness is a human pursuit that has been an integral aspect of collectivist indigenous cultures and Eastern traditions that emphasise interpersonal relationships and the coherence of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions.

Mindfulness and positive psychology are also interrelated, although positive psychology has historical roots in the Greek philosophers Aristippus and Aristotle's reflections on well-being (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). Nevertheless, mindfulness and positive psychology focus on optimising the individual's capacity to flourish developmentally and interpersonally, enhancing overall wellness, as I have discovered in my life (Mayorga et al., 2016).

Positive benefits of mindfulness

According to Rybak (2013), research indicates the efficaciousness of mindfulness with self-awareness on physical and mental health wellbeing regarding stress reduction, living in the present moment, and enhancing wellness. According to Aten et al. (2011), mindfulness has beneficial psychological outcomes, such as overcoming negative emotions, improving

wellbeing, promoting emotional regulation, eliciting empathy, reducing anxiety, depression and rumination while developing self-compassion and positive emotions. Likewise, Tirsch (2010, p. 12, as cited in Rybak, 2013) thinks that mindfulness helps clients improve internal attunement and neural assimilation. From experience, I agree with Rybak (2013) that clients who practice mindfulness appear to have a higher level of coherence and are less hostile towards life, more accepting of their situations, and capable of self-transcendence without dismissing their circumstances' seriousness. In brief, having discussed what mindfulness is, I now focus on its benefits.

Mindfulness and self-transcendence

Aten et al. (2011) state that mindfulness involves self-transcendence and transformation and is a potent means of mental wellness and spiritual integration and enhancement. Furthermore, Fiske (2019) defines self-transcendence as the expanded notion of personal growth towards maturity, transformative viewpoints that connect an individual to the spiritual or the metaphysical. In addition, Vago and Silbersweig (2012, as cited in Aten et al., 2011), categorise the beneficial features of mindfulness and self-transcendence. The first is a transforming self-awareness wherein an individual develops a heightened sense of presence and is attuned to its movements. In the second category, a person experiences a transformation in self-regulation. A person's emotional regulation capacity increases emotional and cognitive flexibility, greater acceptance, and a healthy detachment from a challenging situation. The last benefit is increased self-transcendence, which signifies greater maturity, improved self-awareness of interdependence at a spiritual level, a heightened and developed sense of compassion and the ability to operate out of an ethical framework (p. 135-145). In short, I explored mindfulness, an integral aspect of enhancing resilience and wholistic transformation of the human person. Hence, in the next section, I explore transformative learning, which is the goal of counselling.

Counselling – an overview

To me, counselling is a reparative concept and a transformative means to inner wholeness. Accordingly, my discussion examines emotions, religion and spirituality as a foreword to discussing trauma. I come from a storytelling culture, so I end this section with trauma because I believe it is integral to an individual's healing experiences. In the Asian or African

context, the former where I hail from and the latter where I worked, storytelling is a cultural way of communicating, understanding, and processing complex thoughts and experiences akin to critical self-reflection and critical thinking.

Definition of counselling

The American Counselling Association holds that “counselling involves professional relationships designed to assist individuals, families, and groups toward mental health, wellness, educational, and career goals” (Kaplan et al., 2014, p. 2). Therefore, at its very core, counselling is a helping relationship (McLeod & McLeod, 2011). It is a facilitative or integrative process, and it aims to enhance personal growth, self-awareness, and self-confidence (Pelling et al., 2007, p. 12). I refer to this as wholeness, and in the next section, I explore it further.

Counselling and wholeness

Counselling is an invitation to experience undivided wholeness, drawing on David Bohm’s philosophy, if it is to become a rich source of healing and integrity (Clement van Pelt, 2005; Friedman & Hartelius, 2013; Spalding, 2008). According to Bohm (2002, p. 4), the term ‘wholeness’ comes from the Anglo-Saxon term ‘hale’, meaning ‘whole’, like ‘Shalem’ in Hebrew and ‘Holy’ in English, meaning ‘whole.’ In this sense, I, as priest engaged in psychospiritual counselling, identify with Bowden (2010), who offers a new paradigm of therapy that embraces the notion of connection. This connection is described in a transpersonal sense as an experience of wholeness, unity, and possibility. It transcends behavioural therapeutic intervention models that are evidence-based (Jones, 2010, p. 248; Spalding, 2008; Watson, 1994). As a Christian, wholeness is akin to conversion, which spiritually means turning around and implies transforming an individual’s life direction and fostering a closer relationship with God (Mahoney & Pargament, 2004, p. 482).

Counselling implies self-transcendence and self-transformation

Counselling empowers individuals within a safe and secure therapeutic environment to transcend self by consciously changing. Pugh et al. (2010, p. 1) say that a holistic and transformative counselling experience that engages an individual's behaviour, emotions, and intellect is fundamentally motivating. Pugh et al. (2010, p. 5) add self-transcendence and self-

transformation as a commitment contingent on an individual's self-identity regarding goals, values, and beliefs. Walters (2008) also cites Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), who stated that a person's education transcends the transmission of facts (p. 112). Psychospiritual counselling fosters self-transcendence and self-transformation, and God is at the heart of this phenomenon (Roth, 2018). Moreover, Roth (2018, p. 95) explains that Van Kaam believes that the formation of the person consists of three zones – 'Intrasphere' or relation to self, 'Situational Sphere' that encompasses our relational immersion within culture or society and the 'Extended World Sphere' that refers to a person's relationship to God. Additionally, a personal relationship with God entails authentic transformation, integral to psychospiritual counselling as transformative learning, as the love of God is inalienable or inseparable from the human love of self and others, which includes the cosmos and ecology (Jeanrond, 2010, p. 242). This theme is echoed in the last judgement parable in the Gospel of Mathew in the New Testament, Chapter 25: 31-46.

Authentic transformation

At the heart of psychospiritual counselling is the love of God, self, and others, which entails the authentic transformation of assumptions as integral to wholeness and wellbeing in every personal dimension, including the spiritual. Tolliver and Tisdell (2006) were correct to assert that authentic transformation must include “the rational, affective, spiritual, imaginative, somatic, and sociocultural domains through relevant content and experiences” (p. 38). Moreover, in psychospiritual counselling, an authentic transformation entails a multidisciplinary and multiparadigmatic view of the human person. It includes differing historic-social-spiritual paradigms or truths of what it means to be an integrated or transformational human in potentiality (Taylor et al., 2012). Humans cannot be considered human without personal meaning, freedom, responsibility, and creativity. Psychospiritual counselling recognises that spirituality is inherently a transformational means to self-actualisation and self-transcendence (Van Kaam, 1961; Schneiders, 1989). Hence, I agree with Thomas Merton (1972), who described self-transcendence as the doorway from the false self to the liberating true self, which is crucial to psychospiritual counselling (Haynes, 2016). I also found it fascinating that John Dewey (as cited in Pugh et al., 2010) held that legitimate knowledge not only had value independent of social or individual constructs but also in how individuals used it in their interactions in life. I agree with Jackson-Jordan (2003), who asserts that contemporary education promotes and expands unsustainable globalisation, a social

construct of European Enlightenment thinkers. In psychospiritual counselling, I challenge clients to think, stand outside systems, religious and secular, and critically and courageously take a stand if they are to experience religion as liberating and transformative. Having explored counselling within a transpersonal paradigm as a call to 'wholeness' and a conscious choice to experience self-transcendence and self-transformation, I focus on my approaches to counselling from a transpersonal and philosophical perspective. I then expand on my theoretical underpinnings in Emotion-Focused Therapy and Solution-Focused Brief therapy, followed by spiritual emergency.

Approaches to counselling

In this context, my preferred therapeutic techniques to bring about transformation in psychospiritual counselling are emotion-focused and solution-focused therapies. They are short-term and efficacious in their therapeutic outcomes, as most of my clients come from disadvantaged backgrounds and cannot afford long-term therapy (Egan, 2014). I begin with a transpersonal approach indistinguishable from my philosophy or way of life if it is to be transformational, an idea espoused by Foucault (Flynn, 2005, p. 612). I focus on God understood as consciousness, collective unconsciousness, or embodiment as God is foundational to psychospiritual counselling. I expand on psychospiritual counselling and its aims, culminating in the creation and nurturing of unconditional love or agape, understood as altruism.

Transpersonal approach: philosophy or way of life

The transpersonal approach is fundamental to my philosophy, as I explained above. Implicit is a search for God and the recognition that God exists within and outside the realm of self that consciously seeks to unite with it (Collins, 2008a, p. 3). McDermott (1993) refers to "trans" as moving beyond one's self or ego to emphasise "the extraordinary, on the profoundly transformative and on alternate states of consciousness" (p. 209). My paradigm is undeniably 'transpersonal.' Bergson defines transpersonalism, Carl Jung's 'collective unconsciousness, as the "continual, seamless, interconnected, immeasurable movement of our awareness, manifesting, simultaneously, as both the knower and what is known" (Barnard 2011, p. 7). Jung portrays the collective unconscious as a universal human phenomenon that every human being is naturally endowed with at birth. The collective unconscious innately exists as

archetypes that bring it into consciousness (Stark & Bonner, 2012). Therefore, I agree with Van Kaam (1969) and view my 'true' self and clients in psychospiritual counselling as spiritually evolving realities continuously integrating, disintegrating, and reintegrating (p. 17). This sentiment finds echoes in St. Augustine's words, "For Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee" (Sheed, 1944, p. 1).

Consciousness or the collective unconscious

I recognise the human urge to unite with God, focusing on ways to achieve this oneness. This union is brought about through mystical experiences, contemplative prayer, meditation, a sense of awe of creation in a cosmic sense, or the reverence of the spark of the Divine in others and the cosmos (Rhor, 2019). Similarly, I believe my experiences resonate with what Carl Gustav Jung called the 'Collective Unconscious', which is "a source of experience that has both prepersonal (phylogenetic) and transpersonal (telic, spiritual) inherent expressions" (Washburn, 2003, p. 2). Admittedly, for me, consciousness is an ineffable, blissful state of being, in which I am infused with, illumined, fired up, energised by, immersed into, connected with and inseparable from a personal God who is wholly 'other' or numinous (Washburn, 2003, p. 55).

Consciousness as embodiment

Esbjorn-Hargens (2006, as cited in Young & Koopsen, 2011) speaks of consciousness as embodiment, embedded and enmeshed. Interestingly, the early Church referred to this as *theosis*, which translates "becoming God", and it is in this sense I view my existence as a transcending reality. 'Becoming God' entails an ongoing transformation so that I evolve into a visible and living presence of God, a sign, sacrament, or reflection of the Divine, in this world (Feldmeier, 2015; Gill, 1979, p. 18). Feldmeier (2015) also tries to explain this idea through a quote from Saint Augustine, who said, "God became human that humanity might become God." Therefore, I agree with Van Niekerk and Niemandt (2019) and Molnar (1997) that Jesus is the embodiment of God's love, the centre or locus of my being, and in whom my true self finds its real potentiality. In psychospiritual counselling, I endeavour to offer clients an experience of becoming an embodiment of God's love, which implies integrity and wholeness or transformation.

Psychospiritual counselling

Psychospiritual counselling, which is trans-psychological, spiritually alleviates emotional distress, anxiety, and depression caused by psychospiritual stressors such as loneliness, lack of intimacy, and relational ruptures by strengthening psychospiritual transformation (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Muto & Martin, 2009). According to Cashwell and Young (2014), psychospiritual counselling cultivates in clients an outlook of existence as a conscious movement towards attaining higher levels of integration within a historical process that includes connectivity, inclusivity, and human brotherhood and sisterhood (Cashwell & Young, 2014). Moreover, according to Cashwell and Young (2014, p. 97-103), psychospiritual counselling or human development comprises four stages:

1. A person's faith can be an internal projection of beliefs, mythic or literal interpretation of sacred texts and affiliation with like-minded believers who believe they are connected to the cosmos or higher being.
2. Religious judgment, wherein life's challenges force individuals to examine relationships with God as all-powerful, transcendent, immanent, creator, compassionate and loving.
3. Developmental growth, which involves ethical, mental, and psychosocial change involving critical thinking and reflection that opens them up to other opportunities to experience the spiritual.
4. Transpersonal development, wherein the goal of human evolution lies in spiritual fulfilment.

Psychospiritual counselling is vital for integrative and holistic health care, and a client's central truth is the heart of it. Psychospiritual counselling recognises that every client can experience psychospiritual transformation by assisting the individual in perceiving the sacred in life's circumstances (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Plante, 2016). In this sense, psychospiritual counselling centres on the three aspects of the person's formation – formation, reformation, and transformation (Muto & Martin, 2009). Hence, in psychospiritual therapy, Jesus is the model, the divine transformer and healer of the whole person to integrate body, mind, and spirit (Muto & Martin, 2009). Lastly, psychospiritual counselling recognises that humans are mutually interdependent, and that alienation, separation, or disconnection diminishes their capacity for self-transcendence and transformation (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Muto &

Martin, 2009). After exploring psychospiritual counselling and its four stages, I investigate its goals.

Aims of psychospiritual counselling

Psychospiritual counselling aims to educate adult learners in the art of self-efficacy and self-regulation, which are agents of human liberation through the positive reframing of their narratives (Muto & Martin, 2009). Another facet of psychospiritual counselling is transforming a client's suffering into compassion or empathy, an instrument of healing (Cashwell & Young, 2014). Psychospiritual counselling helps clients to articulate what it means to be human as beings in the world who are in the process of becoming their authentic selves (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Muto & Martin, 2009). In addition, psychospiritual counselling strengthens clients' sense of bonding, intimacy, or connectedness to others, and it provides the necessary conditions so their true self-emerges as transformed individuals with enhanced resilience (Van Kaam, 1969).

Van Kaam (1961) says, "The mutual communication of self-experience in culture leads to a shared image of man" (p. 94). In psychospiritual counselling, clients are encouraged to self-communicate their true selves, engage in critical self-reflection, discern and respectfully enter solidarity with worldviews and perspectives that transcend their cultural foundations (Muto & Martin, 2009; Van Kaam, 1969). Furthermore, psychospiritual counselling challenges clients to move away from a false sense of self-sufficiency and to recognize their need for mutual interdependency with others (Muto & Martin, 2009; Van Kaam, 1969). Additionally, I agree with Van Kaam (1969) that psychospiritual counselling aims to provide clients with a supportive environment from which to experience self-emergence, self-transcendence and self-transformation (p.17). I also agree with Van Kaam (1969) that psychospiritual counselling recognizes the pain of personal crisis and transformation and challenges clients who are terrified of surrendering their false selves, security, irrational thinking, and past behaviours to embrace a new way of being self (p.17). Moreover, to support this transition, psychospiritual counselling offers clients the tools to embrace every 'turning point' or crisis as a golden opportunity to discover their real potentialities to be integrated humans (Van Kaam, 1969).

Psychospirituality recognizes the liberating power of spirituality as a transforming tool for personal or communal growth by "the exercise of power to name reality, to place meaning on experience, and to interpret human phenomena" (Pelling et al., 2007, p. 28). According to Van Kaam (1975), the etymology of 'existence' is comprised of *ex*, which means 'out', and *sistere*, which means 'to stand.' I agree with Van Kaam (1975) that reality is about standing out of the self. Consequently, in psychospiritual counselling, I invite clients to stand out of their minds, emotions, physicality and stand in front of their God or Higher Power (Van Kaam, 1975). Lastly, I view psychospiritual counselling as an immersive experience of God in history. Inspired by Van Kaam's (1975) insight and my theological reflections, this process for my clients involves contemplating their relationship with God and self.

Psychospiritual counselling facilitates genuine transformation in me, other counsellors and educators by developing an attitude of self-awareness and conscious awareness of our surroundings to restore physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and cosmic harmony that enhances wellbeing and wholistic transformation as self-actualised and self-transcending beings. Corey et al. (2014, cited in Philipson & Gary, 2015, p. 1) explain that self-awareness is both a process and a consciousness of one's uniqueness and traits, attitudes, needs, beliefs, worldviews, prejudices, aims, and fears to name but a few. Another way psychospiritual counselling can facilitate genuine transformation is by viewing spirituality and transcendence as integral to our human identity and not as something separate from our true selves (Haynes, 2016). According to Haynes (2016, p. 9) genuine transformation in psychospiritual counselling is achieved by integrating or cultivating a holistic perspective of human and spiritual needs and their growth. I agree with Vazquez and realise that if psychospiritual counselling is to be a transformative experience for me, counsellors and educators alike or for clients in general, we need to be inwardly still or mindful to encounter our true selves and truths. In psychospiritual counselling, healing and transformation are achieved by empowering myself, counsellors and educators to engage in critical self-reflection of their lives and experiences [inner and outer worlds], encounter our distressing emotions, explore our attachment patterns, recognise our capacity for emotional regulation and the breakdown of our defences and confront self-sabotaging behaviours to enhance resiliency and transformation (Vazquez, 2016).

Psychospiritual counselling as fostering 'agape'

Jeeves (2013) alludes to 'agape' as selfless love that is traditionally inclusive, embracing and extending to humanity. 'Agape,' a Greek term, signifies Christ's heroic, selfless and self-giving love on the cross (Jeeves, 2013). Tillman (2008) suggests psychotherapy has challenged the over preoccupation with agape as self-sacrifice and has instead emphasised self-love as the path to loving others. Altruism focuses on others' wellbeing, while agape holistically focuses on the self in a mutual relationship with others that seeks to create circles of love (Tillman, 2008). Agreeing with Jeeves (2013) and Tillman (2008), I explore with clients how sacrificial love is a denial of self-fulfilment but an archetype of God's unconditional love for created humanity that has the free will to choose to love or reject God, its creator.

Psychospiritual counselling is not about disseminating knowledge or stimulating the imagination. Moreover, psychospiritual counselling is akin to transformative learning, wherein clients critically think and discern existence and potentiality, critique belief systems, and arrive at informed decisions to create a better world (Bowell & Kemp, 2015; Carrington & Selva, 2010). In Catholic spirituality, discernment is equivalent to critical thinking.

The counsellor

In the following sections, I build on the impact of transformative learning on a therapist and examine its two core elements: critical self-reflection and critical thinking, which are understood as discernment in Catholic spirituality. Additionally, psychospiritual counselling aims for the holistic transformation of the human person and how clients can become agents of change, beginning with themselves and society. I started the literature review by discussing transformative education, and I now focus on the person of the therapist or clients exploring spirituality, religion, spiritual emergencies and trauma. Transformative learning remains a concept without a person, so I felt it essential to narrate the transformative experiences of those engaged in it. By discussing the counsellor, I reaffirm that the human person remains central to transformative learning that seeks to use positive psychology and spirituality to enhance resiliency.

Critical reflection in counselling

Critical reflection is an integral aspect of psychospiritual counselling, as Christ modelled transformative learning to his followers. Accordingly, Newlands (2006) says that Christianity embedded within society critiques unjust economic, political, social and cultural systems. Moreover, a core element of Jesus's message was founding a Kingdom based on love, justice, righteousness, compassion, and peace. Hence, according to Regan (2019), in Catholic theology, critical thinking, as espoused by Pope Francis, when combined with discernment, is transformative and liberating. Therefore, critical thinking is the bedrock of Catholic engagement in political action, pluralistic dialogue, work in the Church, and theological reflections (Regan, 2019). In addition, Catholic theology holds that every baptised person or believing member of the Church shares in the three-fold mission of Jesus- priestly, prophetic and kingly (Allen, 2014; Philibert, 2006). Firstly, Philibert (2006) explains that every Christian is called to be a priest who is an agent of God's healing and liberating love. Secondly, Christians are invited to be prophets whose words and life testify to God's transformative love that touches every dimension of human existence. Lastly, a Christian is called to be a king who establishes a community of love, justice, and righteousness.

Consequently, in psychospiritual counselling, I empower clients to critically reflect on and discern their faulty thinking and actions about their calling as Christians to be agents of transformative love. I empower them to process feelings of depression, suppressed or repressed anger, and the guilt of challenging the Church's stance on faith and morals. Additionally, I endeavour to explore their fear of rejection by the Church for disobeying and questioning its teachings and even their anxieties about being unfaithful to the Church. I challenge clients to be critical, but in psychospiritual counselling, I model discernment.

Challenging my clients to be critical in psychospiritual counselling

Psychospiritual counselling models discernment that challenges clients to critically see all their experiential, relational, social, and political realities contextually through the prism of God's law of love (Regan, 2019). Recently, Pope Francis, in an interview, expressed his fears that faith itself could become an ideology that enslaves believers (Regan, 2019, p. 670). In my experience, a significant number of Catholic clients still operate out of fear of an unforgiving or punishing God in addition to the dictates of the Church wherein its laws are

considered immutable instead of experiencing the transforming love of the Church (Regan, 2019). Sadly, perhaps many of my clients unwittingly allow themselves to be silenced by the Church's spiritual and moral authority by not critically reflecting on their experiences of faith contextually (Calleja, 2014). In this sense, I am a reflective practitioner, and I expand on this notion in the following section of my literature review.

In summary, at its core, psychospiritual counselling seeks to create viable opportunities for clients to experience healing and wholeness through resilience enhancement and transformative learning.

Spirituality

Etymology and evolving Catholic understanding of spirituality

Spirituality is a multidimensional reality, power, or force (Lepherd, 2015; Schneider, 1989). In Latin, “*spiritus*” means “soul, courage, vigour, and breath, and its French equivalent, *spiritualité*, has its roots in the biblical Greek noun *pneuma* that meant spirit” (Lepherd, 2015, p. 256). In an interview, David Abram, a cultural ecologist and philosopher, stated that he found it fascinating that the words spirit, psyche, soul or anima in their linguistic root meanings referred to breath (David & Vaughan-Lee, 2020). The term ‘breath’ is synchronous with the image in the Book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, in which the Creator God breathes into the nostrils of man (Schneiders, 1989).

Rooted in scripture, the Church’s contemporary understanding of spirituality is inclusive and universal rather than an elite state or way of perfection (Schneider, 1989). Spirituality, in modern Catholicism, is a combination of two approaches: a dogmatic position that emphasizes transcendence, which is the “definition from above,” and the anthropological part that speaks of it as a “definition from below” (Schneider, 1989, p. 682). Nevertheless, spirituality is a term with a rather expansive horizon that breaks religion's narrow and restrictive confines (Rothberg, 2000).

Peter Van Ness (as cited in Schneiders, 2003, p. 166) a specialist in secular spirituality, described spirituality as "the quest for attaining an optimal relationship between what one truly is and everything that is" (p. 166). Schneiders (2003) defines spirituality as "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through transcendence

towards the ultimate value one perceives" (p 166). Rothberg (2000) describes spirituality as involving "lived transformation of self and community toward fuller alignment with or expression of what is understood, within a given cultural context, to be 'sacred'" (p. 163).

But what is sacred? Theologically speaking, I view the sacred as something holy, divine, transpersonal, transcendent, or Other. By extension, it includes things associated with it, such as the crucifix, Bible, altar, or the baptismal font, to name a few. This concept of the sacred is not just limited to Catholic belief, and it is globally applicable to other religious or spiritual traditions (Plante, 2008, p. 430). Spirituality is about achieving integration of the divine within or developing the self's fullest potential, as being fully human or fully alive (Gardner, 2011; Stark & Bonner, 2012; Tolliver, 2006).

Spirituality as a subjective reality is a universal human phenomenon and condition of the human mind: an ungraspable, indefinable, ineffable, relative, or personal reality (Lepherd, 2015; Schneiders, 1989). According to Feldmeier (2015), spirituality is an experience of God that brings about the human person's transformation. Moreover, spirituality reflects how some individuals structure their lives at conscious and unconscious levels and make sense of their existence about the self, others, world, the Transcendent, or the Ultimate Reality through knowledge and love (Rahner, 1985; Schneiders, 1989). Hence, spirituality focuses on God as transcendent but endeavours to look at the profound mystery of human development within the framework of a vibrant and transformational relationship with the Absolute (Sheldrake, 1998). As a transformational reality, spirituality is fundamentally about what we are as humans, or else we run the risk of being stuck in a materialistic or utilitarian outlook of life (Rahner, 1985; Schneiders, 1989; Schneiders, 2003).

Rolheiser (1999, as cited in Engel, 2005), describes authentic, life-giving contemporary Christian spirituality as a new journey from inner restlessness to peace, which involves integrating community ritualistic practices, social action being central to the incarnation of Christ. Furthermore, Rolheiser (1999, as cited in Engel, 2005), refers to spirituality as an inner fire, eros, and life within that motivate and connect individuals to self-emergence, to recognize the limitless potentiality of self-identity for relational authenticity with others and God (p. 97).

Spirituality as empowering

At a traditional level, spirituality, an inner subjective experience, gives meaning or value to a person's existence in their lifelong search for the spirit experienced as transcendent, immanent, or boundless (Kelly, 2004; Schneiders, 1989; Stark & Bonner, 2012). Sorajjakool and Seyle (2004, as cited in Gardner, 2011) feel that meaning-making as an existential reality transcends the rational (p. 22).

In the contemporary sense, as a powerful source of energy, spirituality empowers individuals to integrate aspects of their experiences and personality through self-transcendence, rather than being fixated on their inner spiritual lives (Gardner, 2011; Kelly, 2004; Sheldrake, 1998). As a diversity of forms, belonging, or expression of self as potentiality, spirituality allows for holistic human flourishing that marries the quest for social justice or transformation with environmental protection (Gardner, 2011; Ivtzan, 2013; Van Kaam, 1975). Spirituality, as a complex multi-dimensional reality, is about self-emergence rather than self-alienation, for to be human is to be connected, integrated, and whole (Schneider, 1989; Van Kaam, 1975).

Furthermore, spirituality is about how mature people are empowered by their lived transpersonal experiences (Gardner, 2011; Tolliver, 2016; Young-Eisendrath et al., 2000). Moreover, spirituality is about being centred in their truths, including their authentic personal experiences about others or the environment, which are not necessarily tied to organized faiths (Gardner, 2011; Schneider, 1989; Young-Eisendrath et al., 2000).

Religion

Definition

Religion is linked to the revelatory or mystical experience of a founding figure that is transformative and generally establishes a movement to communicate that revelation from God (Koenig, 2005; Schneiders, 2003). Additionally, religion is an individual's guiding principle, spiritual tradition, or primary stance of life linked to the Transcendent or Ultimate Reality that the individual depends on as the source or ground of being (Koenig, 2005; Schneiders, 2003). Lastly, religion recognises total dependence and allegiance to the divine (Koenig, 2005; Schneiders, 2003).

Religion, like spirituality, is described in neutral terms as a search for significance and having specific or multiple goals (Park et al., 2017). Perhaps, these goals could be psychological to deal with anxiety reduction, offering individuals personal meaning or purpose in life and offering adherents the skills to control their impulses. At a social level, like spirituality, religion offers its followers a sense of social cohesion, individuality, feeling of belonging and definite views on pivotal life moments such as birth, marriage, and death (Park et al., 2017).

Unlike spirituality, religion offers an individual, authoritative, or dogmatic answers to life questions, meaning, a role, status, a place in the world, but crucially, it assists in identity formation within a socio-cultural setting (Young & Koopsen, 2011). Implicit is the authoritarian exercise of social, political, or economic power by organised or institutional religion (Koenig, 2005; Schneiders, 2003). Like spirituality, religion seeks to foster a sense of intimacy with the sacred, described as the Transcendent, God, the Ultimate Truth or Reality or a Force, Energy or even a Higher Power (Koenig, 2005; Young & Koopsen, 2011).

Institutionalisation of religion

Tragically, by the end of the 20th century, the term religion became restrictive, inflexible, or dogmatic and came to symbolize an organized or institutional entity that exerted an enormous influence in society (Schneiders, 2003). Furthermore, Schneiders (2003) elaborates that institutional religion was historically exclusive, highly ideological, clerical, and patriarchal, paradoxically alienating genuine seekers who turned their backs on institutional hypocrisy, lack of inclusivity, obsessive control, legalism, and clericalism. Critics of institutional religion were not necessarily anti-Catholics but individuals of integrity searching for meaning and wholeness in a world that is at best a challenging place to live (Schneiders, 2003; Young & Koopsen, 2011). Lephherd (2015) articulates that spirituality and religion holistically are about integrity or the wholeness of a person rather than mental illness (p. 566). Agreeing with Lephherd (2015), I foster a holistic view of self with a potentiality for wholeness rather than focusing exclusively on clients' mental health presentations in my psychospiritual counselling practice. Nevertheless, I believe there is a correlation between spirituality and religion, as both seek to foster integrity and wholeness in individuals or adherents, which psychospiritual counselling sees as crucial to transformative learning and enhancement of resilience.

Who is God for me?

The Catholic understanding of God up to the mid-20th century was purely transcendent and chained to a religion that was dull, obligatory, and mostly incomprehensibly bound to rituals, and divorced from people's lived experiences. Therefore, many post-modern people sought comfort in other personality development systems, cults, mind-altering drugs, psychotherapy, Eastern esoteric spiritualities, and a return to nature (Schneiders, 2010). According to Schneiders (2010), the search for a genuine spiritual experience of God, or the transcendent, led theological scholars to engage in dialogue with transpersonal and developmental psychologists, comparative religionists, literary scholars, secular historians, and historical specialists to engage at the level of human enrichment (p. 244). There is recognition is a recognition that God is both transcendent and immanent sense-making human experiences (Schneiders, 2010).

The reality is that God, who is free, cannot be philosophically, theologically domesticated, enslaved, or colonized by the Institutional Church (Feldmeier, 2015; Osbourne, 2005). St. Catherine of Siena describes God as a mystery who cannot be known directly, but a desire once awakened cannot be quenched (Rausch, 2016). Formerly in Catholic theology that was moralistic, God was vengeful and ready to condemn any moral infringement (Rausch, 2016). Contemporary Catholic theology sees God as transcendent, holy, incomprehensible, disclosed in history as Father, Son, and Spirit, and by nature a self-giving, relational and an unconditionally loving God (Rausch, 2016).

Admittedly, my notion and experiences of God are formed, nurtured, and embedded in Christian theology, spirituality, philosophy, anthropology, and the sacraments or rituals rooted in the incarnation and resurrection of Christ (Kelly, 2012; Schneider, 2010). The incarnation, which to Christians is a singular and unfolding event, is the belief that Christ who became or took on human flesh is the self-communication or face of a loving God who is for, with, and in me within the context of a faith community (Gill, 1979; Schneider, 2010). I agree with Kelly (2012) and consider that Christ is an integral part of my ever-evolving reality, and I am continuously striving to become another Christ in the here and now (p. 776). Christ's incarnation is the embodiment of God's love in history and humanity if we acknowledge it, while Christ's resurrection is a continuation of God being for us, with us, and in us (Feldmeier, 2015; Kelly, 2012; Schneiders, 2010). Moreover, God as an embodied experience is not just

an intellectual pursuit detached from life (Schneider, 2010). I agree with Kelly (2012) and Schneiders (2010) that knowledge of God as purely a transcendent reality is inseparable from the experience of the immanence of God, as together they transform a faith community into the embodiment of God in human history.

God as a primary attachment figure

Bowlby (1982) stated that most humans born with an innate psychobiological system form socioemotional bonds or primary attachments with significant others in life that offer them safety, protection, comfort, and emotional support that impact their lives from birth to death (Granqvist, 2012, p. 49). Furthermore, Granqvist et al. (2012) said that some individuals find safety in religion, especially when they feel mentally or emotionally dysregulated because of attachment issues. Kirkpatrick, who first saw the connection between religion and attachment issues, asserted that a person's relationship with God met the criteria or norm for attachment and deduced that it functioned psychologically like other relationships (Granqvist et al., 2012). Studies in religion suggest that a person can have a personal relationship with God, experience God as unconditional love or as an attachment figure and someone to turn to for safety in times of suffering and feel secure (Granqvist et al. 2012). Hence, God, I dare say, is my primary attachment figure. Still, I would not describe my relationship with God either as a placebo, protective factor, or a 'self-induced helpline' to inner health and general wellbeing, nor do I dismiss the experiences of religion as purely catharsis (Jeeves, 2013). Religious experiences are emotional links to past childhood memories of longing for a maternal being (Ostow, 2007).

God and identity formation

I believe that God is not only my primary attachment figure but that my spiritual upbringing and religious beliefs have shaped my identity as a creature of God. Interestingly, transpersonal psychologists point out that while psychodynamic and developmental psychology explicate the pre-personal as the stage before a person's ego forms and personal stages of ego or identity formation, transpersonal couches such as God experiences in mystical and spiritual jargons, echoed in religious or spiritual traditions (Stark & Bonner, 2012). Likewise, Collins (2008b) states that God experiences impact modes of knowledge and correlate with the emergent nature or transformation of a person's identity. I view reflexivity as an essential ingredient of

transformative, identity and psycho-social self-development, which include critical self-reflection or self-questioning of prior assumptions, values, theoretical predispositions, and value-laden viewpoints (Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003). Guba and Lincoln (1989) hold the conviction that authentic moral learning implies critically exploring and dispassionately deconstructing hidden assumptions that define a person's cultural, ethical, or moral decision-making processes or identity in the world (Taylor and Settelmaier, 2003, p. 239). I realise that psychology is crucial to understanding religion and that science and faith are not foes but complement each other.

Spiritual emergency

Definition

A spiritual emergency is a turbulent and possibly a very traumatic event that leads to personal transformation and spiritual growth. A spiritual emergency is an encounter with the numinous, classified as archetypal, mystical, or shamanic (Collins, 2008a). Moreover, a spiritual emergency can be a "catalyst for a transformation leading to personal growth" (Collins, 2007, p. 505). According to Watson (1990), a spiritual emergency occurs when an individual undergoes a profound psychological transformation that affects the person at psychological, emotional, sensory, perceptual, cognitive, and bodily levels. Walsh (1990) refers to these as "transpersonal crises" or "transpersonal crises (Watson, 1994, p. 24)." Additionally, Grof and Grof (1989) explain that spiritual emergency incorporates research findings from clinical and experimental psychology, psychiatry, consciousness research, psychotherapies, thanatology, which is a study of the process of dying and death, anthropology, comparative religion and mythology (Watson, 1994, p. 24). A spiritual emergency is a turbulent event that tears a person apart and is erroneously considered a pathology but inexplicably surpasses it (Collins, 2008, p.1; Watson, 1994, p. 23). Transpersonal literature acknowledges a spiritual and transcendent reality beyond self and refers to this reality as a personal awareness of God. However, transpersonal literature recognises that a spiritual emergency is not only a moment of spiritual growth but also embodiment, whose causes vary (Collins, 2008).

Factors that cause a spiritual emergency

Many factors bring about a spiritual emergency, such as an altered state of consciousness, a God experience, terminal illness, sexual relations, childbirth, near-death experiences,

transitional moments in a person's life or spiritual practices (Collins, 2008a). However, spiritual emergencies can present themselves spontaneously or when people are open to personal transformation. Nevertheless, the catalyst to a spiritual crisis is multifactorial: emotional distress or stress, physical ailments, extreme fatigue, insomnia, intense sexual unions, and loss or grief (Watson, 1994). Grof and Grof (1990, as cited in Watson, 1994, p. 25) assert that spiritual emergencies occur when external events weaken an individual's ego system or when significant life stressors lead to introspection. Spiritual emergencies involve a transformation of an individual, a "radical shift in the balance between the conscious and unconscious processes" (Watson, 1994, p. 25). Moreover, spiritual emergencies redirect an individual's gaze from focusing on the external world to an inner world where the transpersonal experience is healing (Bragdon, 2012; Van Kaam, 1969; Strawson, 2010). Additionally, after a spiritual emergency, a person develops a transpersonal, embodied, and self-transcending way of perceiving, understanding the self and the world through the lens of their wisdom or spiritual traditions (Van Kaam, 1979; Strawson, 2010).

Critically reflecting on spiritual emergencies, I agree with Watson (1994) that my spiritual emergency in the seminary led to "emotional and psychosomatic healing, creative problem-solving, personality transformation, and conscious evolution" (p. 24). I agree with Collins (2008) that psychospiritual counselling provides a space to contextualise spiritual emergencies and discover their transformative powers (Collins, 2008). As a young seminarian, I had a spiritual emergency, and my seminary director thought I needed psychological assistance. However, my spiritual director sent me to a psychospiritual therapist who recognised that my spiritual emergency could be a catalyst for "psychospiritual transformation" (Collins, 2008, p. 200). James Connelly, my spiritual director, recognised that spiritual emergencies reflect extreme crises but are developmental opportunities for wholeness and integration at the level of being. In retrospect, my seminary director viewed my issues purely from a mental health perspective and determined the need for psychotropic drugs. In the next section, I elaborate on spiritual emergencies as existential crises that are transformative.

Spiritual emergency is an existential crisis

Stanislav Grof (as cited in Collins, 2008) stated that psychiatry views some of these spiritual experiences as manifestations of deeper psychological issues that need medical intervention

rather than recognising such moments of crisis as transformative. Research by Lukoff and Turner (1998) suggests that a spiritual emergency is now recognised as a diagnostic category in DSM-IV. In a study of psychologists by Lannert (1991), 72% of respondents addressed spiritual emergencies (p.23). A spiritual emergency is an experience of an existential crisis and a spiritual awareness akin to being spiritually born again (Ankrah, 2020). I recall the experience of an alcoholic who had a spiritual emergency and one day walked into a church to pray. His marriage was on the verge of a breakdown, his children reviled him, his alcoholism had destroyed his career, and all he had left was his fragmented faith. He was torn apart and felt that God was inviting him to transform his life. While he was praying, he looked at the statue of Mother Mary to his right. He saw that Mary was in tears. It filled him with incredible sadness. He felt that his wayward life had brought the 'Mother' of God to tears. This spiritual experience restored his faith, and this experience of a spiritual emergency transformed his life completely. He was a transformed man and said to me, "I am born again!" The expression 'born again' alludes to transformation or conversion, which I shall explain in the following section.

Spiritual emergency and conversion experience

In Christian Theology, conversion or repentance, *metanoia* in Greek, refers to a radical transformation in a person's life (Keri, 2020). Conversion in Latin *con-vetere* means to turn around (Rhor, 2016). A conversion experience is a divine mandate to become actively involved in doing one's bit to transform the world (Rhor, 2016). Hence, a spiritual emergency is akin to a conversion experience in which an individual experiences an enhanced sense of personhood, emotional or physical wellness, capacity for free choice, and a deepened feeling of connection to self, others, nature, the cosmos, and God (Watson, 1994, p. 25). In contrast, Keri (2020) holds that some individuals who are characteristically introverted exhibit sudden religious changes that possibly emanate from psychological projections of deep-seated personality issues rather than a genuine God experience" (p. 586).

Bragdon (2012) states that many with spiritual emergencies are misdiagnosed and are medicated. However, I agree with Wootton and Allen (1983, as cited in Keri, 2020), who stated that there is a similarity between a genuine religious conversion and a predisposed psychological concern that results from processing unconscious conflicts related to emotional states such as anxiety, guilt, depression, and confusion (p. 585). Likewise, most of my

psychospiritual clients referred to spiritual emergencies as a 'conversion experience', although they were highly conflicted and struggled to go beyond their unconscious conflicts. But for the vast majority, psychospiritual counselling helped them see their spiritual emergency as a catalyst for inner and spiritual conversion.

Spiritual emergency: religious and spiritual resources

Religion and spirituality are inner resources or protective factors that offer adults a new vision, purpose or meaning in life as they build knowledge through imagery, symbolism, and consciousness (Snider & McPhredan, 2014; Stark & Bonner, 2012; Tisdell & Tolliver, 2003). Additionally, religion and spirituality help adult learners to ground themselves in their spiritual truths, discover their true selves, acquire new skill sets to manage their intrapsychic distress, disturbances, and emotional dysregulation (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Koenig, 2005; Snider & McPhredan, 2014). Moreover, research has discovered that spirituality and religion have a placebo effect. Belief in God enables individuals to operate out of a higher mode of control, resilience, emotional regulation, and hope (Snider & McPhredan, 2014).

In psychospiritual counselling, commonly referred to as spiritual companionship, God is the ultimate healer and spiritual resource for individuals undergoing a spiritual emergency. Hence, in psychospiritual counselling, a fragmented client seeks accompaniment to experience healing, wholeness and holiness, and a reconnection to God or a Higher Power (Cashwell & Young, 2014). Etymologically, accompaniment in Latin is comprised of 'com' which means 'with' and 'panis', which signifies 'bread' (ANSD, 2020). Clients in psychospiritual counselling process their spiritual emergencies akin to 'breaking bread' by sharing their broken lives or narratives within a sacred space where they feel nourished and empowered to face their own sufferings, knowing that Christ suffered a spiritual emergency, too (ANSD, 2020). Having discussed counselling, I now focus on my approaches to counselling and its transpersonal foundations.

Spiritual interventions to trauma

I perceive that spirituality and religion are crucial to a holistic and integrated intervention to trauma recovery, resiliency enhancement and transformative learning. Additionally, spirituality and religion are not only protective factors but are essential in sense-making. Therefore, they provide personal insights into the inner mind, emotional processing and

behavioural patterns, culminating in healing the whole person in psychospiritual or transpersonal counselling. I now further expand my discussion on spirituality that I introduced earlier on.

Compatibility between religion and psychology

To me, psychology utilises scientific principles or methods to pursue truths in nature and therefore it is vital that psychospiritual counselling incorporates psychology to foster the authentic transformation of the self. Science, like religion, seeks to explain reality, but its language differs. Science speaks the language of facts until proven otherwise, while religion gives meaning and both need to dialogue with each other (Watts & Dutton, 2006). Alfred North Whitehead, the American mathematician and philosopher, claimed that Christianity mothered science into being, as the medieval ages considered God to be a rational being (Sweet & Feist, 2007). Jeeves (2013) cites Lord Martin Rees, President of the Royal Society of London, who said that “Science isn’t dogma: its assertions are sometimes tentative, sometimes compelling. The hardest situation to portray is where there is a strong consensus but some dissent. Controversy confrontations and scepticism about Orthodoxy have such public appeal” (p. 21). Late Pope John Paul II asked theologians to take science seriously, to interpret and integrate it into their works. His Holiness spoke of “unity with integrity” that aimed through dialogue and partnership to break down the walls of suspicion between the scientific community and the Church (Russell, 2011). The former searched for the truths in nature, and the latter sought truth in human history and experiences. Russell (2011) cites late John Paul II’s message to George V. Coyne, Director of the Vatican Observatory, on the 1st of June 1998. His Holiness wrote, “Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish.” In psychospiritual counselling, I agree with Watts and Dutton (2006) and help clients recognise the compatibility between science and faith to understand better or integrate what is revealed in the depth of human nature, human sciences, and neuroscience.

By way of summary, I view the human person through a transpersonal lens by integrating religion, and spirituality to understand the depths of human nature. God, religion, and spirituality offer meaning and purpose to an individual's life. The aim of God, religion and spirituality is to transform the entire person and, by extension, the world. The transpersonal

dimension of an individual's life is a catalyst for critical self-reflection and critical thinking that fosters inner wholeness, enhances resilience, and enables transformative learning that is liberating.

Trauma: definition, research, personal reflection

Definition of trauma

Trauma is defined as “the exposure to life-threatening experiences (actual or perceived) where a person is faced with overwhelming feelings of helplessness and terror at the possibility of annihilation: life and death moments, accompanied by abandonment, isolation, hopelessness, shame, and invisibility” (Benamer & White, 2008, p. 2). Exposure to trauma can have a range of adverse effects on a person, such as anxiety, depression, interpersonal difficulties, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD (Park et al., 2017, p. 8).

According to Lahad and Doron (2010), the DSM-IV-TR outlines the criteria for PTSD as a life-threatening event, a severe injury, and a threat to life that elicits disproportionate fear. The traumatic experience is reignited when the person experiences or relives distressing memories, nightmares, flashbacks, intense psychological distress, and physiological arousals (Lahad & Doron, 2010). Moreover, as DSM-IV-TR states, individuals cannot respond to stimuli as they previously did after the trauma, experience persistent hyperarousal, and have impaired functionality (Lahad & Doron, 2010).

Traumatic events point to the pervasiveness of evil in human existence, the randomness of unjust events, human vulnerability, powerlessness, mercy at the hands of fate or destiny, and the reality of death (Park et al., 2017). Park et al. (2017) allude to trauma as an assault on one’s fundamental values, moral compass, and spirituality (p. 39). Furthermore, trauma rattles previously held ideas and potentially devastates an individual’s self-identity, sense of trust, self-assurance, breaks attachment bonds and alters the person’s lived reality (Park et al., 2017).

Wellbeing and resiliency

I am convinced that emotions precede an intellectual sense of wellness and the development of resilience. Hence, I now focus on wellbeing and resilience, which are therapeutic goals. As

I have mentioned earlier, most of my clients have a background of trauma. In psychospiritual counselling, I allow my clients to voice their stories and touch their pain before helping them process emotions, which is vital to healing trauma and pain. Enhancing resiliency is crucial in fostering my clients' wellbeing, apart from spirituality, religion, and mindfulness practices. I next explore resilience briefly.

Definition

Resiliency is a multi-definitional term that points to the capacity to embrace change, face adversity, and effectively adapt to any environment, whether personal or professional, to maintain mental wellness (Hefferon, 2011; Richardson, 2002). Richardson (2002) believes that resiliency is not an innate quality or a protective genetic trait that we are born into this world with and asserts that environmental factors, self-esteem, and self-efficacy foster it (p. 308). Furthermore, resilience is associated with a positive and optimistic outlook of life or a "successful adaptation to adversity" (Mak et al., 2011, p. 4; Reich et al., 2010). Resiliency is a multidimensional reality that impacts a person's emotional, spiritual, physical, social, cultural, and relational lives differently (Herman et al., 2011; Park et al., 2017, p. 186). Lastly, resiliency is about bouncing back and recovering and cultivating an attitude of psychological, emotional, and spiritual perseverance (Ramsey & Blieszner, 2012).

Resiliency is not merely a buffering process, overcoming adversity, or "jumping back" at life (Webb, 2013). For me, it is a more prosperous term, linked to other life skill factors such as protecting, persevering, enduring, adapting, letting go of negativity, and being filled with hope that all will be well. More crucially for me, it signifies the utilisation of my inner resources, setting a goal for myself to return to an original state of intrapsychic regulation or reintegration caused by disruptions in my life (Hefferon et al., 2011; Stark & Bonner, 2012; Webb, 2013). I understand that this reintegration has a transpersonal dimension, and resilience is, for me, a source of strength at cognitive, social, religious, spiritual, or ecological levels (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Herrman et al., 2011). I remember being cut off from my priestly community because I had gone off to work with AIDS orphans in Africa, with the threat of being dismissed from my Redemptorist congregation. I grieved deeply, but even though I felt abandoned in every sense of the word, I hung on to my belief that God would vindicate me together with a routine of prayer that kept me grounded, enhanced resilience and brought me a measure of peace.

I comprehend life at the best of times to be complicated, demanding and potentially stressful in our globalised world devastated by Covid-19, wars, terrorism, consumer culture, ageing populations, unbridled capitalism, culture wars, political polarisations, ethical violations by biotechnology, artificial intelligence, genocides, rapacious exploitation of the Earth's resources and environmental destruction (Kelly, 2016). These phenomena demand a renewed focus on how best we can broaden and strengthen how our understanding of resiliency in our educational settings, whether secular or religious, and in the lives of citizens who struggle to cope with stress, burnout, morale, demanding relational, academic, and professional expectations and emotional fatigue (Anguilar, 2018). How do we broaden resiliency in citizens, students and seminarians?

One way is to approach this is as an opportunity for transformation. Resilience, a complex, multidimensional phenomenon, is a process of becoming and developing adaptive behaviours, allowing adversity to become an opportunity for transformation rather than reacting maladaptively (Anguilar 2018, p. 2; Beltman & Mansfield, 2018)). I agree with Anguilar (2018) that resiliency is an opportunity to transform our stories and the meanings we attach to them and allow them to become a source of transcendence emotionally, mentally, and spiritually (Anguilar, 2018). Reflecting on Anguilar (2018), I agree that our stories have the potential to determine who we are and influence the choices we make and the directions we take in life. Implicit that every narrative has a context as humans are understood to be social animals, relational or spiritual beings and cannot be understood in isolation from their socio-cultural contexts. When Aristotle referred to humans as social animals, he implied that by nature, our humanity is linked to others for meaning, survival and existence (Asikaogu, 2018, p. 37).

Another practical way is to help students, educators, seminarians and ordinary citizens to critically reflect not only on their circumstances and contexts beliefs, values, ideas and traditions are culturally shaped (Anguilar, 2018, p. 8).

A helpful strategy to broaden resiliency is to educate students, seminarians and individuals in society to appreciate and develop the art of processing an event so that they create a mental and emotional space between an event and their response to it (Anguilar, 2018; Mansfield et al., 2018). My approach has been to allow clients to narrate their stories, touch their pains, understand that feelings are passing or transient, examine the context of their experiences,

view them from different angles and how their attitudes are shaped by them while allowing for time to confidently harness their inner strengths and resources to respond to events mindfully.

A crucial element to broaden resiliency is to help students, educators, spiritual educators and seminarians in seminaries and citizens by offering them space to discover and get to know who they are (Anguilar, 2018). In my experience, some of my clients appear not to know who and what they are as persons and the re-discovery of their true selves, dignity and intrinsic worth as humans is vital to enhancing their resiliency and transformation. Once they discover their true selves I focus on caring. Self-care, as I understand it, is the promotion of a person's holistic wellness through mindfulness practices starting from childhood (Lin et al., 2020). I agree with Lin et al. (2020) that resiliency, like all adaptive behaviours, is modelled and therefore vital in educational settings, seminaries and society. Modelling resilience includes cultivating positive attitudes such as perseverance, trust, courage, purposefulness, acceptance and empowering self and others (Anguilar, 2018, p. 20).

The adage that knowledge is power attributed to the philosopher Francis Bacon can be applied to the broadening of resilience within educational, religion formation and all citizens. According to Silva et al. (2018, pp. 255-274) resilience shaped by the dynamics between individuals and contexts that provides for risk or protective factors and that resilience can be nurtured through education, professional development, and continued support networks much like experiential growth groups to enhance awareness, self-reflection and promote work life balance to address stress, emotional fatigue and burnout.

Therapeutic Strategies in Psychospiritual Counselling-SFBT-EFT—Emotions

My therapeutic approach is eclectic or integrative. According to Hollanders (1999), 'eclectic' and 'integrative' are interchangeably used. However, 'eclectic' refers to various therapeutic practices without regard to their roots within a different theoretical framework (Hollanders, 1999, p. 483). 'Integrative' relates to "combining multiple theoretic therapeutic strategies to create a cohesive theory" (Hollanders, 1999, p. 483). My practice is an invitation to wholeness, communion, relationship, harmony, solidarity, integration, inclusivity, fulfilment and peace with others, self, and the world at emotional, intellectual, psychic, moral, and spiritual levels (Friedman & Hartelius, 2013; Spalding, 2008; Van Kaam, 1975). Nonetheless,

my preferred theoretical underpinnings are in Emotion-Focused Therapy and Solution Focused Brief Therapy, which I discuss after briefly exploring critical reflection on faith experiences.

Critical Reflection on faith experiences

As I understand it, psychospiritual counselling aims to transform clients' interpretations and understanding of faith experiences through discernment. Discernment is akin to critical thinking and self-reflection. According to Stevenson-Graf (2019), discernment helps clients examine the rationale for their previously held beliefs and arrive at mature, enlightened, and broadened constructs of faith that encompasses all dimensions of existence and relationships.

Solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT)

Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg, working at the Brief Family Therapy Centre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, were the architects of SFBT, a post-modern, strength-based, goal-oriented, future-focused, evidenced-based model of treatment (Connie & Metcalf, 2009; Quick, 2008). Influenced by social constructivism, SFBT holds that humans tend to "invent properties of the world rather than discover them" (Kukla, 2000, p. ii). Additionally, SFBT dismisses any focus on past experiences and concentrates on viable solutions to presenting concerns rather than paying attention to problems (Crockett & Prosek, 2013; Quick, 2008). Therefore, clinicians emphasize a client's earlier achievements, coping skills, and future constructive behaviour (Crockett & Prosek, 2013; Quick, 2008). Moreover, SFBT empowers clients to utilize their inner resources or strengths by focusing on exceptions, scaling, miracle questions, and so-called solution-focused dialogues for effecting positive behavioural change in problematic situations that they might perceive as uncontrollable (Crockett & Prosek, 2013; Quick, 2008).

Walter and Peller (1992, as cited in Crockett & Prosek, 2013), describes the four therapeutic principles in SFBT. The first focuses on solutions rather than client problems, and the second is a reluctance to pathologize client hardships. The third principle encourages clients to explore new behaviours and solutions to concerns. Lastly, SFBT frames each session with clients as if it were the first and last (p. 238). SFBT employs four techniques to effect transformation, which I discuss in the following section.

1) SFBT Techniques

Quick (2008) states that SFBT utilizes several techniques (p. 1-14). For instance, the miracle question is a technique that prompts a client to imagine what life would be like if, through a miracle, their struggles vanished (Crockett & Prosek, 2013; Quick, 2008). The therapist's aim using SFBT is to aid clients in altering miracle questions into goal setting (Quick, 2008). Another technique is 'exceptions', wherein a client is asked questions about a period when the problem was not overly tricky (Crockett & Prosek, 2013; Quick, 2008). Another method is scaling, which is fundamentally a rating process from 0-10 that provided therapists with a baseline from which to gauge where a client is (Crockett & Prosek, 2013; Quick, 2008). In short, these techniques facilitate behaviour modifications or solutions to client problems, and yet, SBFT is not a problem-focused therapeutic modality.

2) Not a problem-focused approach

According to Connie and Metcalf (2009), SFBT is not theoretically a problem-focused therapy but a practically oriented therapy approach (p. 5). Hence, Ratner et al., (2012) point out that SBFT aims to transform the client in the shortest possible time (p.3). Additionally, SBFT is a collaborative goal-setting process where the therapist surrenders any notion of being an expert on a client's problems but initiates a transformative experience for the client (Connie & Metcalf, 2009; Quick, 2008). Moreover, SFBT holds that clients possess the innate capacity and inner resources to transform their lives, and lastly, SFBT is a time-sensitive, therapeutically empowering process that is advantageous (Connie & Metcalf, 2009; Ratner et al., 2012). Hanton (2009, as cited in Crockett, 2013), states that the advantages of SBFT are that it provides timely solutions and focuses on what works rather than what does not, and that it promotes wellness and takes a preventative approach (p. 239). In short, SBFT is a goal-oriented and time-saving approach that aims to harness client resources to bring about transformation. After having explored SBFT's approach, I next focus on its shortcomings.

Criticisms

According to Crockett and Prosek (2013), despite its advantages, SFBT, like other contemporary psychotherapeutic models, appears to be heavily invested in individuals' cognitive and behavioural transformation (p. 237). Moreover, SBTF, like other current psychotherapeutic practices, focuses on diagnosis rather than exploring a client's identity

(Mijares, 2014). Hence, SFBT seems to diminish a person's affective and spiritual dimensions to generate solutions (Crockett & Prosek, 2013). Other objections are that it does not give the counsellor access to the individual's emotions but focuses on the client's cognitions (Crockett & Prosek, 2013). Therefore, it robs the therapist of entering into solidarity with a client's sufferings or emotional upheavals (Crockett & Prosek, 2013; Ratner et al., 2012). Additionally, Miller (2012, as cited in Crockett & Prosek (2013), holds that SFBT relies on conversations with clients or the constructs of their circumstances to set goals, and that it negates emotions (p. 238). A further objection to SFBT is that it appears to accept a client's problem at face value rather than exploring a client's sufferings in-depth, in all its complexities (Crockett & Prosek, 2013).

Nylund and Corsiglia (1994, as cited in Crockett & Prosek (2013) state that SFBT does not value the emotional aspects of a client's story of pain (p.239). Consequently, this stunts the therapeutic relationship and reduces the client's opportunity to experience emotional catharsis, especially regarding interpersonal or emotional stressors and events (Crockett & Prosek, 2013). Another disadvantage of SFBT is that sometimes a therapist must listen to a client who feels therapeutically helped when, in fact, the opposite may be true (George et al., 2012). However, I believe a therapist needs the discipline to accept a client's word and, in this sense, respect a client's adult self-assessment (George et al., 2012). Another criticism levelled at SFBT practitioners is that the counsellor can never take credit for their client's progress, which is a somewhat facetious objection as I consider therapy is about the client per se (George et al., 2012). Others hold that a disadvantage of SFBT is that the therapist cannot afford to be clever (George et al., 2012). Therapist cleverness, in my opinion, is not a disadvantage as solutions are co-created, but the client ultimately knows best. Generally, the therapist organises schedules, but in SFBT, the client is co-responsible for creating therapeutic routines (George et al., 2012). Others think that SFBT prevents therapists from being helpful to clients, which goes against their aspirations or motivations as altruists (George et al., 2012). Lastly, Franklin (2015) also believes that SFBT approaches lack a rigorous research design (p. 73).

I feel such criticisms are both unfair and limiting. I have been able to apply SFBT within my overall psychospiritual approach, focusing on client strength, wellness, mental health, and spiritual empowerment (Dierolf, 2014). Judging from clients' accounts of their experiences, I feel that emotions play a significant part in their narratives and spiritual experiences and more generally ritual contexts (Crockett & Prosek, 2013; Ratner et al., 2012). As a Catholic and a

priest, I understand the power of rituals to tap into my clients' emotional, psychological, and spiritual lives to bring about their holistic transformation and mental health recovery (Mijares et al., 2014). In this sense, I see the connection of rituals to SFBT as religious traditions offer a silent space for clients to process their painful circumstances and develop new life perspectives.

Combs and Freedman (1990, as cited in Crockett & Prosek, 2013) explain the connection between SFBT and ritual to heal and develop new perspectives on life. They believe worshippers unconsciously experience healing at emotional and spiritual levels. In effect, spiritual or religious traditions enable worshippers to allow their spiritual experiences to alter how they view their painful situations and develop a transformed perspective on life (Crockett & Prosek, 2013). Additionally, ritual celebrations offer worshippers a different perspective of life, model an alternative life based on unconditional love and instil hope in believers to face the harsh realities of their life (Crockett & Prosek, 2013). A good example is the Catholic Mass wherein the sermon, referred to as the 'breaking the word', aims at behavioural transformation, and communion, or the 'breaking of bread' spiritually nourishes a transformed community so it can face life bravely (Clarke, 2014).

Emotion-focused therapy (EFT)

EFT is an evidenced-based humanistic or process experiential therapy developed by Robert Elliot and Greenberg and Rice (Greenberg & Goldman, 2018). EFT's roots are firmly planted in affective neuroscience (Fosha et al., 2009). As an approach, EFT espouses an integrative and neo-humanistic perspective of motivation and claims that experience and behaviour are influenced both by culture and biology (Greenberg & Goldman, 2018, p. 9).

However, if transformation is to occur, an individual needs to alter emotional schemes by exploring personal experiences and the stories attributed to them (Greenberg, 2006; Pos & Greenberg, 2007). People try to make sense of or regulate their emotions within cultural settings. This sense-making process concerning emotions contributes to transformation when clients can access an alternative feeling or narrative (Greenberg & Goldman, 2018; Pos & Greenberg, 2007). Emotions, which are states of arousal, are language constructs and are culturally conditioned (Bertrando, 2015; Fuller, 2007). Greenberg and Goldman (2018), I hold that transformative learning occurs when individuals overcome internalised maladaptive

emotional schemas and cultivate adaptive feelings (p. 12). In the following two sections, I share my personal experiences of adaptive and maladaptive emotional schemas in the context of EFT.

EFT and nurturing alternative feelings

A vital element of EFT is nurturing life-giving alternative feelings that are positive, healing, and spiritual (Greenberg & Goldman, 2018). Emotions are potentially adaptive to alter undesirable self-experiences (Pos & Greenberg, 2007). From personal experience, EFT as a therapeutic intervention makes perfect sense in psychospiritual counselling. EFT helped me weave my traumatic life story into a cohesive unit that shaped my self-identity. From my earliest childhood, I sensed the need to nurture alternative feelings.

As I processed childhood trauma, I realised that searching for meaning and purpose in life was core to my survival – my faith, volunteering with Mother Teresa, and vocation to the priesthood are keys to my broken past. Rather than focus on the negative emotional upheavals of my childhood, caused by war and repeated exposure to death, I channelled and sublimated my energy into nurturing alternative feelings of love, compassion, forgiveness, and peace with God. It was therapeutic.

EFT and maladaptive emotional schemes

I often look back at my childhood and honestly feel sad about my maladaptive emotional schemes, especially my anger struggles. I was blessed to have a supportive psychotherapist, a priest who was psychologically present and understood that my anger and maladaptive emotional schemes were soul-destroying and affected my interpersonal relationships in childhood (Greenberg & Goldman, 2018). He showed a genuine spiritual interest in my narratives and got me to look at them anew. He encouraged me to self-reflect and, in that process, helped me to construct a new identity. In retrospect, my psychotherapist helped me understand my own tortured past through the Jesus story, which helped me see life differently and transform.

Reinterpreting my narratives of trauma

I have applied the principles of EFT to nurture alternative emotions in clients by attending to, exploring, reinterpreting narratives and self-reflecting on my experiences to consciously transform as a person rather than continuing to operate out of a maladaptive pattern of behaviour (Greenberg & Goldman, 2018; Pos & Greenberg, 2007). I am 57 years old, and I am always conscious of the raging child within, who I befriended during a therapy session in my teens. Something changed in me; the last time I acted on my anger was in 1984. I was all of nineteen, and yes, I believe that reinterpreting my narratives of trauma through the prism of my faith was a transformative experience. Consequently, I no longer felt like a victim, and my life took a completely different direction, and I eventually joined the priesthood (Greenberg & Goldman, 2018).

Emotions

From personal and professional experiences, I realise people first speak of their experiences of trauma and later understand and accept their emotional responses within therapy. Spirituality is a powerful intervention and response to traumatic experiences as a coping and protective factor for many of my clients. After discussing or sharing their painful stories, clients begin to cognitively understand and accept their emotional reactions to trauma within therapy.

Definition

Emotions are the fundamental building blocks of and the instruments for self-organising self, and vital to survival (Greenberg et al., 2018, p. 10). Brubacher (2006) describes emotions as the “raw material of existence” (p. 63). They are complicated responses to individual circumstances. As I understand it, emotions are transient, whether adaptive or maladaptive, and not permanent. They vary in quality and intensity depending on an individual’s perception of a situation. By acquiring new insights into problems, an individual can transform maladaptive emotional responses into adaptive emotional responses (Greenberg, 2006; Paivio, 2013; Pos & Greenberg, 2007).

Three types of emotions

There are three types of emotions. The first type is the primary adaptive emotion that responds to stimuli, such as the body's need to defend, protect itself, gain acceptance, generate, or direct itself (Arnold, 2013). An understanding of primitive adaptive emotions derives from Darwin's theory of evolution, and provides the basis for understanding biology (LaFreniere, 2010). From observations of wildlife in Africa, I agree with contemporary socio-biology advocates that human emotions have their roots in biology and that parental altruism is an evolutionary requirement of survival (LaFreniere, 2010). The migration of our human ancestors, *Homo erectus*, out of Africa 500,000 years ago coincided with the second brain expansion due to the need to collaborate, connect, cooperate, form groups, and recognise deceit within new social settings (LaFreniere, 2010).

The second type of emotion is the primary maladaptive emotion, which is learned or internalised in early childhood, and such emotional experiences impede upon a person's ability to cope appropriately with a situation (Greenberg et al., 2018). Secondary, or reactive, emotions obscure or transform original emotions and fundamentally make them detrimental to any given situation (Greenberg et al., 2018). I have done trauma-informed work with youth as a priest, particularly as a psychospiritual counsellor. Many of these clients operated maladaptively out of survival due to hurt, pain, shame, and guilt resulting from complex trauma (Knipe, 2014). In childhood, they internalised the maladaptive emotions of their primary caregivers (Greenberg et al., 2018; Knipe, 2014). I regulated and transformed my own maladaptive emotions by recognising their tendencies or by making sense of my emotions. I believe that processing my maladaptive childhood emotions, like anger, shame, guilt and even hatred, whether acknowledged, repressed, denied or blocked, was the key to healing and accessing healthier alternative emotional responses. As a teenager, I learned from my psychospiritual counsellor that if I lost my capacity for emotional regulation, avoiding and denying my painful emotions, they would express themselves through my body.

The third type of emotion is instrumental emotions, which influence or control others, whether in relationships, families, institutions, or workplaces (Greenberg et al., 2018). Instrumental emotions are transactional and manipulative and are employed to reward positive emotions by having beneficial outcomes (Brandstätter & Elias, 2001; LaFreniere, 2010). I agree that emotions are a powerful tool of control and manipulation at personal, social, religious,

cultural, linguistic, political, and economic levels. I believe it is especially true when humiliation or shaming is involved as it erodes a person's self-esteem, pride, and sense of integrity to achieve a desired behavioural outcome. I recall a situation in my formation as a priest when the Novice Master hauled me up in front of other novices for breaking the sacred code of silence and solitude, meant to put me in touch with the God within. In anger, he chastised me in public. It had the net effect of shaming me in public and ensuring that we novices collectively conformed slavishly to the rules of the Novitiate and, more importantly, to my Novice Master.

Another example of instrumental emotion was a daily Mass goer who used emotional cut-offs as a powerful 'behaviour modification' tool with a daughter whose values went against Catholic morals (Frevert, 2011). I did not condone her actions, and I know that her mother psychologically crushed her daughter. However, with time, the daughter relented, rather than losing her mother's love, but she lost a part of her autonomy in doing so.

From personal experiences, I have observed that individuals voice their painful emotional experiences before they process them intellectually and gain acuity or link them to the relational and contextual dynamics of their lives. In psychospiritual counselling, I permit clients to 'touch' their pains, which is both a healing and self-discovery experience of the relational or contextual dynamics involved. I learned early on that my clients are overpowered by the emotional toll of traumatic experiences and are unconscious of the contextual and relational dynamics involved. Hence, they block out, deny, repress, suppress, or even dissociate as they are afraid or ashamed to speak up about root causes. Emotions are paramount to an integrated sense of self, and emotional forms or behavioural reactions to them in the present are intertwined experientially with an individual's past (Brandstätter & Elias, 2001, p. 5). In psychospiritual counselling, I engage in transformative learning through critical reflection and critical thinking, which I examine in greater depth later in the research, and elicit clients' inner spiritual resources, so clients experience healing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I summarise some conclusions of this literature review, followed by its significance. I examined the literature on critical self-reflection and critical thinking as central facets of transformative learning that seek personal and societal changes to create an equitable

world. I then discussed how positive psychology explores wellbeing from a scientific paradigm as transformative learning and resilience enhancement. Afterwards, I investigated counselling as a reparative or helping relationship aiming for personal transformation and the attainment of inner wholeness. I explained how psychospiritual counselling, which is trans-psychological, spiritually alleviates mental health distress and strengthens psychospiritual transformation. Next, I examined spirituality and religion as protective factors critical to a holistic and integrated intervention in trauma recovery, resiliency enhancement and transformative learning. Subsequently, I clarified that a spiritual emergency is a turbulent and traumatic event that culminates in personal transformation and spiritual growth. Furthermore, clients typically express their pains or traumas before engaging in spirituality or endeavouring to analyse traumatic memories or events psychologically. I then clarified that enhancing resiliency is crucial to fostering clients' wellbeing apart from spirituality, religion, and mindfulness practices. I discussed my therapeutic strategies in EFT and SFBT. Lastly, I discussed emotions, although transient, is fundamental to the organisation of self and its survival and response to situations that are either adaptive or maladaptive. Reflecting on this literature review, I recognise that psychospiritual counselling enhances resilience and transformative learning using a multiparadigmatic or integrated approach to therapy. Likewise, positive psychology and spirituality are compatible and strive for the whole person's transformation through critical self-reflection and critical thinking.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to relevant aspects of my research methodology, which is auto/ethnographic, and whose underpinning philosophical foundations are interpretivism and critical constructivism, and the ethical guidelines that direct how this research is conducted. This chapter discusses my theoretical approaches and research paradigms. This chapter has seven main sections: I discuss the research paradigms relevant to this study, including interpretivism and critical constructivism. I then explore the notion of an emergent research design, with auto/ethnography as my chosen methodology, followed by a section on writing as inquiry. The section on research strategies describes how four techniques are used in the current research, after which I explore data sources and data analysis. Lastly, I consider research quality standards together with ethical considerations.

Research paradigms

My two chosen research paradigms are interpretivism and critical constructivism. Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 245) define paradigms as “a basic set of beliefs that guide actions”. Additionally, paradigms are worldviews, belief systems or assumptions that a researcher adopts to interpret experiences within a social milieu in an eclectic manner (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain that paradigms determine the methodology, quality standards, language, and writing styles used in a qualitative study. Interpretivism is the art of observing and sense-making to understand social realities or cultural environments and generate action due to the meanings ascribed to experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Truth, as seen through an interpretive lens, is “pluralistic, open-ended and contextualised (e.g., sensitive to place and situation) perspectives toward reality” (Creswell, 2000, p. 125). A social constructivist epistemology acknowledges that a researcher’s “unfolding subjectivity” (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 377) shapes a research design, especially in terms of ascribing meaning to another’s perspective and its emergent characteristics such as queries, methodology and form (Taylor et al., 2012). For example, I realised that as a researcher and Catholic priest, I could not segregate myself from my chosen theoretical framework in this research inquiry and literature review. I am immersed in

Catholicism at a formative developmental, spiritual, moral, and at intellectual levels. These factors influence my narratives, discourses, interpretations, and construction of knowledge

Interpretivism

Constructs are subject to interpretation

Individual backgrounds, history, culture, education, social status, ethnicity, and religiosity shape the lens through which a person perceives the world, constructs meanings, and interprets experiences in engaging with society (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Interpretivism influenced my research while I was engaged in processes of data collection, analysis, and reflexive journalling, which began at the outset of this research inquiry. During the analysis, I grouped concepts into themes, observed emerging ideas and classified them.

I was equally conscious of how I identified and internalised my religious constructs whilst certain that my lived experiences as a cultural insider or my 'emic perspective' (Morey & Luthans, 1984, p. 29) informed my auto/ethnographic research, which can be viewed as an aspect of interpretivism (Cumming-Potvin, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). From my readings, I acknowledged that I had engaged in auto/ethnographic reflexivity grounded in interpretivist and critical constructivist thinking. Therefore, as a researcher with an insider status, I endeavoured to pay analytical attention to both transparency and methodological rigour when considering the influence of Catholic heritage, culture, language, politics, ideologies, dogmas, theologies and moral prejudice on my narratives, discourses, interpretations, and construction of knowledge. In this sense, I accept that my actions, observations, and the sensibilities of participants produced unique data. However, I am also mindful that my participants are inhabiting the same historical space as I am. I agree with Johnson (2013) in that I, too, view psychospiritual counselling as an extension of Jesus' transformative and healing ministry within the sociocultural context of a faith community (Johnson, 2013). Consequently, I have incorporated other constructs from my lived experience and relevant professional literature to attain thick descriptions. Thick descriptions are "detailed personal accounts of lived experiences directly related to the topic" (Wertz, 2011, p. 89) and are thus understood contextually. To generate thick descriptions, I had to comprehend the initial constructs of the participants' interviews before reconstructing their more profound meanings in light of my knowledge and the available literature. In the

following section, I explore critical constructivism, which rejects the notion of truth as being absolute.

Critical constructivism

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) view constructivism as aligned with relativism. They assert that ‘truth’ and morality are integral contextual social realities, not segregated from knowledge. Post-modernists assert that truth is not a singular reality and is relative to something, for example, the Christian belief that the universe is related to God (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Mosteller, 2008). Relativism, at an ontological level, refers to existence in relation to something else, for example, culture or language. Therefore, post-modernists look with suspicion on any claim to truth, by positivists, as being absolute, determined, objective and final (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Moreover, ‘truth’ is established through dialogue on different perspectives of reality. Consequently, in a departure from positivist standards of determinations of fact, terms such as “trustworthiness and authenticity” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 247) are employed to describe internal and external accuracy.

Definition of critical constructivism

Critical constructivism is a modality of thought that seeks to understand the forces that impact upon our consciousness and endeavours to transcend traditional modes of view based on rationalism and empiricism (Watts, 1997, p.312). Critical constructivism is an offshoot of post-modernism and post-structuralism that critiques historical and social power relations or oppressive forces within society, which shape how individuals perceive the world and themselves (Kincheloe, 2014). Critical constructivism examines the interrelationship between power, justice, society, and culture as a dynamic and evolving reality (Kincheloe, 2014).

Constructs are human inventions

Lincoln and Guba (2013, p. 45) define constructs as “a mental realisation, a making real, of an apparently singular, unitary entity or relationship.” I feel that implicit in the definition is the notion that insights gained develop or deepen in sophistication from knowledge gained experientially or academically. Critical researchers espouse transformation by critiquing rigid social structures by exposing their inherent contradictions, flaws, and imbalances (Kincheloe, 2008; Taylor et al., 2012). Critical researchers transcend interpretivism by actively engaging

in activism and by educating readers through scholarly writing to examine whether they silently condone conserving or passively accepting prescriptive social traditions as sacred (Taylor et al., 2012).

Praxis

Praxis is “action informed by reflection with an emancipatory intent” (Kincheloe, 2012, p. 220). I desire to make psychospiritual counselling a liberating spiritual or transformative learning experience, not imprisoned by invented, narrow worldviews or assumptions that claim their notion of reality to be conclusive, beyond the scope of doubt and not “subject to human error” (Guba, 1994, p.108). I use critical thinking as a “journey of personal development” (Settelmaier, 2007, p. 175) to unearth how I and my participants have uncritically assumed perceptions of truths that underpinned my and their assumptions. Van Manen (1991) refers to critical thinking as “pedagogical thoughtfulness” (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 7). In this research, I explored how my participants help clients recognise how psychospiritual counselling contributes to their continuous transformations as individuals and as agents of social change living in a constantly evolving world that can be best described as complex.

Meaning- making

Several authors such as Guba and Lincoln (1994), Guba and Lincoln (2013, p. 45), Dewey and Wheeler (2009), Kincheloe (2005) and Taylor (2015) refer to ‘meaning-making’ or ‘sense-making’ processes. Using interpretivism and critical constructivism, I endeavoured to understand how my participants create meaning-making processes by appreciating their values or belief systems through critical self-reflection and critical thinking and recognising how their assumptions influence their lives. Additionally, I investigated how my participants promote reflective thinking - an instrument of transformative learning that requires their clients to understand their paradigms.

Crisis of Representation

Post-structuralism is a philosophy that dissents from and contradicts the dominance of rational and empirical science or knowledge, viewing thinking as correlated to science and yet independent of it while insisting that science has its limits (Williams, 2014, p. 16). Williams

(2014, p.17) maintains that truths have a critical function concerning scientific evidence and methodology for post-structuralists. A good example is art and architecture, which offer insights of 'truth' that science cannot provide from within, as science claims to be free of values and impartial. By contrast, from a post-structural perspective, art offers "multiple interpretations and creative responses" (Williams, 2014, p. 18). On deeper reflection, post-structuralists view truth as a multi-faced or multi-dimensional reality and, like a crystal (Richardson, 1994, p. 516), it changes, evolves, and grows (Richardson, 1994). From my listening, I have realised how complex my participants' lives are. They are so multilayered. What I grasped was only a tiny glimpse of the 'truth' of their existence and their lived experiences. All I did was scratch the surface. I can say with all honesty that the more I know of people, the less I know of them (Richardson, 1994, p. 516). Admittedly, in the discipline of humanities, my encounter with post-structuralism has weaned me away from a fanatically held socially constructed Catholic-centric worldview and its belief that it possesses a "universal and general claim as the 'right' or privileged form of authoritative knowledge" (Richardson, 1994, p. 517).

I realise that truth is not absolute, but a multiplicity of realities enriched by a diversity "among peoples, ideas and institutions" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 11). An interrogation of them are at the kernel of critical research, and power structures are an aspect of truth (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Truth can masquerade as sociocultural myths that, as Taylor (2015) suggests, subtly perpetuate social injustices, institutionalise cultural exclusion, namely economic, political or gender inequity, and institutionalise racism, sexism, ageism, and scientism, to name but a few.

The crisis of representation, also called the "Fourth Moment" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 24) of qualitative research re-envisioned research and writing as reflexive and/or incorporating issues such as "gender, class and race" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 24). Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 26) reported that critics emphasise that qualitative researchers cannot accurately and completely recount personal experiences. Researchers create phenomena when writing 'social texts'. I agree with Rosaldo (1989) that qualitative researchers broke away from conservative objective modalities of interpreting, articulating, conceptualising, communicating, and re-telling truths of the plot they narrated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.25). Further reflecting on Richardson's (1994) writing, I concur that no researcher possesses a

“universal and general claim as the ‘right’ or privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (p. 517).

Reflecting on several researchers, such as Denzin and Lincoln (1998), Settelmaier (2007) and Taylor and Settelmaier (2003), I endeavoured to understand how participants or the researcher discerned “hidden assumptions about how narrative accounts are constructed, read, and interpreted” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Underpinning this thought was the correlation between the views of participants and the researcher’s narrative discourses and “the historical situatedness of inquiry” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126) in collaboration with participants that enhanced the trustworthiness of the research project. Furthermore, I discerned from my reading of Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 245) that I have preconceived assumptions, lenses, or conceptual frameworks about psychospiritual counsellors and their realities as a researcher. Consequently, I wondered how I could truthfully describe my insights into the realities of my participants’ lives as they are immersed in social realities.

Crisis of praxis

I inquired how I arrived at claims about my participants or what I needed to do to “reconceptualise” (Taylor, 2015, p. 4) my own pedagogical practices so that I did not come across as the expert on their lives, diminishing their capacity for self-agency (Christopher & Campbell, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Drawing on Sandelowski (2006) and Settelmaier (2007), I realised that my hypotheses to speak authoritatively about my participants might be factually incomplete and open to error. Consequently, I explored my own interpretations’ horizons and also my how my participants re-told their stories and their ‘reconstructions’ of events (Cho & Trent, 2006, p.323), acknowledging that communication is a dialogue between individuals.

Auto/ethnography as methodology

Considering the crisis of representation and crisis of praxis, I chose auto/ethnography as my research methodology. I looked critically at my endeavours to voice my participants’ experiences (Settelmaier, 2007, p. 177) and questioned whether I had the right to speak authoritatively about or present my participants’ experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 57). At a fundamental level, I understand that auto/ethnographic research is the discovery of the

subjective truths and the truths of individuals within social contexts. To an interpretative researcher, there is the recognition that ‘truth’ cannot be unquestionable, as human behaviour is sociocultural in context (Creswell, 2012). Interpretative ethnographic research is qualitative and descriptive of a group’s life (Burton, 2005; Creswell, 2000). It accounts for people within a cultural group context that shapes its organisation, belief systems, meaning-making processes, and behaviours. Essentially, auto/ethnography is about the “irreducibility of human experiences” (O’Reilly, 2012, p. 3) of self and others.

Within my research context, I recognise that I am a cultural insider and therefore the “human as instrument” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 124) of this interpretative ethnographic research inquiry. I developed a sense of critical reflexivity to interpret meanings that I ascribed to my actions and others’ actions behaviour (Afonso & Taylor, 2009; O’Reilly, 2012). As a researcher who is a priest, I initially believed that my judgements were infallible. Reading O’Reilly (2012, p. 28), I realised that I needed to adopt an ‘inductive’ rather than a deductive’ approach to accessing knowledge. An inductive approach begins with an open mind and with as “few perceptions as possible” (O’Reilly, 2012, p. 29) and allows for theory to emerge out of data. I prefer O’Reilly’s (2012, p. 186) description that ethnographic inquiry is iterative-inductive because it is impossible to be a hundred per cent open-minded.

Lionnet (1990, as cited in Denshire, 1990, p. 834) refers to auto/ethnography as a research method that “opens up a space of resistance between the individual (auto) and the collective (ethno) where the writing (graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed.” I recognise that auto/ethnographic inquiry is a critical enquiry about my inward and outward journey as a research practitioner and provides insightful interpretations of the self (Settelmaier, 2007, pp. 175-188). Moreover, in my study, autoethnography has been a process of rediscovering my lost history and culture that Western thinking historically colonised (Taylor, 2015). As I revised older concepts to weave personal and societal narratives into this evolving research inquiry (Harris, 2011), I realised that some of my predetermined assumptions about data were unconsciously born of a positivistic frame of reference (Creswell, 2012). I am aware that data analysis is at the heart of this qualitative research inquiry and its future directions (Wright, 2009). In addition, I have consistently evaluated how my understanding of epistemology, which is the science of knowledge, and ontology, which is the science of the existence of things or personhood, are at the heart of this qualitative research (Forrester, 2010).

Reflecting on Taylor (2015), I became aware of how auto/ethnography offers me new insights into personhood as a way of being in the world with integrity, unrestrained, morally upright and with an inclusive mindset. Auto/ethnography empowers me to see my original meaning-making processes and to derive critical insights into my participants' perspectives through the lens of my diverse, complex historical human experiences within my sociocultural realities. Hence, auto/ethnography encourages me to acknowledge that I was a 'reflexive ethnographer' (Denzin, 2003, p. 259) before I become a researcher (Gosovic, 2019). Reflexive ethnography postulates that the researcher and the research inquiry are a unified, "embodied activity" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 99). I strive to learn how my participants' perspectives of sociocultural contexts are fundamentally integral to their lives (Creswell, 2012). Their surroundings are determined by their belief systems, meanings they place on events or experiences, sense of embodiment or of what it means to be an ethical human being and consciousness that reveals itself in behaviour.

Writing as inquiry

Richardson (1994) explains that writing as inquiry is a twin process of the recording and discovery of the subject matter and the 'discovery of the self' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 279). In retrospect, this concept applies to me. Reflecting on my readings of Settelmaier (2007, p. 3) helped me appreciate how the metaphor of writing as inquiry is like art that is simultaneously evocative and challenging. Writing as inquiry helps me voice my inner mind and empowers my voice, which is both a cathartic and liberating experience. In my study, I tried to grasp my participants' sociocultural situations and conditioning, their journeys through life, and the values that not only shape their lives but are vital to them. Furthermore, I explored how culture influences the meaning participants ascribe to their experiences and their purpose in life. I aimed to gain crucial insights into myself, especially into my underlying hidden assumptions and interpretations, take a principled stand within a historical context, and to offer new 'holistic perspectives' of reality (Settelmaier, 2007, p. 3; Wright, 2005). However, I noticed the need to distinguish between writing as an inquiry rooted within a sociocultural milieu and my personal life story, i.e., my autobiography (Settelmaier, 2007, p. 3). By writing about my participants' beliefs, I noticed shifts within my sense-making processes or constructs and how I became an instrument of personal transformation within sociocultural settings. I realised that I needed to reclaim my own voice and trust my subjective truths without the fear of sociocultural, economic, political, and religious institutions, whose

'truths' and values I have co-opted as my own, if I am to become an authentic agent of personal and social transformation. By weaving my life and practice into my writing and allowing each to enrich the other, I acquired new knowledge. I gained new knowledge by reconceptualising my internalised assumptions and interpretations of reality that I had uncritically accepted as absolute. This insight helped me voice and unpack my own 'truths' while simultaneously recognising that 'truth' is a multidimensional reality, which is a powerful, liberating and transformative force (McLaren & Jandrić, 2018; Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry, a core element of qualitative research, is inclusive and respectful, not just of differences in opinions but also of meanings ascribed to events. Being a communicator at this interpretative level is akin to being an artist who defies all the conventional rules of art to explore and create new art (Beuving & Vries, 2015; Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Both research and narrative inquiry are methods of analysing or collating information that endeavour to produce ideas using a "narrative approach for interpretive purposes" (Denzin, 2008, p. 563) at three levels: from human existence (ontology), values (axiology), and knowledge (epistemology). Research and narrative inquiry recognise that people are parts of a complex sociocultural network (Lincoln, 2011). Narrative inquiry was needed to inquire into participants' lives, backgrounds, education, professional development, and experiences (Patton, 1999). I am aware that participants' stories of past experiences are concurrently factual and are a description of events that participants identify with and blend with their narratives as their version of the truth (Beuving & Vries, 2015; Medeiros, 2014). In data analysing my participants' interviews and narratives, I strived to perceive how language, social structure, perceptions of self, and power are intertwined and how my participants' conversations reshape or critique influential social realities (Harland, 2003; Medeiros, 2014). As I ponder on the defining memories that outline my participants' narratives, I visualise them as 'scaffolds' (Singer et al., 2013, p. 571). The more I reflect on my participant narrative discourses as 'embodied' beings the more I recognise that I am an 'embodied' researcher (O'Reilly, 2011, p. 99; Van Kaam, 1975). Moreover, I feel transformed academically and as a person engaged in discovering the self that needs to change in relation to the other (Afonso & Taylor, 2009; Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

Storytelling and research inquiry

I drew on narrative methodology inquiry in the context of auto/ethnographically exploring the relational aspects of my participants' cultural experiences that allowed for creativity (Pensoneau-Conway et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2012). Critical auto/ethnographic inquiry sets the autobiographical self in "dialectical tension" (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 10) with the ethnographic "other" (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 10). This practice of recognising the tension between the person and cultural context enabled my participants to review, through critical reflection and mining of memories, our observations of experiences through our cultural locus (Taylor et al., 2012). I strived to capture their voices (Gergen & Davis, 1985). Importantly, I realised how narrative writing is ultimately about personhood, and I had become the self my autobiographical narrative was about (Bruner, 1986). I recognised that my narrative writing was about my painful evolution, maturation, self-emergence, and self-transcendence in the present (Van Kaam, 1975). Crucially, storytelling is as much about the person who narrates as the one who reads or hears the anecdote.

Research strategies

This section on research strategies describes how four strategies were used in the current research: a pilot test, reflective journals, observations which, and interviews.

Pilot testing the interviews

As a researcher, pilot testing helped me "reflect in greater depth" (Sampson, 2004, p. 390) on the nature of my research design. Pilot testing acted as a road map for interviews with my participants and helped probe further or prompt them, especially if I thought pertinent data was missing or needed clarification (Gillham, 2000). In qualitative research, pilot testing is an informal way of rehearsing, honing, specifying, and enhancing my research designs, including framing questions and collecting background information (Sampson, 2004, p. 386). Therefore, I pilot-tested the interview with former parishioners before interviewing my participants to enhance this research design's credibility (Forrester, 2010; Taylor et al., 2016; see Appendix A). My former parishioners wanted their opinions to remain confidential and off the record. However, their feedback was incorporated into the interview schedule. It made me aware of my privileged status as a researcher, and reflective journaling heightened that awareness (Gillham, 2000).

Reflective journals

Despite my initial hesitation to engage in journal writing, I heeded my supervisor's advice to journal in a narrative genre, realising that it would provide invaluable data in my journey as a qualitative researcher. I explored how writing autobiographically assisted me to critically examine my co-participants' assumptions that underscore our professional worlds (Ellis et al., 2011). Reading Ortlipp (2008) aided me to appreciate how reflective journaling enabled me as a qualitative researcher to integrate my experiences of participants as transformative educators within their therapeutic settings, explore ideas that emerged because of interviews, grasp participants' conceptual frameworks within interpretivism and critical constructivism, analyse this emergent research design, and finally understand how it allowed for trustworthiness and credibility. Reflective journaling was not only "an effective tool for understanding the processes of research" (Leavy, 2014, p. 303) but a way of representing my participants' lives, sensitivities, mentalities, inclinations, and experiences (Leavy, 2014; Vine et al., 2018). Furthermore, reflective journaling provided me with a road map about the emergent research design, a record of the techniques I employed, descriptions of how I was able to follow my participants' thinking processes and finally, appreciation of "the ethical issues that evolved in this study" (Leavy, 2014, p. 306). Insights gained from Settelmaier (2007) aided me to see how communicating reflexively through the word instilled a new appreciation of my value systems that were challenged and opened my eyes to how transformative learning was for my participants a way of integrating past and present concepts of psychospiritual counselling within their sociocultural worlds. From my reading of Leavy (2014), I observed how reflective journaling helped me in my sense-making process and how it enlightened, empowered, and illuminated me as a reflexive thinker to engage in a more profound discovery of participants and self (Leavy, 2014; Settelmaier, 2007). Furthermore, I realised how co-participants' re-storying of experiences empowered me as a "research instrument" (Leavy, 2014, p. 306) to appreciate the value of rigorous academic research (Livholts & Tamboukou, 2015). Reading Beuving and Vries (2015) helped me understand how documents referred to historical events, alluded to our assumptions or preconceptions and co-participants' stories. According to Erlandson et al. (1993, p. 99), documents include "historical or journalistic accounts, memos, accreditation records, newspapers, audio-or video tapes". Like anything else, for analysis, I realise that I had to exercise a fair deal of prudence and discernment in collecting such data or else I would have found myself overwhelmed by

the quantum of data (Erlandson et al., 1993). Unfortunately, my diaries were destroyed in February 2020 when the floods in Sydney destroyed my granny flat.

I agreed with Erlandson et al. (1993) and Smiley (2015), who assert that observation for auto/ethnographic researchers is a complex practice that goes beyond verbal and non-verbal observations. Consequently, I judged that observing my co-participants in their places of work would grant me access to their worlds. Observation is a skill that helped me appreciate how to increase the trustworthiness and authenticity of the setting of the research investigation as a naturalistic researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2012). I intended to immerse myself in my co-participants' immediate and contextual environment (Knox & Burkard, 2009). However, this plan did not materialise. Due to lack of time, most of my participants preferred online interviews via Skype and Zoom. I had moved to Sydney, and two of my participants lived interstate. Online interviews had the advantage of saving time and being economically efficient (Knox & Burkard, 2009). Additionally, my co-participants permitted me to record sessions so that I did not need to take notes, which may have made participants nervous.

Interviews

From the outset, I sought to explore how context and “interpersonal dynamics” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 452) between the interviewee and interviewer shaped interviews with my participants. Admittedly, interviews are a vital aspect of qualitative research which is “idiographic” (Morey & Luthans, 1984, p. 29). Ideography in qualitative research seeks to focus, empower participants’ voices, truths or perspectives as individuals silenced by positivist notions of criteria or truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Furthermore, interviews are person-focused or centred using a naturalistic research paradigm to elicit participants’ subjective experiences (Morey & Luthans, 1984, p. 27-36; Morrow, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

I interviewed five participants after painstaking preparations that included research on the topic, picking an interview type, and “defining the focus of the inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 452). I balanced flexibility with structure to elicit rich data or novel insights from my interviewees. I listened to my participants with minimal interruptions and paraphrased and prompted them sparingly. Finally, I utilised the power of silence to provide the participants

with the space to articulate experiences rarely verbalised. In this emergent research I favoured a naturalistic approach, grounded in my participants' worlds. I did not question in the interviews solely to mine for incisive data but also showed interest in them as persons. I saw this process as an intersubjective, respectfully empathetic of participants' experiences. By offering "rich descriptions" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 9), I explored how I learned more about our socio-cultural worlds by sharing ideas, recognising co-participants' paradigms, noticing their ambiguities about life or experiences. I reflected on how my participants embedded in their social realities discovered vital psychospiritual counselling information as transformative learning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Gill et al., 2008). Likewise, I journaled how some of my participants' anecdotes revived vicarious trauma in me or even challenged my assumptions that psychospiritual counselling was a mode of transformative learning (Schostak, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews

I conducted hour-long semi-structured interviews with a predetermined discussion schedule that was flexible and open-ended, which aimed to produce qualitatively rich data while exploring my participants' psychological and social worlds (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013). I strived to balance flexibility with a structure to elicit rich data or novel insights on psychospiritual counselling as transformative learning from interviewing my participants (Willig, 2013; Forrester, 2010; Gillham, 2005). I had a purposive sample, that is, a group for whom the research question was significant (Smith & Osborn, 2008). I endeavoured to examine how my participants enhanced resiliency in clients as a form of transformative learning, which served, in effect, to change their clientele's 'frame of reference' (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5), or the structural framework that clients employed to understand their experiences at perceptual, rational, and affective levels (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). As Erlandson et al. (1993) explain, semi-structured interviews aided me to grasp or elucidate themes that arose within my participants' specific cultural conditions and contexts in this research inquiry.

Concerning this qualitative research inquiry, my interview schedule (see Appendix B) consisted of seven non-leading questions that I pilot-tested with parishioners of mine before interviewing my potential participants to elicit rich information (Forrester, 2010). According to Patton (1999), queries about participant experiences, opinions, feelings, knowledge, and background are vital to garner a broad spectrum of data.

I highlighted the benefits of informed consent regarding their research participation (Christopher et al., 2007; Wendler & Grady, 2008). My aim was to gauge if the research inquiry was compatible with participants' interests and if so, how they could freely decide to participate after they had considered all the relevant information that I provided them with (Christopher et al., 2007).

I interviewed 5-6 participants at a mutually acceptable time and place, or online via Zoom or Skype. Their pseudonyms were Chantelle, Jason, Rianne, Jan, and Crystal. I called them before the interviews to develop rapport with them so that the discussion did not come across as rehearsed. My approach aimed to discover ontological authenticity regarding their experiences and meaning-making processes of psychospiritual counselling as transformative education (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). I developed an interview schedule, i.e., seven open-ended questions (see Appendix B) that enabled my participants to explore their experiential worlds and freely voice their opinions or insights (Creswell, 2012).

The first three questions sought to comprehend the potential links between psychospiritual counselling and personal transformation. They included the contemporary challenges of psychospiritual counselling faced by psychospiritual counsellors. The rest of the questions I asked focused on strategies and in-depth exploration of how psychospiritual counsellors viewed building resiliency as a form of transformative education.

Data sources

Sampling and participant recruitment

Funnelling is a technique in qualitative research that aims to elicit a participant's generalised perspectives of an issue or, more specifically, a more focused perspective of issues (Smith & Osborn, 2008). I used snowballing to access other participants through professional networks. After completing the transcripts and thematic analysis, I went back to the participants to clarify data in person or via email (Gill et al., 2008; Kitto et al., 2008; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Lastly, I contacted my participants, briefly described the research, underscored its significance, and summarised its goals. I followed up by sending them the ECU information letter that included an overview of the study and a consent form. On the advice of my professional mentor, I searched the Australian Network of Spiritual Directors (ANSD) and

Catholic Religious Australia for their listings of spiritual directors. One of my participants, Jason, was a part of ANSD. My professional mentor guided me to Chantelle, a colleague of his, and my PhD supervisor recommended the name of my third participant, Crystal.

Participant selection

I selected qualified, experienced participants, immersed in a living and inclusive spirituality mainly drawn from the Catholic faith and other Christian denominations. I interviewed five participants, but I selected three for writing this research study. I began with Chantelle, a former Catholic nun engaged in midwifery, a leader, a clinical pastoral educator, and counsellor with over thirty years of experience as a ‘spiritual accompanist’, a role akin to psychospiritual counselling. I then interviewed Jason, a former Catholic priest and psychotherapist who practices Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy, which he views as core to his “ministry of healing” Jason has a flourishing practice specialising in body-oriented psychotherapy, couples, family, and narrative therapy. Jason offers clinical supervision, and his clientele includes disadvantaged youth with complex trauma. Jason’s psychotherapy deals with various presentations such as gender issues, identity confusion, sexuality orientations, addictions, and substance abuse. Additionally, it includes concerns such as anxiety, defiant behaviour, borderline personality disorder, and depression. Jason’s therapeutic practice consists of existential problems, family, parenting, personality disorders, phobias, psychosomatic issues, PTSD, spirituality, and trauma recovery. Lastly, I interviewed Crystal, who is a senior counsellor and an anthroposophist engaged in psychophonetics. I aimed at garnering rich data on how participants enhanced resilience as transformative learning (Patton, 1999).

Data Analysis

Malterud (2012) describes data analysis as “a systematic and essentially taxonomic process of sorting and classifying the data that have been collected” (p.546). From my readings of several authors, such as Lincoln and Guba (2013) and Malterud (2012), I recognised how data analysis helped me generate transferable in-depth data analysis qualitatively and systematically. Based on my preferred critical constructivist or interpretivist paradigm, data analysis helped me gain knowledge, analyse data, and perhaps determine the truth of how resilience enhanced transformative learning. Reflecting on Lincoln and Guba (2013, p. 45), I

appreciated the interplay of how co-participants and I created data as a co-constructed reality. Therefore, I listened to the interviews many times and wrote up the transcripts while I simultaneously journalled my impressions. Additionally, I noted my co-participants' interviews and reflections, jotted down notes, and wrote memos of my experiences of contacting participants and our subsequent discussions. I then listened to the recordings, transcribed them, and entered the transcripts into NVivo, a computer software package for qualitative data analysis. I coded them by determining ideas in the texts, their relationship to each other, and their connotations thematically. Afterwards, I arranged the data thematically using a hierarchical chart that captured the interviews' emerging themes (see Appendix C).

Grounded Theory Analysis

Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 27) define grounded theory as 'a specific methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) for building theory from data'. From my readings of several authors such as Corbin and Strauss (2015), Creswell (2012), and Conrad (1982), I employed a grounded theory approach to inform my qualitative data analysis, which is a complex and flexible discovery process of creating a practical theory that is systemically obtained from and grounded in data. I then analysed themes that emerged from my co-participants' constructs of their social worlds. I coded the themes into a hierarchical chart. Lastly, I categorised them into broadly related but coherent themes for the interpretation of data. Furthermore, I felt that I needed a theoretical sensitivity that informed my data analysis in an emerging theory. I was not naïve to believe that I came into this research completely without a theoretical basis. Armed with such an awareness of pre-existing ideas, I analysed with theoretical sensitivity to broaden my horizons of what others say of this topic and contribute to knowledge. Therefore, I wrote subjective and interpretative memos, procedurally collected data, and constantly reflected on my observations and critical thought processes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2012).

Reading Taylor and Settelmaier (2003) helped me appreciate how, within an interpretivist study, I needed to permit data to speak to me rather than imposing my perspectives or hidden assumptions on the data, thereby allowing practical theory to emerge by voicing my participants' stories and mine. I did not analyse the data hoping to prove or disprove any proposition of whether resilience was integral to transformative education (Glasser & Strauss, 2017).

Coding

Forrester (2010) explains that coding is done on a computer using software packages such as QSR NVivo. Corbin and Strauss (2015) identify three ways of coding. Firstly, open coding is akin to brainstorming to discover the potential of ideas contained in the data. Axial coding, which follows it, shows the relationship between concepts, followed by the selective theoretical stage of integrating notions. Coding enabled me to make a comparative study on the available but emerging data, grounded or rooted in my co-participants' contextual experiences (Corbin, 2017; Creswell, 2012). Malterud (2012) affirms that coding is an instrument with which to scrutinise and organise data into meaning units. Therefore, I connected the ideas that emerged after coding and thematically organised the data into meaning units (See Appendix C). To achieve this, I wrote memos, procedurally collected data, and continually reflected and refined what I observed in person or online during co-participant interviews. They were my lifeline to creating theoretical knowledge from my research design's conception to its end (Creswell, 2012).

Sense-making process

Reading Lincoln and Guba (2013) and Schostak (2006) encouraged me to appreciate how my co-participants' constructed meanings, 'inherited' from our culture, our social standing, or our 'standpoints' and what those events signified retrospectively for my co-participants' feeling and thinking, and to be aware that the co-participants' realities were not foundational but relative or "subjective" (Guba & Lincoln, 2013, p. 47). Elliot Eisner (1993) suggests that "The is world is immediately before it is mediated, presentational before it is representational, sensuous before it is symbolic" (as cited in Lincoln and Guba, 2013, p. 44). I became mindful of how my co-participants were the experiential experts on their lives (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Hence, I strived to experience how my co-participants transformed their impressions of psychospiritual counselling as transformative learning into concepts, theory, or philosophy (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

I ensured that my rigorous analysis of data grounded in interpretivism and critical constructivist views of reality that was subjective and in hermeneutical terms was opposed to an objective perception of reality (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Hence, I remained focused on transferability so that my readers might ascertain its quality (Patton, 1999). I vicariously

entered the spirit of data collection without getting into a frenzy of jotting down notes in the margins. I followed data collection by “open coding” (Flick et al., 2014, p. 30), Strauss’s term, thematically classifying and comparing the codes. I spent considerable time on developing the resulting hierarchical chart that perhaps captured the interviews’ emerging themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Leavey & Barker, 2007). I was aware of what qualitative researchers refer to as the hesitant nature of data collection expressed as “working concepts, working definitions, and working hypotheses” (Flick et al., 2014, p. 36). I have attached the hierarchical chart (See Appendix. 1).

Research quality standards

Crystallisation

Laurel Richardson (1994) coined the term crystallisation (Ellingson, 2009, p. 3). This sociological metaphor highlights the insufficiency of the original traditional triangulation concept for achieving “reliability, validity and truth” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 275) - that triangulation fails to establish a connection between researchers, participants, others, professions, and self. Crystallization, by contrast, exposes hidden assumptions in narratives and highlights how they are communicated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Richardson (1994, p. 522) defines crystals as “prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves. What we see depends on our angle of repose.” Richardson (1994) explains that crystallisation critiques the age-old notion of certainty as singular and absolute while emphasising that crystallisation primarily presents individuals with an exhaustive yet incomplete knowledge of reality. Richardson (1994) signifies that we question our knowledge acquisition as our understanding grows in complexity and intensity. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) report that the metaphor of the crystal lets the researcher and reader alike comprehend that a research inquiry involves “discovering, seeing, telling, storying and re-presentation” (p. 276). Ellingson (2009, p. 442) described crystallisation as a developing framework in qualitative inquiries that beckons researchers to question relational topics using multiple lenses and various genres. Crystallisation offers validity to coherently fuse multiple genres of data analysis into a rich, deep, and partial understanding experiences. Furthermore, crystallisation exposed my powerlessness in fully understanding the truths of my experiences and highlighted my frame of reference (Ellingson, 2009, p. 4). It stood in contrast to positivism, and it helped me move beyond a binary model of communication (Ellingson, 2009, p. 5-9).

Principles of crystallisation

I tried to understand how culture influenced my participants' knowledge of self and their understandings of relational dynamics that impacted their lives. I explored how the subjective comprehension of their socio-cultural worlds shaped their capacity to critique "modern society" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 247) or to have a vision founded on ethical codes that consciously guided their actions (Taylor, 2015). I saw knowledge as a sociocultural contextual shaped reality as constantly evolving "partial and incomplete" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 252) and therefore, never neutral (Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003).

Crisis of Legitimation

Denzin (1997) explains that the crisis of legitimation problematises a research process as fundamentally a product of a researcher's subjective perception, "value-laden" (Denzin, 2011, p. 92) interpretation or construction of sociocultural realities that are incomplete and culturally influenced. Reflecting further on Denzin (1997), I critically reflected on my rationale for the research, its quality, and through this lens, I endeavoured to appreciate how I understood reality and my process of interpretation, which includes my 'paradigm or belief systems' (Denzin, 1997, p. 139) within interpretivism and critical constructivism. I tried to recognise how my worldview impacts upon my practice of psychospiritual therapy. As a researcher, I developed a critical stance of reality from sociocultural, psychospiritual and philosophical levels, including creating knowledge and positioning self as an active agent of transformative education that this research topic is about (Taylor, 2015). Therefore, my readings of Lincoln and Guba (2013) and Taylor (2015) empowered me to appreciate how my educational background is potentially instrumental in either silencing my story or subtly co-opting other voices through a process of socialisation or an uncritical acceptance of prevailing viewpoints in society. Finally, the crisis of legitimation helped me understand how my interpretations within this research that were "characterised by tensions, uncertainties, contradictions, and hesitations" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1997, p. 143) that reflected my present sociocultural realities.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, in qualitative research, no matter what its paradigmatic or epistemological underpinnings, emphasises a quality of research that is achieved or that makes research worthy by employing various nuances such as "credibility (parallel to internal validity),

transferability (parallel to external validity), dependability (in place of reliability) and confirmability (parallel to objectivity)” (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 219). Credibility in positivism points to internal validity that reflects confidence in research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p.105). Techniques such as prolonged engagement, peer debriefing and member checks are employed to ensure credibility in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Confirmability is synonymous with objectivity in positivism, wherein findings and interpretations result from data collection. In positivism, dependability relates to reliability, which postulates that findings and results could be determined using a ‘consistent and dependable process’ (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 105). In qualitative research, an audit of the research inquiry ensures consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Additionally, an audit or reflexive journal is key to confirmability.

According to Lincoln (2011, p. 13), these terms replace the traditional positivist “internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity” criteria and wherein the results are “stable and replicable” in constructivist research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 219). In the conventional sense, ‘in positive inquiries’ (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 79), terms such as ‘transferability’, ‘dependability’, ‘plausibility’ or ‘confirmability’ were the prerogative of researchers who statistically determined generalisability. According to Seale (2007), plausibility refers to the consistency between an investigator's conclusions and hypotheses considered as conceivable. The interpretive and critical constructivist auto/ethnographic components of this emergent research developed on the criteria of authenticity and trustworthiness advocated by Guba and Lincoln (1985), who renounced any claims to objectivity. Lincoln & Guba (2013) demonstrate that transferability is not determined by the researcher but by the potential reader who aims to make sense of the researcher’s constructs in qualitative inquiries. Furthermore, the researcher is committed to furnishing thick descriptions, an aspect of transferability, of the participants and their contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 80). Lincoln and Guba (2013, p. 104) explain that the ‘external validity’ or ‘generalisability’ of trustworthiness is ascertained by those who seek to “apply the findings and interpretations” as opposed to the replication or extrapolation of data. I achieved credibility via member-checks with my participants via phone calls or emails finally, arriving at dependability or a level of consistency of findings through this emergent research design. Therefore, I incorporated an audit trail as confirmation, ensuring transferability via thick descriptions so that the reader

could decide whether my conclusions could be transferable to the reader's context. I did this so that a reader could personally contextualise my emergent research design.

Additionally, I attempted to understand how through the "hermeneutical dialectic process" (Lincoln, 2011, p. 104), my interpretations or constructs of reality were filtered or progressively processed, examined, or selected but which brought about mental and affective unity (Christopher & Campbell, 2008; Lincoln, 2011). I tried to confirm trustworthiness by conferring and discussing the emerging data with participants via phone calls and emails. I attempted to ensure fair representation of participant perspectives by incorporating their viewpoints and discussing whether their ideas were fairly represented. Additionally, fair representation involved reflexivity, member checking, and engagement with participants about events and experiences occurring in their lives (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Credibility

According to Guba and Lincoln (2013, p. 51) credibility or what makes for truth, which "is a quality of construct", relies on an individual's meaning-making perspectives, which are conditioned by sociocultural factors. Hence, I outlined my philosophical belief in qualitative research, "that is, a fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking" (Patton, 1999, p. 190). I agree with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) idea of credibility and, therefore, I pondered how my readers might perceive my findings or conclusions as being credible. Hence, in this research inquiry, I construct meanings by interpreting and reinterpreting data continuously (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 70). I reformulate my ideas about criteria and use expressions to state how I give voice to the marginalised within my socio-cultural worlds (Hammersley, 2007; Morrow, 2005). Moreover, I enhance credibility via member check-in, increasing subjectivity and lengthened engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 70).

I recognise that credibility is subject to interpretation, such as my interview schedule, participants, data collection, analysis, generalisation, and presentation. I was aware that the notion of empirical credibility was open to review. For example, I questioned myself, "What are my chosen research paradigms? Am I hearing what I want to hear rather than what my participants are saying? What are my constructs of truth in this inquiry?" Likewise, I brought my participants' and my narratives, experiences, interpretations, and paradigms to offer thick

descriptions, typically including knowing theirs and my world as a social, cultural, and historical reality. I made my qualitative inquiry credible by understanding how I, as a researcher, my data, and my readers interact with each other. Therefore, I incorporated my background, professional and personal experiences, including my theoretical underpinnings, into this qualitative inquiry. I also analysed how I mediated my lived experiences through my linguistic style and assumptions. Morrow (2005, p. 250) refers to this as ‘horizons of understandings’, a term coined by David Rennie.

I achieved credibility through various stages such as crystallisation or “multiple forms of analysis and genres of representation” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 565), referencing, methodology and regular audits. I engaged in this process with a sense of detachment to avoid hasty research conclusions to understand better my co-participants’ social-cultural realities in a scholarly manner (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Authenticity

I ensured authenticity as described by Guba and Lincoln (2003, p. 70). The first criterion was fairness, with which I examined my participants’ meaning-making process, their interpretations of events, analysing them and recreating meanings in the emergent design (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 70). Furthermore, to attain fairness, I had obtained informed consent from my participants, endeavoured to explain my sociocultural situatedness or meaning-making processes, and debriefed with peers (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 71). After this, I examined ontological authenticity wherein my understanding of the ‘nature of reality’ (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 37) or knowledge appeared to become more knowledgeable, complex, and refined (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 70). This required deepening my perception of my sociocultural sensibilities from the initial stages of the research inquiry to the present and determining my transformation as a researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). The next level was educative authenticity, in which I investigated the nature of the relationship between the “knower and the knowable” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 37). I examined how I as the researcher embraced my participants’ meaning-making processes as educated beings (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 70). I then focused on the catalytic level, in which I critically examined how my understanding of how resiliency enhanced transformative learning and how this research inquiry spurred me into transformative action (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 70). I ensured that my understanding of how resiliency enhanced transformative learning did not diminish my

voice or subjective experiences, while also not dismissing the process of crystallisation (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Lincoln et al., 2011; Morrow, 2005). Lastly, at the stage of tactical authenticity, I strived to ascertain whether the readers of my research inquiry and I would be triggered into being agents of change. Moreover, I adhered to the research processes that I had negotiated with my participants, together with my ethical obligations in this research inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Ethical considerations

This research progressed after gaining approval from Edith Cowan University Research Ethics Committee. It met all the ethical criteria for this research project. Before commencing my data collection, the participants were contacted and informed about the research's nature. I gave my participants an understanding of its methodological approach within interpretivism and critical constructivism, and I explained the purpose of the study. Following Edith Cowan University's ethical obligations, I sent each research participant a copy of the information letter and consent form (see Appendix D). Participants were reassured of anonymity and assured that they could withdraw from the research project without prejudice. Consequently, my participants consented to be interviewed either online or in-person and to have their sessions recorded, including notetaking during interviews.

Definition and nature of research ethics

Ethics is “the branch of philosophy which addresses questions about morality” (Wiles, 2013, p. 13). Researchers do not operate in an ethical vacuum, and so, professional guidelines, disciplinary norms, and ethical and legal regulations are the moral imperatives that guide their actions (Wiles, 2013).

Three research stages from an ethical standpoint

Erlandson et al. (1993) and Sikes (2015) state that ethical codes ensure co-participants' physical and psychological well-being. I realised that they are paramount and that I needed to protect my co-participants from harm. Therefore, I assured my co-participants that safeguarding their privacy and guaranteeing confidentiality was crucial to me. Furthermore, I ensured that co-participants were protected against deception in the research project, as authenticity was critical to qualitative research.

1) Confidentiality

Erlandson et al. (1993) and Van den Hoonaard & Van den Hoonaard (2016) emphasise confidentiality as an ethical imperative. I assured my co-participants that their privacy was guaranteed, and that maintaining confidentiality was sacrosanct. Therefore, I used pseudonyms to prevent public disclosure of information shared in confidence with other participants, and other familial or friendship networks. However, I informed my co-participants that confidentiality was not absolute. To safeguard confidentiality, I excluded any data that could identify co-participants.

2) Autonomy

I safeguarded my co-participants' rights and autonomy against deception by omission or commission by using pseudonyms. This is called nonmaleficence, wherein individuals "strive to do no unjustified harm" (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan 2015, p. 37). Nonmaleficence suggests that access to information about co-participants in any report or publication is to be restricted and, as a rule, that the collection, storage, and dissemination of data needs to protect the dignity of participants who are partners in research, particularly in light of the sophistication and proliferation of digital technology (Loue, 2000; Miller et al., 2012; Oliver, 2003). From an ethical standpoint, the aim of data collection is to respectfully explore and discover the experiential world of participants, which is a privilege (Erlandson et al., 1993). Moreover, I assured my participants of how their disclosure or data was to be used or be reused by others in the future (Mauthner & Parry, 2009). I, therefore, restricted any report or publication that could identify my co-participants. (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015; Loue, 2000; Miller, 2012; Oliver, 2003).

3) Informed consent

Informed consent is an essential ingredient of ethics, as co-participants are not objects, and their values and choices as autonomous beings must be respected (Loue, 2000). While it was necessary to explain and inform co-participants about procedural aspects of the research, it was also wise to "daily renegotiate and expand the basis for informed consent as new opportunities for collaborative activity emerge" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 155). However, informed consent remained the prerogative of my co-participants and that they had the right

to withdraw consent at any time (Sikes, 2015; Van den Hoonaard & Van den Hoonaard, 2016).

Conclusion

This chapter acquainted the reader with how my research methodology is embedded in interpretivism and critical constructivism to investigate how psychospiritual counselling as transformative education can enhance resilience. This chapter had seven main segments: first, I presented the research paradigms relevant to this study, including interpretivism and critical constructivism. Then I explored the notion of an emergent research design, with auto/ethnography as my chosen methodology, followed by a section on writing as inquiry. This section discussed my research strategies, followed by data sources and data analysis segments, before introducing relevant research quality standards in which I outlined ethical considerations. In the next chapter, I will provide a more profound insight into the background, context and theoretical underpinnings of my practice of psychospiritual counselling.

CHAPTER FOUR: Case Study 1: Dominic

Purpose and organisation of the chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how my professional practice of psychospiritual counselling, spanning across Asia, Africa and Australia, has the potential to enhance resilience through transformative learning by using an integrative approach that employs critical self-reflection, critical thinking and discernment. This chapter is structured into three sections: I begin by briefly outlining my understanding of psychospiritual counselling practice before describing my background and formation as a therapist and priest in Section 1, which includes the stories of my childhood, teaching career, joining the priesthood, and experiences as a priest and psychospiritual counsellor. I begin by describing faith as a protective factor in my life, the hopelessness of clientele situations, seeing myself as a wounded healer, and alluding to self-actualisation and burnout. In Section 2, I elaborate further on clientele experiences across Asia, Africa and Australia before describing key elements of my integrative therapeutic practice, highlighting aspects of psychospiritual counselling as transformative learning, including transformation of the self, and identifying obstructions to the transformation of the self. In Section 3, I describe my eclectic, integrative practice of psychospiritual counselling for developing resilience through transformative learning.

Psychospiritual counselling - a transformative learning perspective

Psychospiritual counselling, to me, is a healing, empowering, integrative, liberating, and transformative process wherein clients critically self-reflect and critically think about every dimension of their lives through the eyes, heart, and mind of God, their primary attachment figure. I agree with Weaver (2011, p. 140) who states many people appear to feel insecure about God's love, struggle to accept themselves as fallible, vulnerable, fragile, broken, wounded persons who have perhaps lost their capacity to love (Weaver, 2011, p. 140). My clients seem to recognise that they have moved away from or even refused God's love in light of their maladaptive behaviours or life choices that destroy them and those in their orbit of love. I view psychospiritual counselling as a method of discernment or critical self-reflection wherein a client makes God the very centre and locus of his or her personal and professional life. This process is akin to Mezirow's transformative learning, wherein clients become integrated and transformed wholistically (Collins, 2008, pp. 549-552; Hoggan et al., 2016).

Moreover, I believe that discernment presupposes, similar to Mezirow's transformative learning approach, that clients are mature, grounded in their truths, and capable of arriving at informed adult decisions that God or a Higher Power is a part of.

Life as a field hospital – my practice of psychospiritual counselling

Seeing life and, more specifically, the Church itself as a 'field hospital' is central to my psychospiritual therapy (Mullens, 2013, p. 62). The metaphor of the 'field hospital' was coined by Pope Francis. I come from a spiritual tradition that speaks of bandaging people's wounds, and in doing so, I dress the wounds of Christ. Therefore, no matter how my clients present themselves, I accept them. I voice my concerns to the Church, advocate for clients, and challenge hypocritical attitudes within the Church that I consider unchristian. I try to taste my clients' tears, assuage their fears, or calm their minds with meaningful silence. I am not talking of empty silence but a silence that helps them touch their wounds. In addition, silence enables them to introspect without giving in to the temptation of self-loathing, self-pity, self-blame, self-condemnation or engaging in self-afflicted pain due to anger, resentment, grudges, fear, guilt, shame, unforgiveness or unacceptance of things beyond their control (Ladany et al., 2004, p. 80). Perhaps at times, they experience catharsis, empowered by narrating their vulnerabilities and trusting that I, as a priest counsellor, would never betray their trust, as they may be suspicious of psychologists or counsellors for religious reasons (Nanay, 2018). In the next section of this chapter, I outline how I became the counsellor and priest that I am today and how my life has shaped my own psychospiritual development.

SECTION 1

Panorama of my background

Writing this case study has been a monumental struggle, and I still feel traumatised by the news of my mother's death at 18. Moreover, I battle with PTSD and vicarious trauma, witnessing firsthand the dehumanising poverty of India. By the time I was thirteen years old, I had volunteered in the slums of erstwhile Calcutta with Mother Teresa. I then qualified as a teacher as I was passionate about understanding the art of educating, growing, and learning (Hoy & Margetts, 2015). I taught English, mathematics, general science, and geography at St.

Paul's Primary School. During my winter holidays in erstwhile Calcutta, India, I was involved in pro bono bridging programmes for university students struggling with English.

In 1990, I joined the Redemptorist seminary in Bangalore after a walking pilgrimage with my former fiancé to a Catholic Shrine in January 1990. She was shocked about my decision to join the priesthood and, in anger, cut me off from her life, unaware that I was undergoing a spiritual emergency or religious conversion experience. I turned my back on the world I knew as I felt called, set apart, anointed and commissioned by God to live a life of holiness as a priest, to mediate God's love to humans and "transform the earth" (Dozeman, 2005, p. 117). According to Lamb and Bryant (1999), religious conversion, which is a universal term, marks a stepping away from a former state of life or "to head in a different direction" (p. 51). It took me many years to integrate my past into my priestly identity as I 'became' another Christ on earth reflecting Christ's values, vision, and mission. I recollect a prolonged period in the seminary of feeling emotionally confused, psychologically depressed, socially alienated, personally lonely, and dissociated from reality as the world around me rapidly changed. I struggled to cope with the perception of having surrendered my identity, sense of autonomy and voice as my religious or spiritual guides tried to mould me into 'another' Christ. To clarify my doubts, I sought answers from the sciences, particularly from psychology, to better understand my struggles.

My interest in psychology and counselling germinated from an interest in how my childhood trauma, complex trauma, and PTSD were connected to my Catholic faith, which was not merely a protective factor but was becoming a transformative learning experience enhancing my resilience. According to Kelly (2012), the word Catholic means to be "open to the whole" (p. 8). Over a twenty-seven-year period, my work spanned across Asia, Africa, and Australia. I joined the Redemptorists in 1990 at 25, as their goals to work for the poor, appeal to youth, excellent preaching, and simple, authentic lifestyle of poverty attracted me. I took my first vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty in 1992 and my final vows in 1998 after which I immediately left for Africa only to return for my ordination to the priesthood at the end of 1999. In 2000 I was ordained as a Redemptorist priest at 35 in Bangalore, India and then returned to Africa in mid-2001.

The Redemptorists are a Catholic, male religious congregation founded in Italy by Saint Alphonsus Ligouri in 1732. Their mission is to offer professional spiritual development

through biblical preaching to the marginalised across ideological divides – religious, economic, social, political, cultural, and ethnic affiliations. As a Redemptorist and priest, I have been engaging in professional religious development, spiritual direction, psychospiritual, grief and loss and trauma-informed counselling, preaching, pastoral care in hospitals, youth ministry (18-25 years old), project work for people living with HIV/AIDS, community services, community development, mentoring and life coaching in Africa. I returned to India for nearly two years before relocating to Australia in 2007, where I now engage exclusively in faith-based services and psychospiritual counselling. In retrospect, I have been incorporating the richness of my diverse life experiences as an erstwhile teacher and priest, with a background in Eastern and Western Philosophy, Theology, Christian Scriptures, and spirituality into my professional therapy practice for a long time. While Carl Rogers' person-centred approach is foundational and central to my practice, my approach is eclectic or integrative. Walters (2008) alludes to Carl Rogers (1902-1987), who believed that education needed to promote personal growth and therefore be transformative (p. 112).

Trauma: my lived experience

I have been diagnosed with PTSD, and it is like a shadow that never leaves me. I am grateful that I could access therapy, but I believe that my faith eventually healed and continues to heal me. From my lived and therapeutic experiences, I believe that we articulate our pains or traumas before we engage in spirituality or psychologically analyse our traumatic memories or events. Hence, healing is in the story and touching our woundedness before deconstructing or rationalising how we feel or how they affect our lives. Admittedly, spirituality is a protective or coping mechanism to process trauma for most of my clients and me. Humans tend to either cry out to a God, a Higher Power of Force, in desperation as much they would to a loved one or a therapist before self-reflecting on traumatic events and possibly how they affect them mentally or emotionally. I know that therapists speak of getting in touch with one's feelings, and I validate that, but I feel that healing is never instantaneous. However, when one is traumatised, one does not have the luxury of processing, deconstructing events or analysing emotions, whether they are maladaptive, permanent, or transient. What is more important is to tell the story. I believe that in telling the story, whether to God, a loved one, or a therapist, individuals experience a diminishing of the pain of trauma.

Many of my clients, particularly in the Asian and African contexts, were exposed to trauma too, and psychospiritual counselling provided them with a safe space to process their trauma that their cultures collectively denied. Admittedly, like me, they took shelter in spirituality. In retrospect, given my exposure to childhood trauma, I feel incredibly resilient, but I continuously question if my spirituality is a genuine experience of God or a coping mechanism.

While mental health experts might dispute that spirituality is vital to healing, individuals with a spirituality see it as vital to their trauma recovery (Park et al., 2017). I hold this view that spirituality is vital to recovery from trauma, based on my lived experiences, interactions with individuals in faith communities, hospitals and in psychospiritual counselling. Spirituality has helped me cope with complex trauma – feelings of loss or abandonment, existential emptiness, disempowerment and disconnection from self and others. Additionally, spirituality has shaped my character, and has influenced my vocation to the priesthood, which is a sharing in Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection (Kelly, 2004; Park et al., 2017).

I found it spiritually therapeutic, working with Mother Teresa in the slums of erstwhile Calcutta. In touching those who suffered, I dressed inner my wounds. I hold that at a transpersonal level, Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection was and is, for me, the archetype of resiliency. Therefore, reflecting on resiliency, I consider self-esteem, self-compassion, resourcefulness, hope, spirituality, cognitive flexibility, emotional regulation, supportive environment, cognitive appraisal, personal reflection, awareness as transformative realities that have helped me to endure, cope, overcome and transcend suffering (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Kelly, 2004; Park et al., 2017). Having explored trauma, I discuss emotions that are key to understanding the inner mind and part of an individual's trauma response.

My life as an artist

I have always been fascinated with nature and beauty, and art is a big passion of mine. Years ago, as a teacher, I 'rescued' a child's oil painting of a tiger, and I knew back then that I was an artist. However, I took up art in 2010 to help me with fundraising for my 'adopted' children in Africa and to thank people. I soon observed that my art became a source of inner peace and a trigger for inner transformation, especially mentally, emotionally and physically. Carr and Hass-Cohen (2008, p. 21), who reflect on the perspective gained from neuroscience, state that

artwork engenders body-mind connectivity that helps individuals attain control of their lives. I agree with Carr and Hass-Cohen (2008) from experience that when I engage in painting, I sense a connection to the earth. Moreover, I experience a profound oneness to the environment that I visually interact with and my inner world. I believe painting reduces my alienation from the earth and, at other levels, helps me process inner and relational feelings of separation and loneliness. To me, art is a prayer, a means to inner healing, self-discovery, and a projection onto a canvas of my innermost self, especially emotions such as fears, anxieties, depression, stress, insecurities, hurts, and the trauma of my unconscious mind that enhances inner resilience.

Reflecting on Carr and Hass-Cohen (2008), art is a way of acknowledging, owning, processing trauma, reducing my chronic feelings of stress, and experiencing inner catharsis and transformation. From personal experiences, I have noticed that whenever I was overwhelmed with emotions, I found an escape in art, and I was able to regain intrapsychic peace and create alternative positive and life-giving emotions. Emotional processing involves recognising emotional states and the ability to regulate and transform negative emotions into positive ones through reflection and sense-making (Carr & Hass-Cohen, 2008). According to Dreifuss-Kattan (2016, p. 1), art is a medium to express intense emotional states. I believe art is fundamentally storytelling through colours. I have long recognised the connection between emotions and colours, especially when I engage with nature on my treks. I get a dopamine rush, and I believe that I experience transformative healing as I unconsciously process my emotions. The same is true of my art, as my stress levels noticeably fall, and I feel renewed or even regenerated emotionally and physically. Colours seem to invite emotional expressions (Carr & Hass-Cohen, 2008). Most of my art is titled 'Emotionality in Colours' (See Appendix E).

My role as a Therapist

Faith as a protective factor

I realise that my life experiences and my faith in God, sorely tested at times, helped me cope, heal, self-emerge and self-transcend. My faith continues to impact positively upon my mental health and wellbeing as a protective factor. The seeds of my future altruism were sown when witnessing India's dehumanising poverty overwhelmed me in childhood. I decided to do

something about it by becoming a priest. I remember the story of a depressogenic classmate who had complex trauma and had lost hope because of recurring flashbacks of his mother's death (Mills et al., 2015). According to Arnold and Fisch (2011), complex trauma is an insidious and pervasive phenomenon that impacts development. He told me that he recalled sitting beside his mother as a little child, who died during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. Ironically, I discovered years later that my father led a brigade in the war and I felt both sad and angered by it. My friend said that Mother Teresa had picked him up and had given him up for adoption; the scars of his trauma never healed and he had embarked on a self-destructive path in adulthood, haunted by the image of his dying mother. His story still resonates in me.

The hopelessness of clientele situations

My lived experiences help me recognise that not even the best-intentioned counsellor can emancipate some clients from the hopelessness of their situations, but God alone can - if they believe in one. How do you accompany ragpickers, scavengers, refugees, victims of repeated domestic violence and ethnic cleansing? How do you counsel women and minors who have been sexually, emotionally, and physically abused practically every day? I was wondering if I could offer them psychological safety and security at all when they were operating out of survival mode, especially my clients in Asia and Africa. In such circumstances, men rarely come forward for help. Thus, I mainly counselled women, who were doubly oppressed by unfortunate events and patriarchy. At times, not even psychological intervention strategies could help as their conditions were appalling. Besides, the sheer numbers meant that I could not help everyone in need of therapy. Their woundedness kept reminding me of my own as a therapist.

Therapist as wounded healer

I see myself as a wounded healer whose inner woundedness, tribulations and vulnerabilities are pathways to inner healing. I view the collective tragedies of my life as internal resources for empowerment and personal transformation. As a therapist, I facilitate catharsis in clients by exploring ways to tap into their innate capacity to regenerate, reintegrate, and reorganise broken dimensions of their lives as embodied beings and make something beautiful of them. Catharsis is not a negation of painful feelings, fear or purging emotions in an ethical sense but

a healing of emotions (Golden, 1962). I integrate positive psychology and spirituality to enhance personal resilience in clients as a form of transformative learning, aware that I am an instrument in God's hands. I remember once, as a priest, consciously and appropriately disclosing aspects of my life to a client because there were certain parallels to our lives. He was shocked, and I recall him saying, "I now understand and looking back at some of our sessions, I sensed that you had undergone a lot in life, but I would never have imagined what you had gone through. You didn't allow your sufferings to embitter or even break you. You are so compassionate, and thanks for helping me own my vulnerabilities and see it as a source of strength."

As a wounded healer, I recognise that I am only an instrument in God's hands, and this theological paradigm informs my therapeutic practice that I visualise as a transformative process. I practise humanistic psychology that is person-centred, eclectic and that incorporates transformative learning that helps clients rediscover the power of spirituality to foster personal transformation by seeing value in ethics, spirituality, mysticism, and consciousness (Mälkki, 2010; Vaughan, 1993). I seek to balance the cognitive and the non-rational in clients by building on Mezirow's concept of transformative learning as it aims to raise clients' consciousness levels as being capable of spiritual growth, self-emergence, self-transcendence and self-actualisation in the world (Mezirow & Taylor, 2010, p. 196).

SECTION 2

Journeying with my clients

Over the years, my journey with clients included social outcasts, the poor, marginalised, exploited, refugees, victims of ethnic cleansing, labourers, domestic workers, school and university students, and faith-based youth groups. Many are drug addicts, escorts, career professionals, single parents, separated and or divorced couples, church-going families, non-Catholics, atheists, agnostics, and militant secularists. Most of my clientele were non-Catholics because Catholicism is a minority in many places I worked, especially in Asia. The majority of my clientele live 'subhuman' lives like hell on earth. I doubt if religion could ever offer them protection. In moments like these, I feel I am only a band-aid because their plights are traumatic. It leaves me feeling angered, sad, and powerless. I do all I can to empower them to transform their present and future, as I could not change their past. Psychospiritual

counselling as transformative education aims to awaken clients to the need to liberate themselves from unjust, oppressive socio-politico-economic structures while enhancing resilience. In this chapter section, I highlight details of my work with clients in different cultural and geographical settings.

Psychospiritual Counselling within Asian contexts

Psychology and, by extension, counselling per se has adverse cultural connotations in Asian society. There, clients came to me ostensibly for spiritual guidance, although the real reasons were often underlying mental health issues, including difficult feelings, cognitions, social functioning, and the absence of wellbeing, meaning and purpose in life. Given their social sensibilities to mental health, I agree with Dow (2011, p. 177) that one needs to understand people's underlying cultural belief systems towards psychic wellness. For instance, shame, a big part of the Asian social fabric, refers to culturally internalised mores regarding morality, competence, beauty and family honour or name (Hampton & Sharp, 2014). I had clients who seemed to prefer to languish in silence to protect their name and family honour rather than bring shame by voicing their struggles. One such case I remember clearly was Rachel: Rachel's parents had coerced her into marrying a wealthy gentleman twice her age for financial reasons. Her husband was an alcoholic and narcissist who physically, emotionally, and even sexually abused her. At 35, she was practically blind due to stress, and still refused to divorce her husband, stating, "I would rather suffer than bring dishonour to our family name."

In Asia, mental illness insidiously affects the entire familial system and affects education, marital prospects, and employment opportunities (Lauber & Rossler, 2007). Therefore, psychospiritual counselling, with its links to spirituality, is a culturally appropriate way of spiritualising their mental health presentations because of existing cultural and religious moralising narratives or discourses surrounding mental health (Lloyd & Waller, 2020). However, a growing awareness of mental health from a scientific perspective has brought about an appreciation of it among my clients in Asia (Lloyd & Waller, 2020). Nonetheless, within Asian contexts, mental health and disclosing family secrets in psychospiritual counselling, even for Catholics, is taboo.

Indian clients and cultural attachments

Some Catholic clients in India appeared to blindly operate from what I view as a flawed cultural attachment model that encourages adults to remain humble, servile or submissive. They seemed unconsciously resistant to individuation, or they may have equated it with disobedience to their elders. I have discovered that this is true of my Dalit clients.

Dalits, especially in traditional rural areas, struggle to break free of rigid caste structures. They are considered untouchables by upper-caste Hindus and deemed as the lowest in the caste hierarchy. Mahatma Gandhi called these “Untouchables” (Murray, 1994, p. 269) Harijans or Children of God. In Sanskrit, the word ‘Dalit’ means being “broken” or “crushed” (Mosse, 2012, p.19). This notion negatively affects their identity and senses of Self. In India, my clients’ family, gender, community, caste, education, economic status, as socio-cultural systems, defined their concepts of Self (Murray, 1994). Clientele from India, including Dalits, seemed culturally overtly spiritual, whilst having a poor sense of self, and tended to have co-dependent relationships and spiritualise their problems. I endeavoured to conscientise, empower, and transform their notions of self as part of transformative learning by challenging them to develop pride in themselves, critically reflect on their real issues, desire to change their social and economic circumstances, fight unapologetically for their rights, and critique society.

My understanding of psychospiritual counselling as transformative education draws from Paulo Freire, the father of critical pedagogy and popular education, who coined the term conscientisation. Influenced by his Catholic spirituality, Paulo Freire advocated God’s calling to people of goodwill to make God’s vision of a new humanity a reality (Kirylo & Boyd 2017). I believe psychospiritual counselling extends God’s vision for a new humanity within contemporary society by offering opportunities for transformative learning to clients, including my African clients.

Counselling in Africa – Partnering with local communities

I worked in Africa at a time when socio-economic, political, and cultural forces provided fertile ground for the spread of HIV/AIDS, which was made worse by illiteracy hampering access to information. I worked in 'ghost villages' wherein HIV/AIDS had decimated households, leaving child-headed households that needed support even to meet their basic

needs (Ndati, 2012). Many clients, including priests, believed that having sex with a virgin was a cure for HIV/AIDS. I feel that such sexual attitudes are still used as an excuse for perpetuating violent control over women in a fiercely patriarchal society. These experiences of many a client broke my heart. I struggled to offer clientele who had lost trust in humans a sense of hope. I generally worked in partnership with women in local communities to provide culturally sensitive approaches to community support and increase the social capital of remote communities through sponsorships for education. With funding from aid agencies, I set up schools, vocational training centres, and social outreach programmes. I offered community-based trauma-informed, mental health supports together with group, peer, and grief therapy. These support systems operated much like the multidisciplinary teams that we have here in Australia, albeit without the same level of expertise or financial backing. Nevertheless, I trained the teams in person-centred and trauma-informed counselling.

I particularly recall Mama Zawadi, a qualified nurse who made it clear that I was not their saviour and that the path to addressing problems was the women. She offered me an operational model: I first identified a clan's matriarch and discussed practical solutions. We then formed groups that included a matron, mother, teacher, nurse, social worker, youth, and an interpreter to problem solve. These women were selfless, diligent, and hope-filled and prepared to usher in transforming attitudes towards sexuality. Each group identified their own needs and the culture-sensitive approaches they needed that involved the entire community. These women nominated individuals for training, liaised with community or religious leaders and local government officials. Consequently, the result of such an endeavour was a mentally healthier, resilient, empowered and transformed community that harnessed the collaborative power of their communities.

Desperate reality of clientele

I am aware that what I describe here is a highly sanitised version of the desperate reality of my voiceless, disempowered clientele suffering from endemic violence, complex trauma, material deprivation and violations of fundamental human rights, especially in the more impoverished communities of Africa. I remember a client who had escaped from the Rwandan genocide and who narrated how he had witnessed his mother and siblings being butchered. He had PTSD, could not hold onto any job to support his family and finally moved into a sprawling slum. He became an alcoholic. His wife worked as a nanny to support the family.

She was a silent victim of repeated sexual abuse working in homes and contracted HIV/AIDS that she passed onto her husband. After they had both passed away, I had to institutionalise their two children and the emotional toll on me was heavy.

Stories such as this have made me doubt if God ever hears the cries of the poor. In moments of despair, I often say to myself that God does listen to their cries and that I am God's ear to hear them. In faith, I realise that I need to continue to be a light reflecting Christ's love. Through offering transformative learning, I offer hope to those who live in darkness, metaphorically speaking, because of globalisation, wars, corruption, natural catastrophes and illnesses, among many other existential challenges.

In addition to the very poor, my African clientele included the middle class and the affluent of those societies. A significant number were nominal Catholics, who perhaps struggled to integrate their faith with their wealth, often dismissing religion altogether as retrograde. I believe the affluent in these societies felt entitled. I share here my experience of Michael, a millionaire who owned a chain of supermarkets, real estate, and a transport company. Every year, the family travelled internationally, threw cocktail parties, fine dined, wore branded clothes, and had a lavish lifestyle. He complained about everyone and everything without ever giving back to society. He felt that the Catholic Church was old-fashioned and seemed out of touch with modernity. He described himself as a 'serial monogamist' and said what he did with his personal life was his business and that the Church had no right to dictate what he did in his bedroom. Initially, I felt disturbed, but I realised that Michael's criticism was a projection of his interpersonal struggles at home. In psychospiritual counselling, I discovered that Michael was vulnerable and processing a lot in his personal life. Therefore, one day, I asked Michael to accompany me every Saturday for a month to a project for AIDS orphans in a slum a few kilometres from his home. After our visits, we would share our experiences. Gradually, Michael realised that the exercise was an extension of psychospiritual counselling and an invitation to see the world through a new lens, reflect on his life, and develop a transformative attitude to life.

Resilience of African clients

Many African clients appeared resilient in the face of adversity through cultural bonds as they had family systems that offered them significant emotional support no matter their

circumstances. As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. Likewise, I agree with Constantine et al. (2006) who believed that people are naturally optimistic about life as their cultures valued working collectively, sharing resources and advanced self-determination. I am thinking of one young African client in particular who had PTSD and who disclosed that she had witnessed - and was traumatised by - her mother's brutal death at the hands of her intoxicated father as a child. The clan brought her up. After struggling to hold back her tears, she said, "I do not deny that I do not feel depressed as I continue to have nightmares and flashbacks. However, I have such a supportive family, and together I will make something of my life." I felt deep empathy for her, and I took comfort in knowing that her clan would take care of her. However, I was worried about her at other levels as her world was a harsh one, so through a funding agency, I helped her qualify as a nurse.

This client was an exception in that my African clientele rarely discussed their emotions while at the same time were open to psychospiritual counselling. PTSD is the hidden scourge of Africa, and the stress of survival is a significant source of concern, especially for clientele languishing in the sprawling slums or ghettos of big urban centres. However, my clients were resilient, and as one client once said to me, "Africa is not a dark continent because of its skin but because colonialism robbed us of our dignity as persons by snuffing out the light of hope." Resilience in the African context is not just an individual trait but also a family, clan, or community quality that involves belief systems, sense-making, collaborative work ethics, cultural mores, interpersonal relationships founded complemented by good communication skills (Tchombe, 2012, p. 232).

Shamanic practices

I acknowledge the important role of shamans for mental health in African societies. According to Singh (1999, p. 131) a shaman is a "person who traverses the boundary between the physical and spiritual worlds." Shamanic practices respectfully embrace those with mental health presentations. They enhance supports in these collectivist cultures by creating order from chaos, healing, cleansing, and purifying the soul in a world that has lost its inner balance on account of ruptures from or disruptions within traditional cultures at the level of living, feeling, thinking and being (Lloyd & Waller, 2020, 681; Singh, 1999). Many African clients believe in the spirit world, convinced that their mental distress results from divine punishment, demonic possessions, or curses by elders within a community.

The identification of the clan with the self

In the African context, the self is identified with the tribe or clan rather than a client's faith. I experienced my African clients as mostly self-confident except for the urban poor living in squalid ghettos. Their interpersonal skills were good as they belong to collectivist cultures that provide means of survival, meaning, interpersonal bonding, shared economic activity, and happiness (Matsumoto, 2007, p. 1297). Indeed, they seemed to feel connected and to draw power and strength from their tribes. Several of them mentioned that their affiliations to the clan offered them space to grow and flourish as persons. However, some of my impoverished urban clients felt robbed of the support of their clans as they had become disconnected from their tribes back in the villages.

Erosion of the sense of self

Some clients in Africa, especially the urban slum dwellers, may have struggled to cope with an eroded sense of self. I endeavoured to integrate and assimilate their faith as a rich resource of transformative learning that empowered, transformed their societies and offered them hope to create a just and equitable society. Sadly, many of my clients unconsciously chose to resign to their fate and silently suffer the indignities imposed on them by colonial, exploitative economic systems, namely unbridled capitalism that espoused the lie that the markets worked best when left unfettered, unregulated, and untaxed (Camp, 1998, p. 9). Subsequently, psychospiritual counselling was not a priority for such a clientele for whom survival was paramount. They did not seem to have any inclination to dwell on transformative learning and showed no interest in psychological, philosophical and religious concepts of what it means to be a unique, free, empowered, autonomous, self-directed, self-emerging, evolving, transcendent and self-actualised individual (Maslow, 2013, p. 60; Van Kaam, 1969, pp. 357-371). However, the hope offered by religion was central to their identity.

Religious hope is transcendent and reconciles us to suffering without being crushed by the weight of false expectations and disappointments by focusing on the hope of faith (Mittleman, 2009, p. 133). The hope of religious belief is the one thing that gives my clients dignity and the reassurance that God is a God for them, with them and in them, which is central to incarnational theology. Incarnational theology is the study of Christ, who exists as God the creator of the cosmos, and who was birthed into human history in human likeness and

appearance, and who emptied himself of his humanity and died in obedience to God on the cross (Osbourne, 2009, p. 395). Speaking of hope, I remember a nun who visited our priestly residence for a chat after Mass in Africa, and we invited her to join us for breakfast. At the table, she politely refused to have even a cup of tea as her family had not eaten for a couple of days. This single act of heroism in solidarity with her starving family was confronting as it exposed how oblivious we had inadvertently become of the harsh realities of people's lives. This experience was transformative for my group of Redemptorist priests who appeared to have become desensitised to the poor's plight due to compassion fatigue. However, the nun's faith had offered her, and I am sure her family, the strength to cope with their starvation with dignity.

Peculiarities of clientele in Post-Christian Australia

My experiences in Australia differ from Africa and Asia, as my Australian clients are affluent, educated, individualistic, materialistic, and entitled. Some appear to believe that they are part of a racially superior culture or civilisation. The context of my clientele in Post-Christian Australia is rooted socially and culturally in a form of Christianity that is no longer a foundational or dominant source of meaning (Boeve, 2012, p. 145). The majority of my clients perhaps fear the death of the Church as they know it, while the rapidly diminishing influence of the Church in public life not only angers but depresses them (Singleton, 2011). Sadly, some appear to use this as a reason for engaging in culture wars on hot button issues such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), abortion, gender equality and same-sex marriage, which I regard as tragic and unchristian.

I believe that my Australian clientele can roughly be divided into two categories: the first is the over sixty-year-olds because the Catholic Church seems to have lost the millennials and Gen X Catholics due to secularism (Singleton, 2011). Despite these challenges, the over 60s choose to remain faithful to the Church even as their children drift away from it. They fret about their children's marriages as 'non-sacramental', and therefore from a Catholic perspective, they are living in 'sin'. Unfortunately, some blame themselves for the adult choices of their children. The second group consists of young professional Catholics seeking to reconnect to their faith. I seem to be a magnet for youth and agnostics for whom secularism fails to fill their inner void, and who yearn for wholeness, meaning and purpose to their lives. I have discovered that many of my younger clients come from divorced backgrounds, struggle

with disrupted attachments, and potentially look for the stability that religion might offer them. Many seem afraid to enter into relationships they fear will not last because of the high divorce rates.

Culture of entitlement and victimhood in Australia

Some of my Australian clientele, while perhaps lost in a world of self-absorption or navel-gazing, seem to come from a culture of entitlement and victimhood. Bardwick (1995, as cited in Anderson, 2002, p. 16) explains that a culture of entitlement is a belief and attitude that people deserve or are owed what they receive or aspire for and yet are unsatisfied as their wants are insatiable. Additionally, such a culture prioritises conformity and appearances. I believe this has arisen from the welfare system, creating a dependency culture. Moreover, according to Ingram (1990, as cited by Barnett & Sharp, 2017), self-absorption is a dysfunctional, unyielding, and over-focused attention on internally created information. Many appear psychologically stuck, lack resilience in the face of adversity, and rarely take ownership of their lives, blaming their parents, schooling, society, government, politics, religion or climate change on everyone else but themselves. I disclose experiences of Third World nations to challenge my Australian clients to critically self-reflect on their circumstances, enhance resilience, and transform their attitudes to life by engaging in community projects for the disadvantaged here in Australia.

Formation of the self – inner mind and feeling

Clients in Australia mostly seem to have a well-informed concept of the self, inner mind, and feelings. They see the self as potentiality, becoming, self-emerging and self-transcending (Craig, 2000, pp. 318-333; Van Kaam, 1969, p.63-74). As a Catholic, the self is the vision of our identity touched by Christ, and it includes our spiritual connection to Christ, other individuals and the cosmos (Hayes, 2016, p. 2). In psychospiritual counselling, I challenge clients as part of transformative learning to critically self-reflect on the religious perspectives ingrained in them from childhood and allow God's love to transform them, open their eyes and broaden their understanding of their faith so that they move from a false sense of self to a true sense of Self (Craig, 2000, pp. 318-333; Hayes, 2016, p. 2).

Spiritual emergencies

Many clients in Australia seem to be culturally aware that their mental distress has natural causes that have a contextual component, which may include spiritual emergencies (Lloyd & Waller, 2020). Australians come to me for psychospiritual counselling because they equate spiritual emergencies with psychopathologies and not as an opportunity for personal transformation (Watson, 1994). Grof and Christina (1989, as cited in Viggiano & Krippner, 2010, p. 118) defined a spiritual emergency as “both a crisis and an opportunity of rising to a new level of awareness.” Stanislav and Christina Grof (1989) coined the term spiritual emergency suggesting that humans are inclined towards love and aspire to wholeness, which is indispensable for inner healing and personal conversion (Viggiano & Krippner, 2010, p. 118). Perhaps those who have had spiritual emergencies and who have experienced transformations of their former identities or selves often embark on a new growth-filled life journey or path of life (Mijares et al., 2014, p. 7).

Many young Australian clients request psychospiritual counselling because of their spiritual emergencies, while others come to discuss other spiritual concerns, especially their sense of meaninglessness, despite economic security. Like my experiences with adults in Australia, I realise that many of my younger clients come from a culture of entitlement and victimhood (Johnson, 2020, p. 196). In a culture of victimhood, a person vehemently protests and highlights status as a victim in the public domain, whereas in a culture of entitlement, individuals feel they deserve specific rights and privileges based on past actions (Johnson, 2020, p. 196; Kaufman, 2011, p. 196). My clientele often suffer from depression, generalised anxiety, substance abuse, disrupted attachments, toxic relationships and anger. Admittedly, psychologists or psychiatrists refer clients to me because their mental health presentations have substantial religious and spiritual components and because they know I have a person-centred approach, and I am qualified in religion, spirituality, Catholic theology, Christian scripture, and comparative religion (Pieper & Uden, 1994).

Scapegoating, PTSD and cognitive dissonance

Some of my clients have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/or cognitive dissonance, by which human behaviour is prone to inconsistency regarding values or beliefs (Homer et al., 2000). These clients, especially the very conservative, probably scapegoat or project

blame for their poor personal choices, irrational thoughts, behaviours, relational struggles, personal or professional failures, financial difficulties, trials and tribulations onto the devil. I realise that by scapegoating the devil, some clients possibly seek to abandon individual agency or responsibility for their actions. Maybe they use it as a defence mechanism or a protective factor against a nervous breakdown (Freud, 1992). Simultaneously, I am aware that some clients possibly come from extremely traumatic backgrounds, have PTSD, and display dissociative behaviours (Knipe, 2014). Sadly, some of my clients seem to have the distorted belief that God sanctions their behaviour or wills their suffering. Therefore, they are prepared to pay the price of martyrdom in their marriages, professions, and religious life. A significant number experience this as a spiritual emergency. They appear to view transpersonal psychology as an extension of God's healing love, a way of touching their wounds, and are aware that their feelings are the gateways into their inner minds (Collins, 2008, p. 549).

I often remind my Catholic clients that their emotions are the expressways to their inner mind. I mentioned earlier that conveying emotions are a taboo in some cultural settings in Africa or Asia. In Australia, clients, especially men, possibly suppress, repress, deny, or block out their painful emotions (Robert et al., 2014, p. 7). I invite clients to bring God into sessions as He is the Divine Healer, and I remind them that I am only His 'unworthy instrument'. Being an unworthy instrument is a purely Christian expression of my calling as a priest to be a transformative agent of love to enhance resilience despite my human frailties to live according to the law of love or Christ (Haughey, 2004, p. 98).

Dissociation, compassion fatigue and burnout in my therapeutic practice

I am aware that I sometimes dissociate from clients because of burnout and fears for my mental health wellbeing. According to Alayarian (2011), dissociation is a coping mechanism, or an inner psychic space correlated with an inability to manage trauma, mental illness and neurological issues rationally. Cardefia (1994) refers to mental processes as two or more cognitive processes that are not associated or united. These dissociated components need to become part of an individual's awareness, self-identity, and memory (Cardefia, 1994). In retrospect, I suspect that I have been suffering from compassion fatigue or burnout, which is a state of emotional weariness that leaves one feeling depersonalised and incapable of achieving something worthwhile (Gentry, 2002). I have experienced burnout as stress that irritates my eyes, and triggers panic attacks, irrational fear, tightening of my jaws,

disillusionment, intellectual cynicism, repressed anger, and feelings of depression. Burnout causes me to disengage in silence or become unempathetic to some clients who spend most of their sessions in tears. However, I do believe in the cathartic effect of crying. However, for my tearful clients, my silence empowers them to courageously voice their pains (Bylsma et al., 2019). According to Bylsma et al. (2019, pp. 1-11), tears increase serotonin levels, decreasing crying, which brings about emotional regulation. At times, I feel that client stories seem to paralyse my thoughts and numb my soul, reminding me of my past burnout, especially when thinking about previous counselling contexts in Asian and African.

SECTION 3

Psychospiritual counselling for enhancing resilience through transformative learning

Inner healing and integrative approach to therapy

I integrate my Catholic spirituality, theology, scripture, and Western and Eastern philosophy studies into my psychospiritual counselling practice that focuses on inner healing and is integrative in its approach. In retrospect, I realise that my initial arrogance or self-belief in my psychological diagnostic skills immediately after my priestly studies was flawed because, in my arrogance, I viewed my clients from a mental perspective and not contextually or in an integrated manner. Additionally, I reflected on my exposure to the disenfranchised of society and the enormity of their human sufferings. I realised that their mental health had a socio-economic and cultural component or relationship. Hence, I now weave other world views, cultural wisdom, spiritualities, and therapeutic approaches into my practice to become a transformative learning experience for clients that fosters inner healing. For example, rituals are fundamental to Catholicism as they symbolically connect us with God, who empowers and transforms us with His love (O'Gorman, 2016, pp. 433-436, Ellen, p. 349). Another example is the sacrament of baptism, in which Catholics are ritually 'immersed' into Christ's suffering, passion and resurrection into eternal life by being 'born' into a new faith family (birth), witnessing to the values of Christ no matter the personal cost to themselves (life). Baptism fills them with the hope that death is not the end as there is life after death in Christ (Osborne, 2014, p. 298). I understand baptism's birth, death, and life cycle to reflect aspects

of my practice that recognise the individual's dignity and existential crisis as a spiritual opportunity for hope-filled transformation.

Spiritual practice, charism and love of Jesus

My spirituality informs my psychospiritual counselling practice that I view as a gift or charism, a way of being in the world where I model God's love (Ekpo, 2017). Therefore, I agree with Truscott (2021, pp. 68-91), as I view psychospiritual counselling as an immersion into people's lives and the offer of a transformative experience of the unconditional love of Christ. Additionally, I facilitate transformative learning by developing a contemplative stance to life in clients. According to Haynes (2016, 2), a reflective perspective is a God-centred way of seeing self, others, God, and others through the true self's prism. I support them to engage with the Bible critically as a form of transformative learning, contextualise Jesus' message in their present circumstances, freely embrace Jesus' transformative appeal and operate out of their true self - that place of integrity, wholeness, and embodied love (Haynes, 2016, p. 2). Embodied love recognises that lives are fired by animating life energy or force that we call God, spirit, and soul (Snowber, 2016, p. 8). Furthermore, I view discernment, akin to transformative education, as a maturation process that assists clients in deepening their understanding of embodied love, faith, scripture, teachings and the traditions of the Church so that Christ becomes integral to every decision of theirs (Regan, 2019, p. 5). Hence, using an integrative approach, my role as a therapist is facilitative and consultative respectful of my clients' journeys towards personal transformation.

My integrative therapeutic approach

My therapeutic approach is what is called eclectic or integrative. According to Hollanders (1999), 'eclectic' and 'integrative' are interchangeably used. However, 'eclectic' refers to various therapeutic practices without regard to their roots within a different theoretical framework (Hollanders, 1999, p. 483). Simultaneously, 'integrative' relates to "combining multiple theoretic therapeutic strategies to create a cohesive theory (Hollanders, 1999, p. 483)". My practice is an invitation to wholeness, communion, relationship, harmony, solidarity, integration, inclusivity, fulfilment and peace with others, self, and the world at emotional, intellectual, psychic, morally, and spiritual levels (Friedman & Hartelius, 2013;

Spalding, 2008; Van Kaam, 1975). Nonetheless, my preferred theoretical underpinnings are in Emotion-Focused Therapy and Solution Focused Brief Therapy (see Chapter 2).

I employ Emotion-Focused, and Solution Focused Brief Therapy to positively harness clients' psychological and spiritual resources to become agents of personal transformation. Furthermore, my rationale for such approaches is to carefront clients who remain psychologically stuck in ruptured relationships or patterns of behaviour, believing that it is God's will. Hence, I listen to their spiritual emergencies and offer them coaching to broaden their understanding of emotions as gateways to their inner mind, structures central to their existence and ways of transforming the self to enhance resilience (Pos & Greenberg, 2007, p. 25). Briefly, SFBT is a post-modern, evidence-based and strength-based approach that helps clients focus on experiences rather than on past problems (Connie & Metcalf, 2009; Crockett & 2013, p. 237). I help clients recognise their coping skills earlier and explore what their future behaviour might look like for them (Crockett & Prosek, 2013, p. 238; Quick, 2008, pp. 7-8).

Likewise, using SFBT, I empower clients to utilise their inner resources or strengths by focusing on exceptions, scaling, miracle questions, and so-called solution-focused dialogues for effecting positive behavioural change to problematic situations that they might perceive as uncontrollable (Crockett & Prosek, 2013, p. 239; Quick, 2008, p. 9). Concerning SFBT, I ask my clients, "If Jesus were to offer you a miracle to solve your problem or your life, how would you imagine your life to look like?"

I now offer a summary of EFT, an evidence-based humanistic therapy that espouses an integrative and neo-humanistic approach towards motivation and claims that experience and behaviour are influenced by culture and biology (Greenberg et al., 2018, p. 9). In addition, EFT recognises that if transformation occurs, an individual needs to alter emotional schemas by exploring personal experiences and stories attributed to them (Greenberg, 2006; Pos & Greenberg, 2007). Using EFT techniques, I help clients develop a sensory awareness of their emotions that point to their needs, wishes and goals and comprehend how emotional schemas impact their lives, perceptions, and responses to the world (Greenberg et al., 2018, p. 9). Furthermore, I coach them to cultivate complementary emotional responses using Jesus to model healthy emotional responses by asking them, "How would Jesus have responded

emotionally to your situation?” (Greenberg, 2004). The rationale for such a question is to integrate psychology and spirituality to transform and enhance client resilience.

Enhancing resilience: integrating psychology and spirituality

Over nearly three decades, I have developed the art of enriching resilience by integrating psychological knowledge and interventions strategies into the wisdom tradition of my Catholic faith. I always keep in mind a simple truth: if unpacked, religious acumen can reveal the collective psychological knowledge preserved in its rituals that foster transformative learning (Pembroke, 2010, p. 146). With this conviction of the transformative power of religious or spiritual wisdom, I aid nominal Catholic clients who have spiritual emergencies or secularists who come to me for therapy to tap into the transformative power of the sources of knowledge. Therefore, psychospiritual counselling becomes a transformative experience helping them relate their faith or spiritualities to their fractured lives, promoting resilience and inner healing and, more importantly, aiding them to self-emerge and self-transcend as transformed learners who critically self-reflect and think. Additionally, I believe that forgiveness is crucial to emotional transformation as modelled by Jesus, enabling an individual to enhance resilience.

Forgiveness

Integral to transformation is forgiveness, which in Catholic spirituality means acknowledging emotional and relational hurt, consciously letting go of interpersonal pain, repaying woundedness with love, diminishing bitterness and transforming spiritual disruptions while enhancing resilience as embodied beings (Worthington & Sandage, 2016). Additionally, I help clients choose to let go of past hurts, allow Jesus to heal their brokenness, develop prosocial behaviour, and experience transformational spiritual growth that breaks the vicious cycle of a need for vengeance. Furthermore, I use Jesus as a model for clients to create alternative emotions by unlearning emotional schemas or psychologically internalised maladaptive behaviour to restructure irrational thoughts and behaviours in the present. Internalisation is a process whereby individuals progressively, willingly, or unwillingly incorporate or co-opt external values, making them an integral aspect of their self-identity (Hardy et al., 2008). Hence, some of my clients experience spiritual dissonance as they

endeavour to make sense of their personal anger that conflicts with their spiritual ideals of forgiveness.

Spiritual dissonance

Spiritual dissonance is the state of imbalance caused by self-reflection on personal experience concerning culturally internalised religious or spiritual standards, norms, and schemas regarding forgiveness (Worthington & Sandage, 2016). It challenges clients to move beyond their self-destructive emotional, maladaptive responses irrational thinking and recognise how internalised behaviours of their past inform current behaviour. In Catholic circles, clients see me as an embodiment or representation of Christ, which is perhaps an impossible ideal to live up to as a priest who in faith acts in the name and person of Jesus who invests me with His power to bring about transformation (Sykes 2000; Van Niekerk & Niemandt, 2019). That is why my Catholic clients give me access to hidden dimensions of their lives only known to God and God alone, and me. Their trust in God places such a tremendous responsibility on me to love and see them as God would do whilst also fostering transformative learning of my clientele.

Nevertheless, a tiny minority of clients appear resistant to unpacking their stories, processing emotions, and engaging in critical self-reflection thinking about their beliefs, which I consider a spiritually transformative experience. Some defensively appear to project their flaws onto me. Whenever psychospiritual counselling begins to head in that direction, I realise, from experience, that I might have reached a dead-end because of the client's unconscious need for transference. I feel such clients mask their vulnerabilities or insecurities while trying to portray a false sense of strength. In psychospiritual counselling, I help them tap into their spiritual resources to touch their vulnerabilities and bravely open themselves to the infinite possibilities of self-transformation that heals and enhances resilience. Nevertheless, for many of my clients, transformation is a challenge.

Obstacles to transformation

Many of my clients possibly feel powerless to change and are psychologically stuck in maladaptive behavioural patterns. Stuckness is when a client lacks knowledge of the true self to give meaning, purpose, and direction to their lives (Carter et al., 2020). Perhaps some desire changes but they lack the willpower to change while others overcome their vulnerabilities and

weaknesses. In contrast, others succumb to guilt and shame, maybe feeling trapped as creatures of habit instead of fostering growth in love, justice and maturity (Carter et al., 2020). Hence, my sessions are both an experience of transformative learning and psychological, emotional, or spiritual healing that seeks to enhance resilience. Perhaps many of my Catholic clients have an incomplete understanding of the 'will of God.' They understand the 'will of God' as blind obedience to God rather than a conscious choice to surrender their lives and the direction of their lives to God, who is love, in faith. Indeed, Catholic theology holds that God has active sovereignty over our lives and destiny (Allan, 1961). Therefore, clients unconsciously block, suppress or repress their rationality and emotions, believing they need to willingly accept their situation and surrender to God's will without questioning it. They appear self-absorbed, guilt-ridden, perhaps obsessively ruminating, regretting past choices, and incapable of forgiving themselves. I help them touch their pains, befriend their feelings, and understand that they need to see issues for what they are and not identify themselves with feelings, for example, "I am depressed" (Ratner et al., 2012). I offer them the skills needed to identify, develop coping skills, set small achievable goals, and use their spiritual resources to attain personal transformation to enhance resilience (Ratner et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, perhaps many of my clients equate and identify their feelings of guilt, shame, mental health presentations and circumstances with sin and their notion of self to God. In contemporary Catholic theology, sin is a relational term described as rupturing, separation, alienation, disconnection and woundedness related to self, others, and God (Weaver, 2011). Weaver (2011) adds that Christian scripture symbolises this turning away from God or the break of relational trust in eating the 'forbidden fruit' by Adam. Adam made a conscious choice in liberty to opt against God's love. Thus, his relationship with God became ruptured, ashamed and naked he hid from God, which symbolically represented his false self (Weaver, 2011).

Challenges to personhood

I notice a common client perception among educated Catholics and secularists, of personhood as evolving, being in the process of becoming, as transformative, gifting, self-emerging, meaning seeking, self-transcending, and an integral part of creation (Van Kaam, 1969). In the Australian context, some of my clients have an eroded sense of self as they are socially isolated. I believe that the self, including my self as a priest, can never grow in isolation.

Humans are social beings whose identities are linked to relationships that predict psychological wellbeing (Rokach, 2019). For me, a person with a healthy sense of self is whole, interdependent, connected to self, others, community, God, and is living in a symbiotic relationship to the earth (O'Neill, 2002). I believe that individuation, a relational quality, flourishes within a community context. Still, I suppose individual autonomy disconnects us from social elements vital to our personality development. It ultimately diminishes our sense of self as agents of transformation with an enhanced sense of resilience (O'Neill, 2020). Like many clients, loneliness is a big part of my priesthood. Additionally, loneliness poses an enormous risk to my mental wellbeing as I also battle with stress, depression, distress, suppressed or repressed anger, alienation, emotional dysregulation, and rugged individualism (Burns et al., 2013; McGlone & Sperry, 2012; Rokach, 2019). Nonetheless, I stay centred and trusting in God's love for me and my inner relationship to Him in faith. Moreover, I believe that I am immersed in God's love and find serenity and consolation in His love, even in sorrow. Additionally, while my sufferings are real, they will not destroy me, as God loves me. Mystics show us a unique religious experience of being loved by God and present us with genuine insights of God while embedding themselves in life, detached from it and centring their beings in God (Harmless, 2008). Therefore, in psychospiritual counselling, I help clients to acknowledge their mental stressors. I connect my clients to the God of love within them, hoping their experience of God's love transforms them and enhances their resilience. However, this is painful for some of my clients as they feel abandoned by the Church.

Abandoned by the Church

Some clients feel abandoned by a Church that appears to them as hypocritical, judgemental and dogmatic. Fresh out of the seminary, I felt saddened and angered by such views. However, I soon acknowledged that people were justified in their determinations that the Church had failed them and, in its calling, to be a sanctuary of God's love, mercy and forgiveness, failed itself. I sense anger at the injustice of people's repudiation by the Church, whose leaders have a different yardstick to gauge their failings. Some of my clients resent being shunned by the Church because of live-in arrangements, separations, divorce, advocating for the right to abortions, and championing the inclusion of women into leadership roles with the Church. I try to portray an image of a humane Church by bandaging their inner wounds with the healing love of Jesus. Many of them are livid with the Church, and I am too. I do not permit inner rage to silence my voice for justice as I feel personally called by Christ to make a difference

and not simply be considered a representative of an uncompassionate, heartless and authoritative Church. I concede that God has called me to link others and clients to Him. These clients would begin their sessions by discussing contemporary issues or scandals in the Church, displacing anger discussing the Church's failings, or projecting their inadequacies onto their children or partners. Some seem hostile, voiceless, broken, depressed, stressed, angered, or traumatised by volatile marital relationships characterised by verbal, physical, sexual abuse or issues associated with substance abuse. Others are feasibly wracked by guilt because of marital infidelities or residual guilt from their Catholic upbringing on sexual mores. A few others possibly loathe or blame themselves for separating and divorcing their partners as their marriages were an outward pretence due to societal expectations. The more upfront would admit that their marriages are living hells, their partners have mistresses, or they seek love elsewhere as their husbands were away for extended periods. I remember a highly cynical client who is an active member of her Church. She is scathing about the Church's response to institutional abuse. However, her marital life is a tragedy. She admits that she lives in a gilded cage, suffering from sexual and domestic abuse within her marriage. But to the outside world, their marriage is made in heaven.

Psychospiritual counselling promotes transformative learning

In psychospiritual counselling, I empower clients in distress by connecting their psyche to faith to promote transformative learning through critical self-reflection and critical thinking (Ellens, 2009, p. 521). I package scripture using secular jargon that clients can grasp because of my philosophy, theology, social sciences, and psychology studies. From my readings, I agree that spirituality uses imagery and symbols to name inner truths. Moreover, spirituality does not pathologise mental health, and spirituality seeks to nurture individuals and care for their souls (Ellen, 2009, p. 663). I believe if psychospiritual counselling is to be transformative and enable clients to develop resilience, then I need to understand how my clients perceive, think and process their experiences.

Furthermore, psychospiritual counselling is about enhancing client resilience by drawing on and viewing the transformative power of their spirituality as means for personal transformation and learning (Ellens, 2009, p. 533). St. Irenaeus' words captured the true meaning of transformative learning when he said that "the glory of God is the human person fully alive" (Proeschold-Bell et al., 2015, p. 718). Irenaeus' saying informs my attitude towards

my clients as transformative learners. I agree with Van Kaam (1969, pp. 63-74) and Ellen (2009, p. 553) that my clients are spiritual beings capable of improving their resilience by developing a sense of mental coherence and reframing experiences using spiritual frameworks. Hence, in psychospiritual counselling I focus on healing emotions and use spirituality as a resource for healing the inner child.

The "wounded inner child" refers to unresolved childhood complex trauma that affects a person's behaviour in adulthood as an individual has three parts: parent, adult, and child (Bordan, 1994, p 387-394). I believe that there is a child in every adult that is spontaneous, free, innocent and trusting, referred to as an inner child, which forms part of an adult's unconscious world in the form of positive or negative memories that impacts present behaviour. Therefore, adults must befriend the inner wounded child and the painful memories associated with them as part of transformative learning by seeing connections between traumatic childhood events and their present behaviour if they are to enhance resilience. I aim to enhance resiliency by assisting clients to reacquaint and reintegrate with the confused, lost, wounded inner child of their past, gaining new insights into the inner mind, developing resilience, and transforming their behaviour (Bordan, 1994, p 387-394, Ellen, 2009, p. 314).

Transformation of the Self

Spirituality, in its essence, seeks the transformation of the self (Ellen, 2009, p. 18). In psychospiritual counselling, I use Christ's words to trigger self-transformation in clients' thinking and emotions (Ellen, 2009, p. 85). For example, Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John12:24). The 'seed' is a metaphor for the self. From personal experience and reflection, I believe that 'falling' and 'dying' is akin to a spiritual emergency wherein an individual, through critical self-reflection and critical thinking, understands the cost of following the teachings of Jesus. Hence, in psychospiritual counselling, my clients identify with the 'seed' and recognise experiences of their false sense of self 'dying' as a result of suffering or choices they have made to live the values of Christ, even if it came at a personal cost to themselves.

I believe scripture is a powerful resource that alters clients' meaning-making processes and, consequently, cognitions and emotions by creating positive memories (Ellen, 2009, p. 85).

This transformation helps clients articulate and integrate distress and develop resilience to overcome mental, emotional and spiritual anguish (Ellen, 2009, p. 147). Perhaps many of my clients' senses of self appears to be disempowered, disconnected, disowned, disjointed, disrespected, and disembodied. Hence, in psychospiritual counselling, clients embrace transformation of their false self through discernment akin to critical thinking and reflection as a free choice of the will that empowers them to operate out of a locus of the true Self, transformed and resilient by their anchorage in faith (Augustine of Hippo & Russell, 2004; Craig, 2000; Haynes, 2016). I remind my clients that God, in faith, is the locus of the true Self, transformed in His love, as we are created in His image and likeness. Therefore, we are imbued with dignity that transforms us in faith with a capacity to grow in endurance and resilience (Gen 11:27). This belief transforms my self-identity and enhances my own resilience, which I aim to model for my clients in psychospiritual counselling.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of my upbringing and development as a therapist and priest and outlined my therapeutic practice with clients on three continents. The first section was devoted to my background, including my childhood, teaching career, joining the priesthood. I highlighted faith as a protective factor in my life, the hopelessness of clientele situations, seeing myself as a wounded healer and alluding to self-actualisation and burnout. The second section focused on my experiences working with clients as a priest and psychospiritual counsellor across Asia, Africa, and Australia. Section three expanded on my experiences as a therapist and highlighted how aspects of my integrative therapeutic approach represent transformative learning for enhancing resilience.

CHAPTER FIVE: Case Study 2: Chantelle

Purpose and structure

The purpose of this case study is to explore Chantelle's view of psychospiritual counselling. This case study has three sections. In the first section, I give a synopsis of Chantelle's background as a nun who practised nursing. I then devote the second section to outlining her journey with clients and her therapeutic approaches to enhance resilience and transformative learning. Finally, I focus on her theoretical underpinnings of psychospiritual counselling as transformative through a threefold process: conceptual, reflective, and non-thematic.

SECTION 1

Interviewing and introducing Chantelle

When I approached Chantelle, she agreed to be interviewed, admitting that she was an extremely private person and nervous about being interviewed. I know Chantelle, and she never came across to me as a shy type. She said she must have done something right if people wanted to interview her for their research projects. I interviewed her via Zoom a week later, but the first interview was a disaster as I had not saved it. I was afraid she would disagree the second time around, but Chantelle agreed to be re-interviewed. In hindsight, the first interview coloured how I experienced the second, as I felt that the first was spontaneous and flowed from Chantelle's heart. Conversely, in the second interview, Chantelle kept reading from her notes, and I thought Chantelle was nervous. But who is the Chantelle I interviewed?

Chantelle is a psychospiritual counsellor who enables clients to explore their lives authentically, re-evaluate and take a different life direction as transformed persons, saying "*to begin to open their own book and to begin to turn the leaf*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle appeared to say that she was not an expert on her clients' lives and that she saw her role as a passer-by and a partner who accompanied and listened to her clients respectfully. She described herself as "*a consultative person*" and as "*a visitor in their [clients] own journey*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). I sensed that Chantelle viewed spiritual accompaniment as empowering clients to self-discover their inner truths, discover their inner power and "*voice*" their feelings and share experiences as transformed individuals.

With over 30 years of experience, Chantelle helps clients with a broad range of presenting issues, dreams, and sexual abuse. Her repertoire of skills includes but is not limited to: spiritual counselling, group work, leadership programmes, supervision, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), professional development seminars and workshops on the enneagram and dream works. The enneagram "is an ancient tool with nine points depicting personality styles. It is a tool that can be integrated into different theoretical approaches. The enneagram is adaptable to each client's unique style and can aid a counsellor in conceptualizing a client or family" (Matisse, 2019, p. 67). Furthermore, Chantelle has a Masters in Pastoral Studies and Christian Formation. Spiritual accompaniment endeavours to aid clients in integrating their lives with the transcendent as the ground of their being or their ultimate value (Schneiders, 1989, p. 9). However, Chantelle was also a religious nun who practised midwifery.

Therapist with a religious past

Chantelle's story as a therapist was fascinating, as behind every face is a story. She hailed from a Celtic background and entered a convent as a religious woman. While in the convent, Chantelle trained as a nurse and used the analogy of birthing as a midwife to describe how she, as a single woman who had dedicated her life to God, empowered her clients to rediscover, revitalise or re-energise themselves as transformed persons living their lives with an entirely new outlook of themselves and their life's directions, saying,

I've been a midwife, and I have been in the profession for 32 years. I, I did believe whilst I don't have children myself, I do believe that I have given birth to a lot of people in the sense I am not, and that is not a boast, boasting but it is like, but I empower them to new life in a way that I could never have done if I hadn't been a midwife I think. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019)

I cannot describe what I felt, but I sensed at that moment that as therapists, we shared a common bond of being generative as celibates or individuals who do not marry but devote our lives to God. I felt deeply connected to Chantelle, and I knew it came from a place of truth. Chantelle had humbly touched on her deepest, vulnerable self that empowered, enhanced resiliency and transformative learning in her clients. As I listened to Chantelle, I recalled seeing the untold anguish of being a celibate in her expressions, possibly mine, too,

as much as I heard her speak of celibacy as the vow of love. However, I did not sense any regret in her voice and acknowledged her generativity in empowering clients. I felt that Chantelle seemed to recognise the uniqueness of her clients and their journeys, no matter how sad, difficult, or complex their own. Nevertheless, Chantelle implied that she remained attuned to her client's life stories but was careful of any countertransference whilst maintaining personal and professional boundaries, aware of her innermost self and emotional undercurrents. She said, "*[I am] aware of my own boundaries and my own inner dynamics that I don't know and if, I can, I don't know I can occasionally get in when someone is desperate*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

As a novice therapist, Chantelle admitted that she freely dispensed advice, possibly not realising that her clients needed her to accompany them rather than to have her direct them. She said she would "*start giving them advice*" (Personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle admitted to self-doubt, but with years of experience behind her, she grew in self-confidence as a therapist, saying, "*over my years of, when I first started you know, I was much more but as time goes on you can fine-tune the thing*" (Personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle acknowledged that initially, as a therapist, she was raw. Still, nursing gave her a certain sense of fearlessness in handling clients as she did with her former patients and she was comfortable with her clients' emotional displays and they did not unhinge her. She said,

I was very green, but there was a sense of naturalness in me because of my nursing that has been a great help to me. I am not frightened of people. Like emotions don't scare me. Some people don't like being with someone when they are angry, but it doesn't worry me. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

What she self-disclosed after this surprised me, but my gut feeling was that Chantelle came across as an incredibly authentic and congruent spiritual counsellor. She did not project any signs of being pretentious and was transparent about issues that troubled her in therapy. It seemed to me that her supervisor's silence or perceived detachment in the face of her emotional upheavals enraged her, saying,

I suppose I have had to journey on my own, too. But you know that in my process, I had to have something there with me. I had a supervisor that I would say was very,

very, very lovely. I mean, I struggled with lots of things, and he never and he never moved, never gave me any input. Never. I could have killed him. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

I recall that I sensed that Chantelle realised her supervisor's silence was therapeutic, a gift par excellence, as her supervisor did not rescue her but allowed her to explore her crisis. In retrospect, with her own experience as a therapist, Chantelle probably acknowledges that her supervisor modelled the art of empathetic listening and owed her catharsis to him. She said, *"But that was his greatest gift. I used to say to him, you are sitting there, I need your help. He wouldn't talk to me, but that was the greatest gift he gave me. And helped me"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle alluded that her supervisor was attuned to her emotional and psychological states and that his silence spoke of empathy, acceptance, and non-judgement. Moreover, Chantelle implied that therapy was like a laboratory of self-discovery of her authentic self and that she has brought those insights into her current practice. Chantelle went on to say,

But he would know if I was off balance. But he knew there that I would always go in and cry in his office and that he was there. Yeah, that was when I was doing CPE. I did CPE and that was excellent. So, I mean I have learned a lot from people and from my own journey from other people and those people that I journey with are a gift to me because I learned a lot about myself. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Reflecting further on this theme, Chantelle realised that the expertise she derived from her therapeutic experience with her supervisor was something she needed to gift and transmit to her clients. It seemed that Chantelle could replicate this process of discovering the transforming truth of herself that enhanced her resilience and transformed her with her clients. She declared, *"In the sense that all the process that I am talking about helps them find the truth that sets them free"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Scripturally speaking, the expression 'sets them free' (John 8:32) is akin to overcoming adversity and, therefore, a reference to enhanced inner resilience and a transformative spiritual resource freely given by God. I sense Chantelle admitted her fragility as a human and was honest about her frailties and limitations. Chantelle spoke of this transformative freedom saying,

“They can stand in their own vulnerability because after all in my weakness I find my greatest strength. Because if we are not, if we can't be weak, we can't be strong” (Personal communication, May 30, 2019).

I felt that these two statements from the Bible seem to influence Chantelle's notion of truth and strength in being vulnerable. In Christian scripture, Saint Paul, in his second letter to the Church at Corinth, said, “For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10). For Chantelle, this faith expression symbolised her therapeutic journey concerning life's challenges and realities.

SECTION 2

Journey with clients as a therapist

Client reasons for psychospiritual counselling

Reflecting on her clients, Chantelle conceded that they had come to psychospiritual counselling because they struggled to cope with their sensitivities, woundedness and hurts and needed healing, saying *“their ego's bruised or damaged”* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Perhaps some of her clients did not tap into their inner resilience, the power of God to experience their sufferings as opportunities for personal development and transformative learning within the safety of a spiritual therapeutic relationship. In the same vein, Chantelle indicated that some clients come with unrealistic expectations for immediate solutions or strategies to manage their presenting issues. Such attitudes went against everything that she believed and so troubled her. However, that was not her modus operandi, and Chantelle accepted that for her, it was *“like a red rag to a bull because I don't do that”* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Perhaps Chantelle feels that sometimes clients see her as a spiritual expert and believe that she has a solution for every problem of theirs. Probably, they fail to realise that spiritual accompaniment is a process requiring courageous soul-searching and deep reflection and that healing or lasting transformation is not time-bound. Listening to Chantelle, I felt that she assumed that the resources for inner healing of self, the 'diamond' within, transformation or insights into experiences lay within clients (Newcomb et al., 2015). Hence, Chantelle modelled this attitude of self-reflection to her clients.

Client understanding of self-reflection

Clients, it appears, had a varied notion of self-reflection on what it means to be a transformed person. I sensed that Chantelle implied a spiritual emergency, crisis, or personal tragedy are necessary conditions for triggering maturity and development in clients, saying that it was *"through pain that transformation takes place"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle's statement reminded me of Jesus, who said, "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). Furthermore, I could not help wondering if Chantelle was alluding to Jesus' metaphor of the wheat by describing suffering as an inescapable and indispensable part of maturing as a person.

Chantelle illustrated that when clients begin to process and self-reflect on their lives, they encounter their deepest and most vulnerable selves and discover their most authentic selves immersed in God. When that realisation dawns, clients gain a new appreciation of their lives and are empowered to put their lives in perspective, possibly recognising that God is with them, in them and for them, and feel empowered and transformed. Chantelle said that *"[Clients] begin to open the window of their own soul and begin to see what is happening for them"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Chantelle went on to state that she is under no illusion about how painful and challenging it is to mature, and yet she is powerless to shield her clients from their pains, just as a mother who allows her baby to fall, knowing that if the child does not fall, they will not learn how to walk. Nevertheless, Chantelle offers her clients a safe and secure therapeutic relationship that is nurturing but not co-dependent; nor is it one where she protects and shields her clients from challenges. In essence, Chantelle emphasises that personal growth is a client's responsibility. Perhaps she only creates the necessary conditions or opportunities for clients to self-reflect on their inner lives and make the required changes to their existence. At a deeper level, Chantelle is probably stating that she is not the one who gives meaning to her lives but that it is the clients themselves who consciously decide to hope, transform, grow, and transcend their own vulnerabilities by tapping into the transforming love of God within. Therefore, Chantelle explains that she saw herself *"as a compassionate listener that empowers a person into speech, into a transformation of their own, their own existence"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

I sensed that Chantelle endeavoured to explain that she understood herself and could only speak for herself, whereas what she says about clients is an opinion or an assumption. Moreover, while confident about her competency as an experienced spiritual accompanist, she cannot profess to know how clients experience empowerment. Hence Chantelle said, *“Well, I find it difficult to explain”* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). While Chantelle struggled to articulate her strength as a compassionate listener, she appeared confident to clarify the theoretical framework of her spiritual counselling.

The therapeutic journey

Chantelle's understanding of healing has roots in her knowledge of the self and perception of pain as being inseparable from the self or a fact of life. In addition, perhaps for Chantelle, transformation implies resilience and not an escape or denial of the transient reality of trials and tribulations as elements of the human circumstances. In a sense, for Chantelle to acknowledge, own and embrace human vulnerability is the gateway to resilience, inner liberation, psychic wholeness, character change and transformation. This understanding is rooted in her theological and spiritual comprehension of the post-resurrection story in the New Testament. Jesus invites the 'doubting' Thomas to touch his wounds and, in doing so, connects Thomas to his deepest self, saying, 'My Lord and my God.' Touching a wound is a metaphor for resilience as it implies an individual's inner choice to overcome adversity by bravely confronting pain and experiencing reality anew. The starting point, as I experienced Chantelle, is the self.

Journey starts with Self

Each of us has our concept of what a journey is or where it starts, but I sensed that for Chantelle, before clients began therapy, they needed to understand self as authentic and deeply connected to others, God, and the world. She expressed that her clients *“need to have a sense of self even before they begin”* their journey (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle stated that pain was an unavoidable reality of a person's self and life and that suffering is the gateway to enhanced resilience, personal development, and character change. I feel that Chantelle said that when clients encounter or face their pains, they are empowered by their weaknesses, saying, *“touch their own vulnerability”* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). I sensed that Chantelle realised that it was not easy for clients

to revisit or touch their raw pains as it could possibly retraumatise them. Hence, she created a safe space wherein clients felt secure to embark on their inner journeys freely and without coercion, saying, “*I would be, I would invite the person to be able to invite them into their own journey*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). How? She earlier spoke about the need for her clientele to have a sense of self before they began their inner journey or discovered their truths. Chantelle then illustrated her conviction about the intrinsic goodness of her clients.

Goodness of the human person

Chantelle stated that her clients were intrinsically good and that it was imperative to move beyond their defects, flaws or past, as they are worthy of love and respect as humans. Chantelle said that her clients “*irrespective of how bad they are, they have goodness*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). This statement of Chantelle went straight to my heart, and I noted it in my memo.

It resonated with my paradigm of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God. My own experiences of terrible human stories and tragedies have also revealed a softer tender side to human beings without exceptions. I have seen it in the confessional, spiritual accompaniment, and I have journeyed with people who were capable of acts of goodness no matter their past. I think that the whole confessional practice is linked to this in Catholicism. I gave weak human beings a reason to believe that there is a spark of the divine in them. It's a powerful image, and I have seen radical conversions or transformations of individuals who have tapped into this element of their faith.

I felt that when Chantelle referred to her clients' “*spiritual core*” she alluded to the “*unlived or unexperienced parts of the self*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). They were either repressed, suppressed, or blocked aspects of her clients' lives as they tried to insulate or protect themselves from the immediate pressures of education, career and family as part of a coping or defence mechanism. It is possible that some of Chantelle's clients, like secularists, did not accept or deny that they had a soul or that their inner lives or “*spiritual core*” were a resource that enhanced resilience or were a precondition and inspiration to transform or flourish personally as a whole. Hence, I think that 'the diamond' was a metaphor

for the soul or a person's "*spiritual core*". Chantelle probably felt that her clients needed to have "*a transformative awareness*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019) to access their innermost spiritual resources to be authentically human and flourish at every level of their being with an enhanced sense of resilience. Chantelle alluded that this transformation was confronting for her clients because she felt that once her clients operated out of a spiritual centre, lived authentically, and operated out of a moral centre, no matter the personal cost, loved ones rejected them. I sensed that Chantelle believes that they needed to enhance resilience, as partners refused to accept their behavioural changes or the transformed relational dynamics and were possibly afraid of changes they witnessed. Chantelle spoke of this rejection as loss and said,

They lose a lot of friends because they are no longer are the same and people don't like to be, they don't like the person, they are becoming they are not the person I married or whatever or whatever people have done (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

I felt that perhaps Chantelle's linkage of her clients becoming truthful as persons and how "*they have been created*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019) was rooted in her faith tradition and mine. In the Old Testament, the book of Genesis said, "So God created mankind in His image, in the image of God he created them" (Genesis 1:27). Chantelle was possibly alluding to the deepest levels of our beings, the diamond or soul within us, created in the likeness of God. However, one of Chantelle's most powerful statements was that "*transformation is not a freedom from the reality. It is a freedom to live in the reality*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). I felt Chantelle was not talking about transformation as an escape or retreat from life that is at best complex and challenging and never without its share of successes and failures, happiness and sadness, and certainties and doubts. Perhaps Chantelle does not equate freedom with detachment from situations or indifference to others or the world. I felt that when Chantelle spoke of freedom, she meant that individuals perhaps operated out of the moral and ethical centre, unafraid of who and what they were, and possibly lived by their convictions, even if it meant that it went against the grain.

Moreover, I speculated that freedom for Chantelle was an acceptance that living life from a place of inner truth, implied personal growth, resilience and lasting character changes or

transformation. She admitted that what was important about accepting reality was the effort clients made. Chantelle said, *"the work that they do and the development and the process by which they do that be it slow or be it fast"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Growth for Chantelle was a subjective reality, and each client matured at their own pace, and fostering their sense of self was a vital aspect of her therapeutic modalities.

Self and therapeutic approaches

As I stated earlier, Chantelle experienced that some of her clientele did not possibly have *"a sense of self, well, since they have no ego in them when they first begin the journey"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). In Chantelle's statement on the self, she realised that her clients needed to understand their 'lostness' or movement *"into that non-thematic matter that is the isness, the whatness, howness"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). For Chantelle, 'whatness' referred to her clients' concrete circumstances; 'howness' might have been about how clients experienced or interpreted events; and 'isness', in my opinion, was either about critical reflection or rejection of the transpersonal and transcendent. I will be dwelling on this in the theoretical underpinning of the case study. Chantelle felt that clients needed to operate from their true selves, inner moral or ethical centre, spiritual core, or transcendent selves. Chantelle inferred that clients need to be sure of themselves and their values rather than following the crowd, depending on inspiration from without, or getting swayed by prevailing societal thinking. She uses the analogy of diamonds to elaborate t, saying:

[I am] aware of this other deeper core where the diamonds are, and there is the deep part of the soul that has been, ah, very much umm, lie, lying dormant we use, because we use exterior forces that, well in some ways needed to be there in order for the person to survive and now they are coming to a state of crisis. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019)

I felt that Chantelle meant that it sometimes took a personal tragedy or a sudden change of circumstances to get people to cry out for help. Perhaps these individuals took their lives, security, or status for granted and did not spare enough time to search for or reflect on the deeper values of life. Possibly, when something unexpected does happen and turns their world upside down, they have no one to turn to, not even a God or a Higher Power, as they have

lived a life of self-sufficiency and self-reliance. I experienced clients who never depended on anyone and imagined that their lives were the centre of the universe until they came crashing down and they did not know who to turn to for help. Chantelle stated that clients only seek help when *“the carpet is pulled out from under their feet, and they have nowhere to go”*. Chantelle then described what this might have looked like for someone who was task-oriented within a work setting: *“I may have been shamed, or the task might be removed from me and given to somebody else”* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Chantelle gave the example of a client whose experience of Chantelle as a therapist was quite a contrast to a possibly unhappy earlier experience in therapy. Listening to Chantelle, I sensed that her client had a terrible client experience with a therapist who paid scant attention to her client’s story. Instead, the therapist assumed the role of an expert, which proved counterproductive, as it distressed the client. Chantelle described the client as a *“distraught”* and *“having no self-confidence and she was given all these strategies”* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle appeared to think the client possibly had an identity crisis and was fragmented and was either traumatised or overwhelmed by her situation. Hence, Chantelle felt that her client had lost her voice and capacity to think for herself and was blindly following her previous therapist’s dictates, saying she *“had no sense of the self and what was happening for her. She was emulating what the person was telling her, but it wasn’t coming out of her”* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). I think that what Chantelle felt that the place to start was the person's experience. Simultaneously, this involved gaining a client's trust, listening empathetically, and empowering clients to voice their aspirations and achieve goals. Perhaps Chantelle did not come across as an arrogant, omnipotent therapist who assumed she was an expert but rather as one who journeyed with the client. Chantelle then added that a client once said, *“that for the first time I have begun to see that this is different, and I am different”* (Chantelle, personal communication, 30, 2019).

Chantelle distinguished the notion of ‘autonomy’ and ‘self’ in many of her clients in their sixties. Chantelle thought that they had a good sense of ‘self’, having a world of lived experiences behind them. Nevertheless, in a sense, they were maybe adrift because they had given up on their religious faith and lost connection with their former faith communities and were without the kind of support they had earlier as part of a faith community. Chantelle described them as having *“a sense of lostness in the self”* (Chantelle, personal

communication, May 30, 2019). I explored this a bit further with Chantelle at a member check, and she hypothesised that perhaps these clients were at the far end of their lives, staring at death, and they reflected on their lives and wrestled with many unanswered questions. They were more likely to ask, "*What's life about?*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle explained that many clients experienced a sense of loss connected to their faith: perhaps secularism, dis-enchantment with institutional religion, or the scandals that had dogged the Church tested their faith. Probably it was like standing on the ruins of their erstwhile Catholic faith and practices for Chantelle and many of her clients. She said that clients in their sixties were either agnostics or nominal Catholics who, for all practical purposes, were "*in a tradition ... no longer*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). In this context, Chantelle felt that she needed to contemplatively listen to her clients' truths as they stood on the ruins of their lost faith heritage.

Contemplative listening

Chantelle used the Christian religious metaphor of listening "contemplatively" to empower clients in their journeys of life to discover what is the ultimate or profound truths (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). She reminded me of our first interview and said, "*the truth told like I said last week, is not like the truth discovered*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). I felt that Chantelle was stating that no one can impose truth onto someone and that adults need to learn for themselves, and there is no better school for uncovering the truth than life. As a spiritual accompanist, Chantelle facilitates clients in this process of self-discovery by having a respectful and reverential attitude towards her clients' journeys of life. This process involves an awareness of God's presence in clients and therapists alike. Additionally, in Christian spirituality, contemplative listening is understood as "bringing a full-bodied, loving presence to the person before you and what is said and what remains unsaid. Contemplative listening seeks to honour the presence of the Holy Spirit in the speaker and between the listener and speaker" (Liebert, 2008, p.xix). In Christian Theology, God is a trinity – one God, three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the third person, the Spirit of Jesus, helps individuals discern their journey (Liebert, 2008, p. 9). In this sense, I think that Chantelle, by contemplative listening, without coercion, probably empowers her clients to discover their truth through critical self-reflection and

critical thinking, which is akin to discernment, saying, “[clients] find their own voice in which whatever way they needed to find it” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

This transformative journey of self-discovery is a confronting one and can open up old wounds that could potentially destroy clients if they lack self-belief. Conversely, if Chantelle's clients face their demons, it could become a springboard for renewal, character change and lasting transformation. Chantelle said, “[It] can lead them to very dark places, but it is like if they are faithful to that, it is a place of empowerment for them” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Perhaps those dark places represent past or present traumas, hurtful, suppressed, or repressed memories, vulnerabilities, failures, or even ongoing distress that Chantelle's clients would prefer to leave buried and forgotten. I believe in contemplative listening, the Spirit of God empowers Chantelle's clients to overcome adversity, and 'empowerment' used in this sense is simultaneously an expression of resilience and transformative learning. Chantelle's statement triggered my PTSD, ongoing struggles with faith, and the near shattering of my relationship with the Church. But no matter my fragmentation, I am deeply convinced that I cannot heal, rise above, or overcome adversities unless I touch my own wounds or experience the power of my vulnerabilities, sufferings or afflictions. Chantelle described her spiritual lens or the contemplative stance through which she viewed the world and her clients' discourses.

Contemplative stance: a process of double noticing

A contemplative stance is a God-centred or a 'love-centred' lens through which I see and experience the world. I was awed by Chantelle's definition of reflective stance as “a loving look at the real” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019), which is attributed to Rev. Walter J. Burghardt, a Jesuit priest and theologian. Furthermore, Chantelle explained that the 'real' referred to God or equal terms such as “a life energy, life force or life grace” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle then explained that the contemplative stance involves examining what is happening within her and gazing lovingly at God present within her and using these experiences as a template with her clients.

Chantelle alluded to God's loving fact residing in her deepest centre as a spiritual resource that creatively energises her, ushers growth, enhances resilience, and empowers transformation in her. By extension, this is true of her clients. Chantelle alluded to her capacity

for self-reflection or her “*interior processes*” (Int 1-para-23). I, too, believe that interiority in Christian spirituality signifies the most profound dimension of my being, the ‘holy ground’ wherein God lives and that I unconditionally surrender to His presence with all my heart. In a letter circulated to his friends in 1968 before his death, Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, wrote, “Our real journey is interior; it is a matter of growth, deepening and ever great surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts” (Thomas, 2000, p. 1). Chantelle explained that the goal was to help her clients as persons to “*engage with what’s happening in their spiritual core*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

I sensed that Chantelle not only listens to her clients’ stories but also accompanies them with an awareness and reverence for the God she sees in them, like herself. I felt that Chantelle hopes that such an experience in therapy would touch her clients and that their ultimate truths empower them as they journey through life. Chantelle seemed to accept that her clients’ notions of what is ‘real’ or ‘ultimate’ might differ from hers. Nevertheless, Chantelle believed that clients must harness their Higher Power to experience lasting transformation. She said,

Well, I would see myself as a process of double noticing. It's noticing what is happening in my own interior process, and that is like taking a contemplative stance and then transferring that capacity of noticing onto the person noticing what is happening to the person that I am journeying with. So, it's like taking a contemplative stance towards them so as to enable them to be able to develop a transformative awareness of what is happening in their personal life. So, an awareness that explores what is ultimate in that person's life and as they perceive it. It mightn't be the same as what I perceive, but it is what they perceive. But it's tapping into that awareness.
(Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Chantelle identified that each one's religious experience is personal and suggested that she was consciousness of the transpersonal at home in her clients and thereby implied that she was ever so attuned to the presence of the divine as integral to therapy. Perhaps Chantelle was saying that she helps clients go beyond a pure humanistic concept of personhood and recognise that they are 'embodied' beings. Furthermore, Chantelle helped clients explore, turn their gaze inwards, discern or critically self-reflect and become attuned to the inspirations or movements of the divine within and in their circumstances of life. Therefore, I perceive that Chantelle's contemplative stance or attitude possibly enabled her clients "to engage with

what's happening in their spiritual core" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle explains it, saying,

My, practice as a spiritual accompanier is to take the contemplative stance towards the person in front of me and, that is an ability to be present to them contemplatively. And my awareness of the various contextual factors that shape a person's life. Being aware of a person's contextual factors helps me to redefine how I journey with each person. So, in a sense, I have a template at the back, as it were that I work with. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Chantelle recognised that her clients have a past and are a part of social webs or affiliations, whether relational, professional, social, cultural, spiritual, or political. Hence, Chantelle realised that she could not have a ‘one-size-fits-all approach to therapy, and I sensed her awareness of her clients’ backgrounds determined her direction. I sensed that Chantelle has a basic theoretical template to work from but is not enslaved to it. Crucially, I believe Chantelle sensed that her spiritual power or life inspires, strengthens, and empowers clients who are possibly going through a spiritual emergency or a distressing situation to trust her and open up about their lives. She said, *"It is really my energy to be able to help them voice"* and using *"frameworks"* would depend on their backgrounds, whether it was *"conceptual"* or *"contextual"*. She stated:

So, I would help them after some time because that would be their conceptual framework from where they come, and so I would help them to get into ahh to get into what all that really means. So that would be one, and another one would be, another contextual framework would be. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

As a spiritual accompanier, Chantelle appeared to develop a rapport with her clientele, listen to their story, recognise their paradigms, and gently nudge her clients to engage in sense-making their narratives or lived experiences at a philosophical and socio-cultural level. I will explain the terms conceptual and contextual frameworks in the section on theoretical underpinnings. I feel that Chantelle was saying that transformation is not merely an intellectual discourse if the individual and context are not seen as integrated. Having discussed her contemplative stance Chantelle then explored what resilience meant to her.

Resilience as re-birthing in the self-transformative journey

Resilience concerns an individual's capacity for change and adaptability in the face of adversity (Werther, 2014). When Chantelle used the term resilience, I felt that she invited me to see resilience as a process of re-birthing or metamorphosis and holistic transformation of the self, rooted and deeply connected spirituality and an inseparable reality of their true self. Chantelle said, *"It is really my energy to be able to help them to have a transformative experience so that they so that they have a transformative resilience in new life"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). I felt that Chantelle was referring to the notion of self-development and self-transformation that Jesus spoke about. I believe that new life in Christian spirituality is a choice for Christ. In addition, it is an openness to the gift of Christ's transforming love that helps me see life in perspective, overcome my limitations, touch my woundedness, whether physical, psychic, emotional or spiritual, and become a new or empowered being. Perhaps Chantelle, whose aim is to assist clients in overcoming adversities and, with time, develop life skills to enhance inner resilience or grit, felt that spiritual counselling is inherently transformative for the whole person. I sensed that Chantelle was saying that self-transformation is a gradual process, and that instant change is an exception to the rule. Furthermore, Chantelle said,

[Clients] find their own wisdom, their own resilience so that they get the grace to be able to be empowered into that transformative resilience. So that is the kind of process that I work with them. But that takes a long time. It doesn't happen overnight. It takes years. It can take years, and I suppose it is a subtle thing. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

I share Chantelle's spiritual heritage, and from my theological training, I sense that Chantelle explained resilience through a religious paradigm. In Christian spirituality, there is a recognition that individuals do not have the inner power, strength, or resources to overcome personal challenges. Hence, they rely on God's power to cope with or overcome sufferings and accept such trials and tribulations by surrendering to God. In such moments of despair, the power or 'grace' of the Spirit of God infuses individuals with supernatural power, courage, resilience, and hope to overcome adversity and transcend it, as Christ did. Additionally, 'grace' is a 'free gift' of God that infuses and empowers individuals with the power and spirit of Christ that inherently enhances resilience and personal transformation (Dych, 2000). Nevertheless,

individuals can freely accept or reject God's grace without fearing being punished by God for doing so. I felt that Chantelle illustrated that some of her clients had lost sight of their spiritual orientations because of their life choices or due to life stressors or tragedies. Chantelle proceeded to explain that *“they are the persons that they’ve been created to be but that they have lost on the way and that’s grace and incredible resilience to them and transformation in their lives”* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Furthermore, Chantelle explained that midwifery's goals, aims and vision and those of spiritual accompaniment are similar. Chantelle implied the process or personal development cannot be rushed and that transformation is ultimately the client’s decision and, for clients to reach that stage, they need time to reflect and assimilate their learnings from their spiritual therapist. Crystal said, *“spiritual accompaniment and midwifery, being there with a person giving birth is great, it is the very same”*. She said,

And it takes as, as the birth could take, a long time. The baby doesn’t come out until it is ready. So does the person sitting in front of me can’t do it until she’s ready. We cannot push them. But you can advise them. And it’s often for them work may not be happening in in the room but it’s often when they leave the greatest work that’s done. Because they are on their own. They have resilience and it’s amazing you go away because they don’t, they don’t have that the dependency on you. They begin to find a new strength that they never knew they had. That resilience that they never had.
(Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019)

She asserted that her role in psychospiritual accompaniment was to empower clients to rise above the ashes of their lives and tap into God's life-giving power and love, to rediscover their inner worth or human dignity, flourish and face life's challenges with renewed spiritual, cognitive and emotional insights. She said, *“to help them have a transformative experience, so that they, so that they have a transformative resilience in new life”*. Chantelle clearly stated that *“it is really my energy”* that aids change in clients. Chantelle, however, recognised resistance in clients who were afraid to touch their pains.

Resistance

Resistance is a complex term that signifies an exercise of power or perception as much as a response to control, even within a therapeutic setting (Afuape, 2011). Chantelle’s perception

of resistance possibly originated in our shared Christian heritage of touching each other's wounds. Thus, Chantelle got them to "*follow that resistance*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). The same was true of some of Chantelle's clients because the fear of touching their suffering past could feel like re-traumatisation, flooding their minds with traumatic memories or feelings that their lives are about to be destroyed by trauma and that an "*avalanche is going to happen*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Probably, Chantelle is alluding to the psychological opposite, wherein clients deny, block out, disassociate, repress, and suppress the pain as a coping mechanism, with catastrophic consequences on the psyche and the whole person. Coping mechanisms are the psyche's protective wall against excessive stress or anxiety caused by external events or internal psychological fluctuations (Kramer, 2010, p. 208).

Additionally, Chantelle elaborated that she gives her clients that holding space. Through critical self-reflection and critical thinking, I feel that Chantelle empowered her clients to tap into their spiritual, mental and emotional resources. Chantelle furthermore encouraged them utilise their inner spiritual powers or grace to break down their internal resistance, safely touch their deepest pains, voice them, and enhance resilience and transformation. Chantelle implies that it is after clients explore their resistance that therapy commences. She said, "*It seems like they have dropped all that and the story begins to come out*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle stated that she would refer clients with psychiatric problems to engage with specialists in the field. Nevertheless, she creates the necessary conditions for clients to reflect on their lives and presentations to facilitate their healing and transformation, saying that she offers clients "*a safe place for those people to explore what is happening for them and the focus is on them and not me*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). From this safe place, I believe Chantelle re-invites clients to revisit their lives and voice their stories and past no matter how painful and therapeutically understand how they impact their overall well-being without them feeling the need to escape. Chantelle, therefore, brings her clients "*back into the situation so they can begin to unpack their whole life situation that is happening to them and stay with that experience*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle did not appear to minimise how frightening it was for clients to explore hidden or buried parts of their lives. Still, she suggested that clients either get in touch with their God or a Higher Power or courageously critically examine their lives and analyse their circumstances in a safe and secure therapeutic

environment. I felt that Chantelle implied that clients possibly gain new spiritually induced insights or perspectives that not only restore their relationship with the transcendent or numinous but inner peace, comfort, and a sense of transforming wholeness. Chantelle explained that,

they [clients] may move down to the non-thematic or the isness or what is really happening. They might have a shift in themselves. And as they stay further into that they move to a deeper place where we call the mystery. We would call God, but some other people might say a life energy, life force or life grace. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

It appeared to me that Chantelle stated that when her clients had entered the doors leading into the “*deeper place*” and had an experience of God or the numinous, they were confronted with a “*new way of being*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Perhaps for Chantelle, this new way of being means that clients possibly experience the grace, power of God or a Higher Being to transcend their situations. Correspondingly, clients are empowered spiritually to critically self-reflect and critically think or discern and experience a transformation of attitudes, perspectives and responses to their circumstances. I feel Chantelle helps clients move away from over-spiritualisation or rationalisation to recognising that transformation needs to impact their lives visibly and positively. I agree with Chantelle, and I, too, try and get my clients to move from ‘head to heart’ as I believe that in spiritual transformation, the heart of God talks to the soul of humans and brings about holistic transformation or lasting change. Chantelle said that some clients “*may go off into their conceptual, up into their head one might say*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Consequently, in Chantelle’s opinion, her dejected clients needed to touch or remain with their experience, even if they were in a dark place, sad, despairing, and depressed. Perhaps they feel, as Chantelle saw it, that their lives cannot change for the better, or they cannot imagine how they have fallen into a vast hole they cannot escape. I feel that Chantelle may mean that her clients are caught up in feelings of shame, remorse, and guilt that they have suppressed, repressed, or numbed or blunted their traumatic memories. Chantelle said that perhaps “*[clients] feel, see that life isn’t worth living the way I had hoped it would*” as they confront the “*the unlived or unexperienced part of themselves*” (Chantelle, personal

communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle realised that some of her clients caught up with the 'busy-ness' of their lives to protect their psyche, cope with their life stressors, or disengage with their inner selves, especially their traumas. Perhaps clients lacked time to investigate the buried or "*shelved*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019) parts of their lives or were unconsciously afraid that they would dig up too much within and remain psychologically stuck, unable to face their demons and grow as persons. I also felt that probably some of Chantelle's clients could not and were afraid to connect with this more profound side of their humanity and the numinous, "the sacred, the holy" residing within as this would entail personal transformation (Tatman, 2011, p. 17).

As I listened to Chantelle, I could not help but think of the words of Saint Augustine, who said, "For You have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless until it reposes in You" (Augustine of Hippo et al. 1962, p. 5). Furthermore, Chantelle metaphorically stated that the divine is an inescapable reality of our lives but is conceivably shrouded, concealed, or denied, as clients are preoccupied with life and prioritise their material or social standing or wellbeing more than God or spirituality. Chantelle said, "*it is like a diamond there, but it is covered with moss*" (personal communication, May 30, 2019). As I listened to Chantelle, I recalled some of my most intimate experiences in psychotherapy. I reluctantly began exploring uncharted parts of my being that I had strenuously avoided, and I was morbidly afraid of discovering my authentic self. Ironically, my psychotherapist used a similar analogy to that Chantelle used in the interview: of the moss-covered diamond lying dormant within me. The diamond is a metaphor for my true self, immersed in the love of God. The moss symbolises my struggles in life that deplete, de-energise, embitter, or clutter my soul and prevent me from operating out of a love-centre or moral centre wherein God resides. Reflecting on the sadness and grieving of leaving the nunnery, Chantelle recognised that she had to face the death of that aspect of her life and believe in her darkness that God was still within her as an empowering presence. She said, "*I suppose I have had to journey on my own, too*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Her psychotherapist enabled her to rediscover the 'diamond.' Hence, empowered and transformed by God, she hoped to pass this learning on to her clients.

SECTION 3

Theoretical underpinnings

The theoretical foundation for this psychospiritual approach has its genesis in the interpretation of Karl Rahner's writing, "Experience of Self and Experience of God" (1983), suggesting two levels of engagement when journeying with people: a journey from the experience of self through to the experience of mystery sometimes called God (Keegan, 1995; Mostyn, 1996; Shea, 1985; Wirth, 2004). I use the word theoretical, not in its classical sense, but instead as suggestive of life frameworks broadly divided into three levels – the conceptual, reflective, and non-thematic.

The conceptual level

For Chantelle, the beginning is the human person as an integral part of a social web that shapes and exerts influence over them and therefore, the conceptual consists of "*the concrete human experience of a person*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). For example, Chantelle illustrated how she approaches a Christian client who views the Bible as the only voice of authority as opposed, by implication, to Catholics who revere the Bible but also defer to the power of the Pope and the Church's teachings and traditions. Chantelle remarked that for Christian clients for whom the Bible is central to their lives, it will be the starting point of her therapeutic approach, but she challenges them to examine how the Bible applies contextually to their lives and experiences. In a sense, Chantelle engages them in reflecting on their assumptions and meaning processes and seeing the co-relationship between scripture and their concrete existences. I sensed that Chantelle had an acute awareness that behind the face of her client, there was a story that needed to be voiced and understood holistically, considering the influences on their lives. In summary, Chantelle explained that the conceptual encompassed her clientele's lived experiences and that it plays out in four domains of their lives' frameworks. She said:

If a person comes from an evangelical background, their framework is a Biblical framework. So, I would be very conscious of that. I would let them be in their Biblical framework, but I would help them to unearth that, what that means in their daily life, like what's happened. So, I have three areas or four, really, and for which my template

is helping me do that. So, I would help them because that would be their conceptual framework from where they come. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

In the following sections, I further elaborate on the four areas of Chantelle's therapy – the interpersonal, intrapersonal, structural, or socio-cultural and environmental.

The four components of the conceptual

Chantelle elaborated that the conceptual, or 'whatness,' has four components. The first, the interpersonal, refers to the realm of friendships or relationships, and Chantelle said that it is much *"like going for a cup of tea and having a chat with a friend"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). The second is intrapersonal, and Chantelle stated that it describes a person's relationship to their inner self and spiritual core. Moreover, it alludes to a person's inner life or dynamics, which, as Chantelle describes, is *"what is happening inside of me"* and is the *"relational aspect of it"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Additionally, Chantelle described that the third component describes persons as part of society. She said, *"The social construct, well, in a sense we are in a social constructive moment, you know. Because it is a prescribed place have a role and, like the intrapersonal, a structured role"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). The fourth is the environment or ecosystem within which a person exists and is impacted by and connected. Chantelle stated, for example, *"We are in a video conference. It is like the natural, the created or the natural stuff that is happening there"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Having outlined the four components of 'whatness', Chantelle explained that these components are inherent to human nature at conscious or unconscious levels. Still, I sensed that she was stating that one aspect might be predominant at any given point in time. Chantelle noted that while the domains were separate, they had a connection. She said, *"So these are all the person comes with. All those things but then they only operate out of one at a time. But they are all operating within the person, but they may be very unaware of that"* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle then proceeded to explore the second level of her theoretical underpinnings – the reflexive.

The reflexive level

The reflexive stage “includes those events, situations and movements that break the conceptual flow and make us stop, look and listen” (Truscott, 2021, p. 85). Perhaps when Chantelle was referring to the reflexive level, she alludes to disruptive occurrences such as serious illness, abuse, marital breakup, professional set back or loss of a job that compel her clients to pause, ponder and pay attention to what is transpiring in their lives and recognise the destructive power of trauma in their lives. She gave the example of a client who experienced significant traumas and disruptive changes in her life, saying, “*She has been very badly damaged, and she is only just beginning to get into the reflexive area, and when she gets in there, she moves out*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle explained that her role is to empathetically empower clients to face their realities no matter how traumatic or painful, as Chantelle said earlier that the truth would liberate them. For Chantelle, the challenge was in “*bringing and helping them to enter into the process of what’s happening*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). I sensed that Chantelle was under no illusion about what it personally cost clients to revisit traumas and reopen old wounds, suppressed, repressed, or blocked out memories. Perhaps many of her clients broke down and had to pick up the broken fragments of their lives. Speaking of a particular client, Chantelle admitted, “*It’s so painful for her*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

I sensed that Chantelle was conscious of the enormity of the situation and her responsibility to nurture her clients through a challenging self-discovery process as they confront the rawness of their wounded selves. Perhaps Chantelle recognises that she needs to be that safe and secure attachment figure as a therapist as her clients navigate their tragic pasts or processed traumatic memories. No matter how challenging, Chantelle emphasised that her clients needed to move from the conceptual to the reflective stage, saying, “*my role is to bring them back into the situation so they can begin to unpack their whole life situation that is happening to them. And as they stay with that experience*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle clarified that she continues to gently probe and ask clients to reflect on their experiences and uncover inner realities or truths even as she listened empathetically, actively, and attentively. I sensed Chantelle was saying that clients need nudging, and all it takes is repeating a word, mirroring what a client says or simply paraphrasing, and these techniques act like levers that pry open a client:

Has something like this happened to you before? Just one little...They are little triggers. They are like little levers that help them to unearth something. It's not like sitting there like a statue. It's like being attuned to what is happening. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

It appears that Chantelle attentively listens to clients and thereby helps them to access their emotional memories like “interior movements individuals may experience within the concrete experience they may share” (Truscott, 2021, p. 85). Moreover, Chantelle helps them voice their stories and remain with their experience. Chantelle felt that her clients needed to be conscious of their ruptured lives and see these disruptive moments as opportunities to pause, observe and listen to their deepest selves. I sensed that Chantelle viewed spiritual accompanying as a calling that invites her to be attuned to the 'diamond' and centred in the present. Furthermore, it allows her to draw deeply from her inner spiritual well and be energised by the love of God to face life with a spirit of gratitude and oneness. Lastly, spiritual accompaniment opens her eyes to how grace or the gift of God's unconditional love, operates and transforms her continually from within and helps her make sense of her experiences. Chantelle implied that she recognised that God's grace or love is freely given and available to all and that her clients also have this power within them. In retrospect, Chantelle admitted that she has had a massive life and is schooled in suffering. Likewise, in her brokenness or the darkest moments of her existence, she entered the innermost dimension of her life wherein the divine resided, empowered by the power of love, and experienced holistic transformation. Chantelle brings her experiences into therapy and admitted that she does not operate out of an experiential vacuum and can empathise with clients because she has been testing; therefore, she brings the richness of her experiences to help clients experience transformation. She said, *“I mean, that's the gift that they have been given, but it's also the gift I know that I can give to others because I know I have been on that journey. It's like walking the walk”* (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Having explored the reflexive level, Chantelle finally turned her attention to the non-thematic level.

The non-thematic level

Chantelle explained that her role is to enable clients to make an inner journey, engage with their most profound and innermost selves and life, and connect with and touch the divine within. I feel that Chantelle is perhaps explaining that clients need to move from the external

to the internal, from head to heart, and from the non-essential to what is real and meaningful. Chantelle said she helps clients to “*move down to the non-thematic or the isness or what is really happening*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). I agree with Chantelle. From personal experience, I sense that Chantelle feels that when clients move into the ‘divine centre’ of their beings, they begin to have a change of heart and perspective and draw meaning and new insights. Moreover, they can separate what is essential and what is passing or non-essential to happiness in life. She admits clients “*may need to go into the non-thematic. They might have a shift in themselves*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Chantelle explained we refer to the non-thematic as God. However, she moves beyond to embrace her clients' experiences of the divine and their spiritual experiences of the numinous say, “*but some other people might say it is a life energy, life force or life grace*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

I feel that when Chantelle uses the term synchronicity, she alludes that God is indescribable, ineffable, mysterious, and unquantifiable. Hence, Chantelle implies that any categorisation of the divine is a projection of the human mind, and no one term can confidently qualify what the transpersonal means. Maybe the term recognises Chantelle’s more inclusive appreciation and understanding of spirituality. Chantelle emphasised that she preferred the term “*synchronicity*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). According to Cambray (2009), synchronicity is a term that, in the Orient, refers to the reliability of coincidences to reflect our world experiences. At the same time, the West used the term “*causality*” to understand the cause and effects of occurrences.

What I found intriguing was that Chantelle took the initiative to correct this interview section. She struck out the term “*non-thematic*” and replaced it with “*soulfulness*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). I was bewildered and wondered if Chantelle seemed to recognise her potential spiritual bias; or was the term “*non-thematic*” an indication her clients were living in a highly secularised environment or perhaps disenchanted with their religious heritage? Maybe Chantelle felt that the non-thematic did not capture what ordinary people think about it. Chantelle explained that she discovered that seniors seemed to quickly embrace the transpersonal, possibly because of the wisdom of years and the ability to grasp the essence of life as they prepare to enter into the shadows of their lives. She said, “*people in their 60s come to that isness phase of soulfulness very quickly*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). It seemed to Chantelle that the non-thematic undergirds her

clientele's human experiences that they had possibly not accessed because they had a buffered sense of self that was less enchanted by God or the transcendent (Truscott, 2021). Chantelle said that many of her senior clients had embraced secularism and pushed spirituality onto the peripheries of their lives. Maybe while younger, these clients focused on real-life issues, whether professional or personal and were too busy to have the time to self-reflect on their ultimate values in life. Moreover, they were educated and had minds of their own. Nonetheless, in some sense, these individuals were poorer because they had disconnected themselves from their inner spirit and former faith communities and supportive friendships. I feel that Chantelle means that they had lost the sense of meaning or anchorage that their spirituality or faith had given them. Perhaps secularism had not filled that gap left by disconnecting from their former faith affiliations, particularly answers about ultimate values or even life after death. At an existential level, I sensed that Chantelle was stating that ageing brings a certain sense of foreboding, existential emptiness, and feelings of loneliness. I feel that when clients reflect on their lives, they might wonder why they spent so much energy on things that do not matter in the ultimate analysis. Perhaps her clients are retired or alone, and their achievements seem to amount to nothing as they stare into the future, leaving them feeling despondent. She says, "*They come with autonomy, and they come with the sense of self. But there is a sense of lostness in the self. I think that's what happens for them*". She further explains that "*they are in a tradition no longer*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Chantelle explained in detail how clients could not dismiss the non-thematic as they pondered about the deeper meaning of life,

they have their occupation, they have their vocation, they have their studies, of their marriage they get on, and their energies are put into that. Now it's like these things are beginning to fall off the shelf, and I can't avoid them. They haven't been away. They are lying inside them dormant. And I don't see that as a, as I might have said last time, depressed. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Chantelle seemed to indicate that the entry into the non-thematic was concurrent with a person's "*faith development*" phase in life (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). I wondered whether Chantelle implied that spirituality is something that seniors or over 60s are naturally prone to engage with because of their collective experiences of life and

their ability to understand life better due to their lived experiences. I view faith development as an adaptive process of maturation that is a product of an individual's capacity to discern or reflect on lived experiences and incorporate life-giving insights into an evolving identity that culminates in authentic spiritual and personal transformation. According to Dowling and Scarlett (2006, p. xxiii), faith development is linked to an individual's identity formation about their perceptions of God or the transcendent over a life span.

In response to my clarification on whether the shift from the reflexive to the non-thematic state results from lived experiences or autonomy, Chantelle referred to it as standing "*in that truth*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Perhaps Chantelle was pointing to her clients' conclusions, convictions, or perceptions of what constitutes the truth for them and not the 'truth' that was imposed on them by others and even religion. Furthermore, I feel that Chantelle linked autonomy to identity formation, and therefore, while such individuals are affiliated or belong to the Church, they are not subservient to it. Moreover, based on their lived experiences, education, and the prevailing climate of secularism, these individuals are critical of traditional expressions of faith, and they now feel empty or devoid of meaning which is probably unlike when they were in a religion or spiritual tradition. I wondered whether her clientele's "*lostness*" was a tacit admission of a sense of alienation from the non-thematic God or the Church as "*they are no longer satisfied*" with their childhood faith tradition that "*they were brought up with*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Perhaps, Chantelle meant that some of her clientele, who had earlier blindly or unquestioningly accepted the Church's teachings or dogmas, now found them to be meaningless, irrelevant, archaic, and backward. Perhaps as Chantelle's clients aged, they did not experience fullness or flourishing within their framework of the non-thematic and, in some sense, felt disconnected from and existentially discontented with the faith they were born into (Truscott, 2021). I sense Chantelle was expressing what is typically left unsaid. Perhaps her clients have not been able to replace the sense of connection to God or spiritual bonding to a living faith community in a secular world. Furthermore, Chantelle possibly alluded to the guilt of clients who have 'abandoned' or 'rejected' their Christian or spiritual heritage still grieving for it, especially as they continue to yearn for it at this stage in their lives unconsciously. Chantelle said, "*[They have] moved beyond that and they have also not really found anything to replace them, but the guilt of not being faithful to that tradition haunts them*" (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

I resonate with what Chantelle said. I know many Christians who have moved away from the Church only to fall into existential despair, experience meaninglessness, and realise that what they are searching for does not offer them inner fulfilment. These individuals are racked by guilt, as their identities were linked to the Church, and they have not only left a Church but grieve the death of their childhood faith, friendships formed in faith, and memories associated with them. Long after these Christians have left the Church, they feel devoid of spiritual sustenance, a lack of belonging to a faith community, with no spirituality to fall back and they wonder if they have betrayed the Church. While I respect people's choices, I have experienced these individuals whose identity formation was linked to the Church as disintegrated or fragmented at a spiritual level because they do not have a faith affiliation or practice a spirituality. Consequently, there is little to hold their inner lives together, to offer them meaning and hope in the face of life's challenges or to fill the emptiness of their lives.

Chantelle helps clients process their guilt by offering them religious and spiritual educational resources that perhaps address their faith struggles, queries, and yearning for spiritual nourishment or upliftment. I sensed that Chantelle was attuned to her clients' spiritual emergencies and circumstances and was careful about the resources she offered her clients. Chantelle seemingly permitted them to remain with their experiences, no matter how painful. She helped them reflect on their fragilities or encumbrances without imposing herself on them or even directing them. Instead, Chantelle invited them to move to a deeper place within themselves, help them notice their inner lives, and touch and embrace the spirit within. She said:

I will give them maybe some input, in the sense of not telling them what to do, but perhaps you might find this article helpful, you know. But I will only give that if it is related to what the struggle is only after they have explored it. I wouldn't say that you might find the answer if you read this. There is no way I would do that. (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Chantelle explained that she does not judge clients because of their past or actions but recognises the intrinsic value and worth of the human person. I sensed that Chantelle helps her clients learn to discover, befriend, and love their authentic selves without judgement. Furthermore, she enables them to connect with their spiritual core and moral centre and accept their fragilities and vulnerabilities as humans as they voice their stories and experience

transformation. For Chantelle, if clients courageously encounter their true selves with an attitude of love and forgiveness and understand that the transpersonal is a part of that experience, they begin to unpack hidden, suppressed, and repressed aspects of their lives. Consequently, in touching their woundedness, clients are empowered by the non-thematic or God to experience inner healing and transformation. Chantelle said, “*the person in front of me, they come, they have goodness, irrespective of how bad they are they have goodness, and it’s, it’s only eh by being faithful to that can a person begin to unearth that*” (Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

Moreover, Chantelle did not hide how painful this encounter with the non-thematic is and its transforming consequences for the client at every level of their being because it is life-altering and touches every dimension of a client's existence. I feel that Chantelle perhaps believes that growth and transformation cannot be divorced from life, especially the confronting, hurtful and traumatising challenges of life. Perhaps Chantelle feels that transformation is not an intellectual pursuit or merely a product of self-reflection and critical thinking and even a result of a spiritual experience. Hence, there are no shortcuts to transformation. Clients need to understand and accept their sufferings if they want to heal, or experience hurt as an opportunity for life-changing growth. On deeper reflection, I realised that Chantelle believed that the path to transformation was accepting suffering and that her role in this process was purely supportive. I feel that Chantelle is saying that for clients to transform, they need to know that the therapist accepts them unconditionally and is not invested in changing them but sees transformation as a choice that clients make. I feel that Chantelle realised that, for clients, a non-judgemental attitude was a vital part of not only self-discovery but personal transformation. On a spiritual level, I sensed Chantelle alluded to the dying and rising motif in Christian spirituality that refers to the paschal mystery, Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection and ‘their saving significance’ for humanity (Harrington, 2006). She explained,

I believe that the journey is that you have to go through the pain in order to go to the other end. You can go around. You can skip around it, but it’s like you need to go through it to come out of it. To come out the other end. It’s through the pain that transformation takes place. And that’s very, very, very painful. You need support in that. Not so much support that people would people would be there for you and not trying to change you. But that they will let you. They are comfortable with the

discoveries that you are finding without judgement. I think that is important.
(Chantelle, personal communication, May 30, 2019)

Conclusion

In summary, I presented a glimpse of Chantelle's life as an erstwhile nun and a therapist who spiritually attends to her clients to attain transformation via a triple process: conceptual, reflective, and non-thematic. I touched on Chantelle's image of touching pain and the analogy of the diamond to depict a person's spiritual essence and place of encounter with the divine. I clarified that Chantelle's usage of the phrase "contemplative listening" and stance pointed to a method of uncovering truths of the Self and recognising the divine. Lastly, I described Chantelle's therapeutic approach that focused on her clients' lives and how she aided them in reflecting on the disruptors of their lives and experiencing transformation by encountering the divine within. In the following chapter, I will describe my encounter with Jason and his psychospiritual approach that aims to foster transformative learning and enhanced resiliency.

CHAPTER SIX: Case Study 3: Jason

Purpose and structure

In this case study, I examine how Jason's psychotherapy practice was akin to transformative learning. I have three main sections. The first examines Jason's background and his professional life as a therapist. In addition, I explore how Jason's psychotherapy is an extension of his former priestly work, and his thoughts and attitudes toward his role as a therapist. The second section mainly focuses on Jason's journey with his clients, his aspiration to transform his clients using a systemic approach holistically, and his belief that the ultimate choice of healing and transformation was the clients'. Lastly, in section three, I examine Intensive Short-term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTPD) as Jason's foundational approach to therapy that aims to enhance resilience and client transformation.

SECTION 1

Background

Jason said he was an ex-priest. I was shocked that Jason had left the priesthood, and I shuddered to think about what he may have gone through after leaving the priesthood. From anecdotal experiences of ex-priests, the Church abandons or cuts off most, as their decision to leave the priesthood is considered an act of betrayal to their priestly brotherhood and a repudiation of their vows to God. Jason's regional leader was an exceptionally compassionate human and gave him twenty-five thousand dollars to start life again. He probably sensed that Jason would not have materially succeeded in life if he had not reached out to him. I can say that Jason's mannerisms were priestly, and his priestly formation as a missionary priest would have been good. Jason explained that he had a crisis of faith which demanded that he reconsider the direction of his life. He clarified that after five years working in a parish, he went to study and prepare for a career in teaching.

When I met Jason for the second time to clarify data from our semi-structured interview, he mentioned when he left the priesthood as he struggled to reinvent himself. Jason said, *"I took twenty years to establish a flourishing practice specialising in body-oriented psychotherapy, couples, family, and narrative therapy"* (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Jason mentioned that he does clinical supervision, and his clientele include disadvantaged youth with complex trauma. In psychotherapy, Jason deals with various presentations such as gender issues, identity confusion, sexuality orientations, addictions, and substance abuse. Additionally, it includes concerns such as anxiety, defiant behaviour, borderline personality disorder, and depression. Jason's therapeutic practice includes existential problems, family, parenting, personality disorders, phobias, psychosomatic issues, PTSD, spirituality, and trauma recovery.

Apart from his Masters Degree in Arts, Jason has an Advanced Diploma in Systemic Therapy and core training in Intensive Short-term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP)/Advanced ISTDP Therapy. Systemic Theory is a psychotherapeutic modality that is interactional and a way of judging relationships (Dallos, 2015, p. 148). I will discuss ISTDP in the third section of this case study. Nevertheless, this leads me to how Jason came about to become a psychotherapist.

Jason as a therapist

Jason, a former priest psychotherapist and spiritual director

After leaving the priesthood, Jason qualified himself to become a psychotherapist to carry on his former priestly work of healing individuals and to be an instrument of change as a lay person. Jason said to me that one day, long after he had left priesthood, his former priestly community leader dropped by his office and asked Jason if he could be a spiritual director. Jason acquiesced and committed to becoming a spiritual director. Jason clarified that it was *less an act of obedience than more humbled that I was deemed safe and appropriate to provide supervision to priests struggling in ministry. It was also an opportunity to give back to a religious community that had been kind to me*" (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Nevertheless, I kept saying to myself, 'once a priest always a priest' as priesthood is a sacrament. Priesthood, as a sacrament, is not purely a cultic or religious profession but the choice to live life the way Christ lived and that one does not stop being a priest because one does not function as one (O'Collins & Jones, 2010, p. 269; Weinert, 2000, p. 1)). However, Jason seemed reconciled to the renunciation of his former priestly identity and accepted his new identity as a psychotherapist. Jason said, "I couldn't say 'no' to him even though I wasn't

a priest any longer but a psychotherapist" (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). Symington (1997, p. 3) defines psychotherapy as "healing of the soul". Therefore, when Jason called himself a 'psychotherapist', he was not only affirming his new identity or path in life but acknowledging that psychotherapy was a profession that compensated for the meaning and purpose that he felt priesthood had offered him.

Psychotherapy akin to former priestly work

I sensed that Jason had admitted that his underlying values and beliefs were rooted in his erstwhile priesthood and that he had discerned and arrived at an educated decision to live out his healing work as a former priest as a psychotherapist. Maybe, psychotherapy had its roots in ancient spirituality, much like his experiences of priestly life. Moreover, psychotherapy was within his comfort zone and his competencies. Perhaps psychotherapy was an unconscious way of reliving his 'lost' priesthood. According to Symington (1997), in ancient times, wise personalities would offer individuals in spiritual distress a new way of seeing a situation and arriving at an informed decision about the direction their lives required them to take. Of Jason's priesthood, I recalled feeling that psychotherapy seemingly gave him purpose, meaning in life, and personal identity, which is "an ultimate unanalysable fact" (Noonan, 2003, p. 93). Jason's subsequent statement captures this thought well and, in a confessional tone, said,

I had been a priest as well, temporally, and it is really important for me to do meaningful work. I can't be a bank teller. I am not cut out for that kind of finance work. So, when I left the priesthood, I sat there for some time. I determined I would do something that was as close as possible to the vocation of priesthood, and I thought doing psychotherapy was the closest I could come to having a meaningful vocation. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Jason did not see psychotherapy as a profession but as a vocation and ministry. These two terms are Christian expressions that connote God's invitation or call to a person to carry out a particular task in life, and a corresponding affirmative response to God's will by the individual. Jason's lived experiences, priestly academic formation, and lastly, his specialisation in Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy are core to his practice of psychotherapy, which he refers to as his "*ministry of healing*" (Jason, personal

communication, March 22, 2019). Jason felt that ISTDP *"is very priestly in that sense"* (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019) as it appears to embody healing that fosters emotional healing and character change and an experience of God's healing love. Jason then spoke of healing as primarily emotional and that the focus of therapy should be experientially helping clients process their feelings.

Jason makes a connection between love and trauma. Jason said, *"We are born into love, for whatever reason because of trauma, we forget to love, and we become incapable of loving"* (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). The etymology of trauma is the Greek for "penetration", and "wounding" (Renn, 2012, p. 19). I consider that trauma is insidious, from personal experience, and pervasively wounds or injures an individual's psyche and impoverishes the person's ability to be self-directing, relationally connected, and have a purpose or meaning in life (Renn, 2012). To me, Jason implied that traumatised persons are terrified to love and reject others while meaning to protect themselves from further abuse. Jason, asserted that the harmful consequences of trauma were especially true of clients who came from a background of *"abuse"* (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). In the case of abuse, I felt that Jason thought that trauma was soul-destroying and yet acknowledged that recovery was possible in a safe therapeutic relationship that is not exploitative nor manipulative, unlike the adult who, when the individual as a child depended on them for safety, instead inflicted harm (Etherington, 2003). Hence the need for therapy to experience the liberating power of personal transformation. While Jason focused on emotions and the spiritual roots of psychotherapy, he regarded his practice as psychological work.

Psychological work and the world of spirituality

Jason described his work as psychological, a journey into a person's mind. Jason did not deny that the innermost mind was the world of spirituality or a place to encounter the divine. He said, *"When you do deep psychological work as I do, you go to the very essence of your clients. Their innermost thoughts, their inner world, and you know that is obviously the world of spirituality"* (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). I sensed that for Jason, journeying into the human mind, which is like an underground labyrinth, is complex and that human behaviour, especially emotional responses, offers a way to travel into the inner mind and engage with a person's spiritual world. To me, Jason explained that the human mind as being unconscious and generally inaccessible to others because of defence mechanisms such

as repression, suppression, blocking or denial of memories to protect the mind. However, Jason collaboratively journeys into his clients' minds and helps them encounter the divine within. Nevertheless, Jason acknowledged that psychology is the study of human behaviour or "the science of the mind" that denies or is suspicious of metaphysical realities (Martin et al., 2013, p. 5).

When I asked Jason if he considered his practice psychospiritual, I was a bit taken aback by his answer. He said, "*I don't know whether I would agree to describe my work as psychospiritual*" (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). I view psychospiritual counselling as a formative therapeutic modality that incorporates the insights of science to foster self-transcendence and self-transformation, wherein God is at the heart of this phenomenon (Roth, 2018). Upon further reflection, I sensed that Jason equates the inner mind with the conscious, and the subconscious dimensions of an individual's subjective experiences with spirituality (Doctor & Lucas, 2009). At deeper levels, I feel that for Jason, spirituality is not a transcendent reality but synonymous with the true nature of a person. He said, "*I'm doing psychological work. When you do deep psychological work as I do, you go to the very essence of your clients. Their innermost thoughts, their inner world, and you know that is obviously the world of spirituality*" (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Therapist self-care

As part of self-care, Jason said that a therapist must be grounded, and genuine or authentic, especially if his clients have chronic mental health presentations as they could trigger a lot within him. Aware of the risks of his unresolved issues or personal struggles resurfacing in therapy, Jason spoke of how he models self-regulation or adaptive behaviours to stress (Baldwin, 2013, p. 23). He implied that it is unfair of him to demand character change from clients if he lacks integrity about his struggles and efforts to process his unfinished business and manage his vulnerabilities. As I see it, Jason appeared to imply that congruence creates trust while acknowledging that working through his attachment styles or issues is not easy and could potentially lead to burnout. Burnout is an all-inclusive term representing an individual's feelings of emotional depletion, cynical attitudes towards clients, a lack of motivation, sadness, and disappointment at the lack of resources that could become chronic if unattended to (Gengoux, 2020, p. 69). He said:

The more unwell they are, the more solid you need to be. It is very demanding in a sense because you are setting high ambitions for clients, and you need to be able to see that what you are asking from your clients is congruent to your own experiences. You're not asking them what you can't do yourself, or you haven't done yourself in life. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

In short, Jason realised the insidious nature of burnout and the significance of countertransference. Jason was aware of countertransference and how his clients impacted him psychologically and brought up feelings, friendships, or memories towards clients that stem from his past. Countertransference is the actual or fictitious feelings, comradeship, or memories that a therapist has for clients whose origins arise from an individual's relational history transmitted to clients (Donavan et al., 2016, p. 54). In addition, Jason admitted to the subconscious possibility of burdening clients with his struggles and so does all within his power to address the matter professionally under supervision. Therefore, Jason felt that engaging in personal therapy is vital if he is to be an effective therapist concerned about his client's wellbeing. In psychoanalysis and psychodynamics, supervision is an activity in which the supervisor, therapist, and supervisee systematically think or scrutinise a client-therapist alliance and its unfolding adverse dynamics (Driver et al., 2002, p. 71). He said:

Clients' experiences are going to stir up, and if you haven't done your therapy, if you haven't looked after yourself, you are going to have major countertransference that can have negative impacts on the therapy, for sure. You need to be able to find ways to look after yourself. After acknowledging the risks of countertransference and the need for self-care. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Approaches to therapy

Creating opportunities to explore the inner mind

Jason clarified that his approach to therapy offered his clients opportunities to explore their inner minds freely and experience the raw power of their emotions. Nevertheless, Jason respected his clients' autonomy and prerogatives to determine their future directions and what was best for them therapeutically. He said, *"My work is not educating, my work is giving them an experience, and to get them to see choices"* (Jason, personal communication, March 22,

2019). I perceived that Jason probably did not dismiss the role of modelling behaviour but inferred that clients consciously need to touch and process their unpleasant emotions because, in doing so, they not only connect to past traumatic experiences but experience healing (Gengoux, 2020). However, the onus was on them, even if clients rejected his therapeutic interventions despite his better efforts. Jason felt that he needed to respect and accept where his clients were at within themselves, resisting the temptation to see himself as an all-powerful therapist who rescues his clients, saying, *"Well they derive the kind of knowledge or skills, but that wouldn't be my primary input. Because then you are coming from an omnipotent therapist state, which I try to avoid"* (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Moreover, Jason indicated therapy as a mutuality that entailed genuinely acknowledging his professional mastery or competencies whilst trusting his client's aspirations to undergo healing. Jason was mindful that his clients were in the best position to know themselves as all he knew about a client depended on his interactions and interpretations of clients. Therefore, Jason concluded that he could not be sure that he was an authority on clients' behavioural presentations, as healing and transformation require 'two to tango.' Jason stated that recovery requires the client and therapist to collaborate and join forces to allow for lasting healing and transformation by unlocking the unconscious mind. Additionally, Jason felt that the client needed to acknowledge intrapsychic and external factors that promote self-sabotaging behaviour (Osimo & Stein, 2012). He said:

I'd like it to be a partnership. They are an expert in their lives, and I have the expertise, and together we can understand the problems that they are facing. But it is about encouraging them to work at their best with their own expertise, which will be their feelings and their lives, and I have to put my expertise as a therapist in terms of my understanding of the human mind or patterns. The meeting of those two creates the conditions necessary for human transition to occur. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Jason not only realised that self-care was imperative, but he was also aware of the need to collaborate therapeutically with his clients.

SECTION 2

Journey with clients

Client choices

Jason acknowledged that his clients were autonomous adults, answerable to themselves and responsible for their destiny or future directions as “*agents of freedom, of their own freedom*” (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). In the same breath, Jason affirmed that clients have the power or can be empowered to realise their true potential if they choose to do so without coercion. To me, Jason stated that the role of a therapist is fundamentally to create the conditions wherein the clients are encouraged and challenged to choose “new ways of being”, but a client’s freedom needs to be respected if they decide otherwise (Corey, 2019, p. 21). He said:

I try to get them to work as hard as they can, to the level that they can work. I always see them as people with capacity rather than people that kind of need help, so I am drawing from their capacity. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

During a member check, Jason clarified that not everyone could be helped by psychotherapy, although most benefited. Jason explained that there are two reasons. The first is that a person may not have the will to benefit from therapy, and the second is due to a person’s fragility. Furthermore, Jason said that those who experienced early abuse and neglect struggle not only to form trusting relationships but are also suspicious of therapeutic relationships, which are essential for change and healing to occur. He said:

So, everything I do here is about giving people a choice. I don't have this kind of omnipotent thing that I can heal everyone. Not everyone can heal. Some people are too far gone, but the ones that choose to engage in therapy can get the benefit of it, but it's their choice, but it is not imposed by the therapy. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

He admitted that his use of the expression “*too far gone*” was judgement and a wrong choice of words. Moreover, to me, Jason seemed to emphasise that his therapeutic relationships

empowered and educated clients of therapy's transformational benefits but acknowledged that in the ultimate analysis, healing is a personal choice (Corey, 2019).

Healing the disconnect between heart and mind

Jason suggested healing occurs when clients touch their pains rather than rationalise their issues, which is a form of escape, avoidance of their woundedness or a disconnect between the heart and the mind. Jason said, "*experience rather than knowledge or insight; it's about giving people an experience of therapy, like teaching*" (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). When Jason spoke of experience, he probably was referring to offering clients the therapeutic opportunity to become conscious of how they have unconsciously become victims of their self-sabotaging "Superego" (Osimo & Stein, p. 12).

Jason highlighted that his therapeutic focus was not on his clients' cognitions but on their inhibitions and dread of their hurtful feelings. Clients tend to barricade or suppress them, only to find that those feelings manifest as physical health issues or somatic symptom disorders. Somatic symptom disorders are conditions wherein clients' physical manifestations are non-biological (Dunphy et al., 2019, p. 1). Jason said that he "*focuses on emotions that are avoided, the idea being that when people defensively avoid emotions then they become unwell, they develop symptoms for which they come to therapy for help*" (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). Jason perhaps meant that his clients know that their ailments directly correlate to their health, so they seek therapy. Jason then clarified what he meant by saying, "*[their bodies are not] disassociated in the sense of psychosis but dissociated in that they detach from their emotions*" (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). From personal experiences of childhood complex trauma, I sensed that Jason did not deny that dissociation is a coping mechanism but that he was perhaps intrigued by how clients disconnect from traumatic memories, feelings, or self-identities as a form of self-preservation.

In ISDTP Jason encourages clients to explore their feelings to understand themselves better rather than repressing the painful memories associated with them. Maybe Jason is more interested in how clients articulate their feelings accurately and develop a deeper understanding of their emotions as they point to the direction their lives need to take. Jason clarified further that, working with a client's emotions in the here and now is central to his

therapy and therefore experiential. In ISDTP, repressed emotions snuff a personal's inner life as they prevent the acknowledgement of pain and healing (Della, 2004, p. 105). For Jason, the central aim of ISDTP is to help clients to experience their feelings and develop a coherent narrative of the self as perhaps clients grow up disowning their painful emotions rather than accepting them as a part of their lives. Davanloo (1990, as cited in Della, 2004, p. 122) explained that in ISDTP, the therapist challenges clients to break through the walls of resistance and bring repressed memories into consciousness. Jason considered emotions as navigational tools that helped him to access his clients' inner minds and allowed them to discover their authentic selves. I sensed that Jason was referring to "schema avoidance" (Rafaeli, 2010, p. 30) as a coping mechanism wherein individuals dissociate from their painful feelings or avoid people or situations that trigger them. According to Rafaeli (2010, p. 12), a schema is a "mental script", and dissociation or avoiding emotions is considered maladaptive because schemas refer to situations that no longer exist. Jason equates depression to dissociation. He explained:

I'm sad, and I say, 'Well how do you experience sadness?' They are not experiencing sadness. It is just a word. It is a concept. Or they might be crying, and I might say, 'Are you sad at the moment?' and they say, 'No I'm not sad.' I say, 'Okay, you are crying, but you're not sad. Would you be anxious then?' And so, there is a kind of education there, where you are teaching them about emotions, which is absolutely important because if you don't know emotions, you are going to be very confused because emotions are like your GPS in life, you know. They tell you where to go, and without that benefit, you'll be quite lost. Depression, for example, is avoidance of emotions. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Jason then spoke of his clients' inner minds and fostering healing of the whole person.

Achieving healing of the whole person

Jason created the conditions that empowered, motivated clients, so that they flourished and integrated mentally, physically, and spiritually. Jason's approach was "holistic" (Thornton & Sigma, 2013, p. 4), and he said, "*I'm interested in the healing of the whole person, so they can be who they're meant to be, succeeding in the various domains of their life*" (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). Jason clarified that when referring to the whole,

he meant “*the body, mind, spirit*” (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). I sensed that Jason collaboratively investigated factors with clients that affect their mental health and wellbeing and decided on the best strategy to overcome them and experience lasting character transformation (Thornton & Sigma, 2013).

Jason offered an example of seeing his clients' lives in their totality and not just focusing on what aspect of their lives, saying,

You might get the relationship fixed, for example, where the CEO is successful. Still, then it might come in their capacity for pleasure. So, there is no pleasure, there is no aliveness, they are miserable, they have a relationship, they are miserable or drinking, or taking drugs or whatever. So, it is looking at the person's totality: all different domains, saying whether they care about themselves, and care about other people, rather than being self-destructive, or they limit themselves, or cripple themselves. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Jason said he makes a “*mental assessment*” about different aspects of their lives seen as an organic whole. He inquired:

...about their relationships, employment, and capacity for pleasure, you know, might be productivity, their ability to be intimate with someone, make new friends, and develop new relationships. So, you can see it is not just one thing. It is the whole totality of the person that you're trying to heal. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

I feel that Jason was trying to communicate that a psychotherapist endeavouring to understand a client's self-destructive behaviour or conscious guilt cannot perceive the client as fragmented, segregated, separate or “compartments” (Bohm, 2002, p. 2). Jason stated that it is essential to view a client wholistically for lasting transformation to occur. According to Bohm (2020, p. 3), humans are “embodied beings”, and healing is not just about an aspect of an individual but the whole individual, including the spiritual. Jason expressed that therapy permits psychologically stuck clients to reconceptualise their thinking and gain transformative insights into their intrapsychic dynamics, undoing them and their journey towards wholeness, wellness, and positivity. By helping his clients assimilate their experiences of self and others, Jason endeavoured to effect holistic change in his clients. Jason clarified at a member

check, “*Psychotherapeutic exploration needs to be intrapsychic, then interpersonal and systemic. Intrapsychic is where the gold is*” (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Jason’s holistic approach seeks to repair or heal relational ruptures. Jason referred to the cohesive role of emotions that hold a person together and strengthen them to face adversity, or risk disintegrating. According to Greenberg (2006, p. 1), emotions are “fundamental to the construction of the self and is a key determinant of self-organization”. Jason elaborated, saying that he liked working with the whole person, and helping people,

connect to themselves and connect to another human being, resilience. Relief from symptoms, relationships, you know, start to look different. They are the kinds of emotions, as the organising principles. The hard work is in being able to kind of weave that into the dialogue and so help them have an experience of themselves and an experience of another person. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Client self-sabotaging behaviours

Jason attempted to understand the inner dynamics of his clients' behavioural patterns, especially client tendencies or choices to engage in self-sabotaging behaviours that either diminish them as persons or make them experience their lives as failures. Jason seemed to think that a client's deliberate choice to fail was because of an unconscious inability to forgive themselves or others, which embittered them and entrapped them in a cycle of self-inflicted hurt, self-deprecation, or failure. I feel that Jason was saying that unless clients explored their unresolved hurts, resentment or anger towards themselves or others, they will get caught up in a cycle of self-directed harm. I understand sabotaging behaviour as an individual's choice, possibly induced by stress or psychological distress, to ensure or justify any project's negligence, whether personal, interpersonal, or professional (Peel & Caltabiano, 2021). To me, Jason meant that that unconscious guilt induces self-punishment and causes untold suffering to the individual as an adult. Speaking of self-sabotage, Jason said,

And if it's not that, it's another domain in their life that is not working so well. So, it's about looking at all these different domains. One quite common psychological factor that I see is this kind of destructiveness or self-sabotage that people engage in, making sure that they don't succeed in life, you know. Their life is a complete disaster of stress

and so on, and that is because of unconscious guilt. So often, you know, what happens is that unless that capacity for self-destructiveness is resolved or undone, it will always pop up in different domains (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Moreover, Jason insinuated that the past will always affect their lives unless individuals process or work through this rage or “distorted” feelings (Segal, 2004, p. 8). I, a priest, and therapist, vividly remember individuals who were demented by the burdens of unconscious guilt that cast a shadow on their personal, professional, and spiritual lives. I often told clients who engaged in self-destructive and self-sabotaging behaviours, “Love and forgive yourself”, and almost instantaneously, they broke down in tears. I discovered that it was at that point that healing and transformation began. From my readings, unconscious guilt tears an individual apart mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually and that such a person possibly struggles to let go of traumatic memories of a loved one or an attachment figure for fear of losing that relationship and engaging in self-destructive behaviours (Davanloo, 1999; Jackson, 2003).

Jason believed this tendency for self-sabotage did not have one cause but rather a few; therefore, as a therapist, it was vital to recognise and address this. Jason said that in therapy, he pays careful attention to a client’s capacity for self-destructive behaviour and its causes. Jason tried to understand how self-destructive behaviour or unconscious guilt negatively impacts other aspects of a client's relational life, and its causes are complex and not limited to one incident or event or an element of a client's life. Davanloo (1990, as cited by Della, 2004, p. 21) asserts that it is critical for ISDTP therapists to comprehend the “metapsychology of the unconscious” and inquire about clients rather than speculate about a client’s demeanours. For Jason, such maladaptive behaviours are projected onto others in self-sabotaging behaviours. Jason added the following insight as a way of reclarifying what he mean by guilt. Jason explained that guilt, as a human emotion, urges us to seek forgiveness from those we hurt. Hence, we become better persons as a result. Jason further expressed that when guilt is avoided, it can become the most toxic, accounting prominently for cases of self-starvation, self-harm and suicide. Jason then said that the most common unconscious emotional conflict in many instances is unresolved guilt. Jason said, “*You are always looking for what we call 'the multi-headed hydra' of self-destructiveness or self-sabotage* (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

In Section 2, I discussed aspects of Jason's journey with clients. In the final section, I explore Jason's theoretical underpinnings in ISTDP and its role in enhancing client resilience as transformative learning.

SECTION 3

ISTDP as enhancing resilience as transformative learning

As a therapist, Jason practises Intensive Short-term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISDTP). Dr Habib Davanloo, a medical doctor and psychiatrist, developed Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP), an integrative therapeutic intervention geared towards rapid and tangible results and client transformation (Della, 2004). In a member check, Jason clarified that ISTDP, a metapsychology, is a condensed form of psychoanalysis designed to understand the emergence of psychopathologies and assist clients to overcome resistance by engaging with their conscious conflicts, feelings, and desires. Jason described it as a simultaneous process that is respectful of clients while challenging the defences that block their potential to transform. According to Della (2004, p. 22), defences are emotional, logical and relational processes that clients consciously utilise to thwart or disown feelings or beliefs that activate nervousness.

As a psychotherapist who transforms maladaptive emotions, Jason mentioned that ISTDP involves neuroscience and neurobiology (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). Furthermore, neuroscience, anchored in medicine, investigates the biological functions of the brain or the nervous system and the consequence of disease or traumas on an individual's cognitive and emotional wellbeing (Sehgal, 2015, p. 49). Studies in neuroscience reveal that our negative emotions affect the amygdala, whereas positive emotional experiences activate the prefrontal cortex or hippocampus (Blevins, 2013; Carr & Hass-Cohen, 2008, p. 53; Sehgal, 2015).

ISTDP aims at lasting transformation

In brief, ISTDP focuses on character change or lasting transformation. Jason affirmed that ISTDP intervention procedures are directed at rapid results to break barriers to resistance and promote character change and ongoing transformation (Della, 2004). I got the impression that Jason was dismissive of long-term therapy as it is costly. He concluded that conventional

psychoanalysis practice was protracted and ineffective, inadequately addressing "the complexity and intensity of human emotion and bring about the desired change" (Osimo & Stein, 2012, p. 12). He said:

The idea of the expectation of getting clients to commit to years and years is unrealistic. Most people don't have the luxury of time or money. So, this is packaged to get results much quicker, but still deriving from the insights of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapy but in a condensed form. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Jason disclosed that the length of his therapy was tailored and depended on his clients' mental health presentations. Therefore, those diagnosed with major clinical issues would naturally require more time. Likewise, Jason also recognised that clients exposed to complex trauma needed treatment for lengthier durations, saying,

People who have major trauma in their first year of life need more. But still, I mean we are working with personality disorders and so on. Some do better with this particular form of therapy, what would take three years, would take a year and a half two years because something about their approach can speed up therapy. Again, it depends on people's capacity. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Emotions and attachments are key to transformation

Jason was aware that emotions are organising principles of the self, but as an ISTDP therapist, they also signify a person's experiential or behavioural manifestations (Neborsky & Josette, 2012). Jason held that emotions and attachments are means or the gateways to discovering people's authentic selves, enhancing resilience and experiencing transformation. Everything else is secondary to this, and he implied that if clients fail to explore their feelings and attachment styles, they do a disservice to themselves. I felt that Jason supported his clients in understanding the power of feelings to be beneficial or self-detrimental. Furthermore, how clients understood their attachment styles aided them in confidently transforming self-destructive sentiments into healthier ones (Neborsky & Josette, 2012).

Additionally, Jason implied that an adult's emotional reactions and behaviours have their roots in early attachment styles. Moreover, Jason alluded to the centrality of attachment

theory. Jason said, *“I guess you know you’re helping people to connect to their inner world: to who they are. But it is through understanding emotions and attachment”* (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019). According to Eagle (2013, p. 145), early adverse experiences in the form of maladaptive representations and the continuation of earlier manners of relating as central elements of psychopathology.

Jason asserted that avoiding, fleeing, denying, repressing, or suppressing our feelings is a recipe for disaster as we potentially lose focus in life. He said that we need to be in harmony with our emotions rather than perceiving them as threats to our true selves as they are vital to our congruence as persons. I feel that Jason referred to emotions as signposts to authenticity, if only clients embraced their feelings as part of and not alien to themselves and owned and verbalised the attachment stories associated with them. Jason said, *“Emotions are really important: they help us navigate, you know, experiences, life, and we become more attuned, more in sync with our feelings. We become more authentic as human beings”* (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019)

Jason elaborated that many exciting research findings and therapeutic interventions acknowledge the power of emotions to heal somatic disorders and trigger personal transformation in clients. Moreover, therapists these days appear to recognise how the principles of the attachment theory are a catalyst for lifelong transformation in clients. Jason said:

[There is a lot of very interesting work] on the power of emotions for deep and lasting change: not only to resolve symptoms but character change. Deep character change. I think there is a lot of change going on. Also, Attachment Theory is utilised now in so many different ways. The insights are utilised to capitalise on transformation in people that come to therapy. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Jason was alluding to his therapeutic experiences and the realisation that people’s present relational issues can be traced back to their primary attachment figures in childhood. I sense he was, unfortunately, saying attachment issues are endemic or problematic, yet mostly unintentional, as even the best of parents are fallible human beings. I agree with Jason, who appeared to imply that an individual’s earliest relational memories with significant carers conceivably impact the person unconsciously in adulthood, with implications concerning

“self-organisation, self-agency, impulse control, and affect regulation” (Renn, 2012, p. 21). Jason had discovered that when he allowed his clients to voice their childhood stories and their pains, they heal, and as I say, they heal their roots, so they change. He said:

I think when you start enquiring about peoples' emotions and attachments you know, it leads to the potential for deep transformative experiences, because you know, we are born into this world with ruptures in attachment, you know. The infant baby is open to connection and for whatever reason, even the most perfect parent can rupture connection and so trauma is a reality for a majority of people, and so when we enquire about attachment or emotions, we can catalyse transformation, the deepest kind of, the deepest experiences of transformation. (Jason, personal communication, March 22, 2019).

Jason implied that his traumatised clients seemingly struggled with safety and security, as their primary carers in childhood were incapable of having a trusting relationship in adulthood. I sensed that Jason realised the tragedy of some of his clients' lives, scarred by trauma from those entrusted to nurture them in childhood, so clients were distrustful or suspicious of people in adulthood. Jason said that in therapy, his clients had a “*healthy attachment for the very first time*” (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

Jason appeared to envisage client transformation as reparative and a reconnection of fragmented aspects of a client's traumatic inner life and mind in a recovery-oriented, safe, and secure therapeutic environment. He said, “*Healing ruptures. And that would mean healing emotions, healing attachment, getting the person to become whole again*” (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019). As a therapist who has developed a secure attachment with his clients and has earned their trust to gain access into their inner minds, Jason admitted that he could translate that goodwill into character change and healing relationships. I sensed that Jason was alluding to his clients' “dissociated traumatic experiences” (Renn, 2012, p. 86). Jason implied that their painful childhood emotional experiences adversely influenced their present relationships. In therapy, Jason models appropriate emotional responses to clients, which is an experience of a secure attachment.

Consequently, the experience of being authentically loved, respected and valued as persons simultaneously heals traumatic memories and transforms clients, by breaking down walls of

distrust. I intuit that Jason saw wholeness as healing an individual's ruptured inner mind, emotions and relationships, including the spiritual, so that an individual rediscovered their true selves and experienced authentic human relationships. Jason said, "*I think I am an agent of change. I think I facilitate transformation*" (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019). In short, once clients experience a secure attachment in psychotherapy, healing of emotions not only becomes a possibility, but those clients rediscover their dignity and worth as transformed humans.

In the first interview, Jason said:

Clients come to me because they have had major traumatic experiences. You know, they are experiencing a healthy attachment for the very first time, and with tremendous opportunities for them to resolve and heal a trauma: you know, so they can grow and develop, you know, become the person they were meant to be, you know, and that is through psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is a powerful tool to help people resolve trauma so they can find the freedom to be the person that they were always meant to be, you know. (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

As part of a member check, Jason clarified why people come for therapy. He commented on the previous quote and wrote:

The process of therapy is on the contrary facing what has been avoided because they're painful, scary, overwhelming – the exact opposite. Clients generally spend more of their time avoiding. What is essential for healing is to increase capacity to face, as much as one can face. Good therapy creates the conditions for this to happen. Good therapy offers a corrective experience. (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019)

Human authenticity and transformation

Authenticity, to me, is an impossible ideal because we are fallible beings, and our constructs of truth are part of our human development. Genuineness broadly refers to a person's self-identity (Samella, 2014). Jason said, "*When we become more attuned, more in-sync with our emotions, we become more authentic as human beings*" (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019). In a member check, Jason added, "*Authenticity is about arriving at*

emotional truth of oneself and is not impossible to achieve at all if one was willing to approach it openly, humbly and courageously” (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

Furthermore, Jason admitted that a person's inner world is indescribable and that every description of it falls short of what is true. But he appeared near certain that the fundamental issue was that the human craving for intimacy and belonging is an aspect of authenticity. Jason suggested that people's mental health presentations have roots in past unhealed hurts that cast a shadow over their relational lives. Perhaps Jason believed that such clients needed to be authentic and accept that they operated out of injury to protect themselves and exercise control over their lives. Hence, instead of experiencing authentic healing, these clients perhaps remain psychologically or emotionally stuck and their lives fuelled by pain, anger, insecurity, and mistrust of others. He said:

When you get people to connect to their emotions, you are getting them to connect to their inner world or what is deeper than one's inner world. We label it spiritual and human, or whatever. But they are deficient labels because it is one person there striving to love really. Nevertheless, traumatic experiences limit their capacity to do that, to develop psychopathology, you know, so what we do is try to heal the psychopathology, so they are freed up to love again. (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

Moreover, Jason emphasised, *"And in terms of learning, that is much more profound than theoretical, because you can tell yourself lies, but your emotions don't tell a lie"* (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019). Perhaps Jason was stating that if clients were to be authentic and experience transformation, they needed to pay attention to their feelings. According to Neborsky and Josette (2012), trauma stymies an individual's ability to counterbalance anxiety levels and demolishes their capacity to sustain authentic interpersonal relationships, perpetuating self-punishing or self-destructive behaviour patterns. Jason perhaps meant that his clients could control their thoughts, not their emotions, which are the gateways to understanding their pains (Dawson & Mogghadam, 2015). At a deeper level, I sensed that Jason meant that words could not capture our categorisations of what constitutes our inner world, which is our authentic self.

During a member check, Jason said that quantum transformation is attainable and that it is an inference that change is gradual. Jason says, "*So, change happens in therapy as well. Some people come depressed, anxious and have a genuine connection with another human being and come out of the session, one session, freed up you know*" (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

At deeper levels, I believe that maybe Jason was asserting that once clients become cognizant of "intrapsychic conflicts" (Della & Malan, 2007, p. 53) or the deployment of forces called "defenses" (Della & Malan, 2007, p. 53), therapy helps them to accept and disempower those memories, resulting in healing (Greenberg & Pascual-Leone, 2006). I also think clients must touch their pains, moving head to heart, or that transformation might only be a cognitive or rational process and might not touch on other dimensions of a client's existence.

I feel that Jason drew a parallel between a transformation because of a divine encounter or a "spiritual emergency" (Collins, 2008, p. 4), and therapy. Both these experiences result in a radical change of being and mind. I sense that Jason referred to an encounter with the divine or "numinous" experience (Collins, 2008, p. 4) as a transformative event and a relationship in which the individual perceives life through the prism of the heart and mind of a loving God. In Christian spirituality, transformation is referred to as conversion, wherein the individual spiritually grows in holiness or the love of God and thereby achieves wholeness in harmony with self and others (Ellwanger, & Gehrke, 2021). Jason spoke of 'quantum change', which to me is akin to "altered states of consciousness" (Collin, 2008, p. 5), which refers to personal growth within transpersonal spiritualities (Collins, 2008). Jason said:

The most profound transformation, I don't know any other human. Although you know, I was thinking about these people who have been alcoholics for years, and they go to church, and they have an encounter with the Divine. Then suddenly, they have something like that happen in therapy. It is almost like a quantum change happens from one stage of being to another state of being in a moment of time. It is possible in therapy. They come to therapy in one particular state of mind, and they leave therapy after one session in an absolutely different state of mind, you know. (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

When Jason refers to quantum change or transformation, I felt that he probably referred to his clients' insights into the dynamics of the inner mind and social relationships. In addition, Jason surmises that quantum change pertains to his clients' decisions to radically transform rather than superficially address mental health and behavioural or emotional reactions. Jason elaborated further on experiences of client transformations, saying that their "*character changed completely*" (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019). Perhaps when Jason indicated that his clients, having encountered a crisis, decisively overcame internal resistance and that they were sustained in therapy and took steps that ensured their long-term transformation. Moreover, that transformation affected every dimension of their being in its totality (Della, 2018, p. 169). Jason spoke of his clients' increased ability to endure anxiety and thereby achieve emotional regulation by interrupting profoundly ingrained self-sabotaging or self-destructive behaviours and harnessing inner resources to overcome habituated resistance within therapy (Rahmani et al., 2020, p. 2124). Furthermore, Jason alluded to change as "becoming" (Fromm, 2013, p. 58) or the individual's capacity or effort to grow, mature and transform as beings in this world (Fromm, 2013; Van Kaam, 1975). Jason challenged the premise that instant change is impossible and remarked that incremental transformation is only a hypothesis. I agree with Jason, as I have experienced clients who transformed after a session of psychospiritual counselling. Jason said:

It's possible [that] quantum change can happen in therapy, and people have studied this mechanism of evolution. There is this idea of incrementalism that occurs in therapy that change happens in a slow kind of process, but that would be an assumption, you know, I have seen people who come to me and have significant changes just after one session, so that is possible, those kinds of phenomenon. (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

Jason further developed this idea of change as he saw love as an integral aspect of personal transformation.

Psychopathology and social isolation

More than critiquing society, Jason said that social isolation is an insidious phenomenon that brings out the worst side of people who feel rejected and alienated, possibly triggering them to behave irrationally. Jason empathised with their situation and pointed out that when

individuals are robbed of love and a sense of belonging, they feel rejected, angered, stressed and depressed. To me, Jason meant that such individuals resent being alone and act impulsively, while at other levels are crying out for help, attention, and companionship. He said,

On the other hand, you know, most psychopathology arises in the context of isolation and loneliness, and loneliness is a very toxic thing you know. People become crazy when they are lonely, you know. People can do really terrible things when they're lonely, when they're not connected. (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

Loneliness is a broad term, depicting the human situation that possibly arises due to distress or a lack of expected physical, emotional, cognitive, or the “interpersonal intimacy” (Bevinn, 2011, p. 2) vital for personal development, and adversely affecting human behaviour. Jason felt that loneliness was insidious and that interpersonally disconnected individuals appear to border on insanity. I wonder if Jason was suggesting that people act irrationally or contemplate risk-taking behaviours to cope with the stress of social disconnection. I believe that loneliness is the antithesis of the human need for love, as it impoverishes the human person. I often refer to loneliness as a silent killer or disease, much like a planted pot starved of nutrients or sufficient water.

Jason alluded that loneliness, whether caused by relational ruptures or painful experiences, goes against human nature. Additionally, research says that trauma disconnects people from each other, further isolating individuals as they escape from their perpetrators or oppressive situations to protect themselves from other hurt or harm or cope with feelings of anger and guilt as part of a survival strategy (Etherington, 2003, pp. 22-34). Jason appeared to accentuate that humans are innately social beings, gregarious and needing to belong. According to Etherington (2003, p. 29), trauma affects their capacity to create intimate relationships apart from breaking the circle of security or trust and, as a result, they experience isolation or loneliness. Jason said, “We were born into connection, you know, but for whatever reason, because of trauma, because of negative experiences, people can find themselves isolated” (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

Jason maintained that traumatic events, the death of a loved one included, representing broken trust in early childhood, possibly undermine a person's sense of safety or security in adulthood, further isolating individuals who struggle relationally. Moreover, misunderstandings could reinforce or trigger painful, traumatic memories, further pushing people away from others, inhibiting the building of meaningful, trustful, and intimate relationships, and increasing loneliness in adulthood. Consequently, trauma leaves an individual unable to form meaningful relationships, culminating in feelings of "alienation, isolation and loneliness" later in life (Etherington, 2003, p. 29). In essence, trauma isolates individuals, and psychotherapy facilitates reconnection.

I felt that Jason strived to help his clients who had disengaged or distanced themselves emotionally to touch their pains and process their traumas. Furthermore, in psychotherapy, he assisted them in discovering how sufferings or trauma affect their health and relationships, saying "that [he] helps people connect with themselves, and then connect with other people" (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

I interpret this statement of Jason's experientially, as I was an angry child growing up. I emotionally cut myself from others in childhood and suffered from constant colds and stomach problems because my mother's death enraged me. The late Jackie Kyle, my mentor and teacher, once asked me, "Are you lonely?" I did not admit that I was lonely but cried uncontrollably. Since then, I have rarely gotten angry or suffered from constant colds. But most importantly, I repaired my relationships with other students and God, onto whom I had projected my "unresolved grief" (Abbass & Twon, 2021, p. 3) and who I blamed for my mother's death. At a member check, Jason commented on my experience and said to me that early childhood adversity is "*a singular negative determinant to future mental health*" (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019). I do not deny it.

ISTDP and transformation

Jason remarked that clients engage in ISDTP therapy to experience transformation because hopelessness engulfs them, and their situation possibly will not alter or change. I suppose that when clients lose a sense of hope, they slip back into a dark psychological world of predictable responses to people and circumstances and assume that they cannot break the cycle of behaviour that becomes such an ingrained part of their personalities. However, Jason appeared

to believe that ISDTP holds clients have the innate potentiality for transformation and maintained that they can substitute maladaptive emotional responses with adaptive ones that are life-giving and enhance their wellbeing. According to Neborsky and Josette (2012, p. 21), ISDTP clients, feeling stuck, come to therapy anguished, to overcome the despair they experience with their maladaptive emotions, and seek ways to learn how to transform them into adaptive emotions so that they experience inner balance or regulation. For Jason, in ISDTP, if clients perhaps experience a shift in their thinking and alter their ways of seeing, feeling, and thinking, they can face their demons and overcome adversity. ISDTP holds that if therapists do not challenge clients to transform, they get stuck (Neborsky & Josette, 2012, p. 21). He said:

They come to therapy because they're stuck. The work of therapy allows clients to understand a bit of themselves. Why do they get into these places that they get stuck in and patterns that promote those sorts of experiences of stuckness? So, they can then undo that, undo the destructive patterns, and catalyse more positive habits or actions that would promote health and healing. Resilience would be a by-product of that process (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

At a closer look, my intuition is that Jason's clients enter therapy possibly emotionally conflicted or cynical, needing to preserve their emotional status quo or façade of wellness and yet paradoxically craving to set themselves free. Perhaps Jason shatters the emotional roadblocks, resistance, or walls clients build out of a sense of hopelessness, to produce transformative healing (Della & Malan, 2007). Jason alludes to clients' resistance, "tactical in nature" as a factor that creates or perpetuates self-defeating, self-punishing irrational and destructive behavioural patterns (Hickey, 2015). Jason underscored that once clients comprehend the delicate character structures of their lives and their underlying origins in their past, they undergo a liberating transformation, saying, "Once they master that [overcoming self-defeating patterns of behaviour], they can face any problems in their world" (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

However, that transformation, rooted in therapeutic education, assists clients in comprehending the rationale of their behaviour: the festering underlying rage or anxiety, and the emotional distance and structures within their fragile personality that sustain those earlier

cited self-sabotaging behaviours (Hickey, 2015; Della & Malan, 2007; Davanloo, 1999). He said:

Yeah, kind of like, you are crying at the moment. Are you sad? Not really! So what are these tears about? I don't know. Ok, so you get weepy but not feeling sad. Could you be anxious? So, the education comes from experience first, and then helping clients make sense of that experience. (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

Jason conceded that resistance is a significant challenge to clients, but he was ardent about supporting clients to get in touch with or rediscover their true selves. He considered clients put up walls because they were probably terrified to revisit their hurts, re-traumatise themselves, or appear more vulnerable than they project themselves to be. Regardless, Jason says he invites clients to count on him and collaboratively address their innate fears of re-traumatisation and rediscover their authentic selves. I discerned that Jason desired to create a welcoming or safe space for his clients to experience lasting catharsis. Nonetheless, Jason admitted that he required them to open themselves up to being helped to encounter their authentic selves.

Jason accepted there was nothing he could do if they chose to shut the doors to healing and transformation. In ISTDP, defences are unconscious repertoires of responses to perceived threats known as "tactical and major defences" (Nebrosky & Josette, 2012, p. 35). Jason said that Davanloo's innovation in psychotherapy focused on the need to let go of resistance so that clients benefit from therapy. Furthermore, Jason added that 50% of clients are not helped because they drop out of therapy. I will let Jason's words speak for him.

Well, I'm just a person that is trying to reach another human being behind a defensive wall that stops them from becoming who they are. That's how I see myself: kind of reaching out, kind of saying, you know, you can come out of this wall, out of this fortress of fear you've hidden behind. You can do this with me, and I am going to create a space here for you to be the person you are meant to be, you know. Every part of you is welcome here. That is my meta-invitation, I guess. When I do my work, it is to give that message to my client, time to come out, I know your hurting, but you can come out, we can talk about this, we can heal this together (*Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019*).

Love and transformation

The inner striving of the child to be loved, yeah, can be thwarted, right, and so, that then catalyses a whole series of events where, as a teenager that infant becomes self-harming, or depressed and cut off and shut down, you know, and eventually at some point in time they come to therapy and therapy becomes the process by which we help them find love again, you know, in themselves and in other people. So that is kind of what I see. (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

I resonated with what Jason said about psychotherapy. I sensed that he was not interested in clinically diagnosing people but wanted to make a tangible difference in their lives at an authentic human level and bring about the kind of transformation through a 'love'- or 'compassion'-focused therapy. Jason implied that love and compassion are intrinsic and universal human values that are key to mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Reflecting further, I felt that Jason was saying that in the ultimate analysis, transformation is not brought about merely by clinical or psychotherapeutic competence, strategies, or interventions but by love, and love alone. Furthermore, Jason implied that if clients do not sense 'love' in a therapist, then they are less likely to open themselves up to the possibility of allowing therapists to facilitate their transformation. In addition, Jason said that facilitating client transformation in just a session is possible if a client senses love at the outset of therapy, trusts that love, and allows that love to break down any inner resistance to change. Additionally, Jason explained that he was keen to support people in growing toward a loving understanding of self because of the conviction that love, at the centre of human living, is liberating.

Freud (1926) speaks of trauma as a separation or loss of love (Della, 2004, p. 5). I feel that Jason implied that if traumatised clients acquired a secure attachment with a therapist who modelled love, they obtained in-depth insight into the dynamics that maintain self-sabotaging behaviour patterns. Additionally, they reconceptualised anxiety-provoking factors, making lasting healing and transformation possible for clients (Della, 2004). Further, Jason said that if a therapist recognises a client's hungering for love and understands that a client's emotional states indicate a loss of love or relational ruptures, then significant transformation is possible (Flanagan, 1999, p. 39). Additionally, I felt that Jason was debunking the notion that a therapist needed special training to recognise the human need for love or the meaningful, life-giving relationships vital to wellbeing and survival (Flanagan, 1999). He explained:

But I am more interested in contact, you know, meeting people, helping them understand themselves, that's the kind of therapy I'm interested in. The very root of our existence is love, yeah, and freeing love. In a sense, to assume that therapy is incremental, that you have to see a therapist for years and years, is without basis, if you know what you're doing, then you can facilitate, deep, deep profound changes in human beings. (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

Jason asserted that the birth of a child is an act of love, a theme in Catholic theology. Nevertheless, Jason stated that there are unfortunate circumstances in which adults fail to fulfil their obligations to love a child they have brought into the world, and their actions scar a child for life. Jason seems to link a child's foremost mental health issues and risk-taking behaviour in their teenage or adult years as a consequence of disrupted attachments. I feel that Jason is probably saying that a therapeutic relationship can catalyse the holistic transformation of trauma and a re-discovery of love (Della, 2004; Lebeaux, 2000, p. 41). Jason said:

Psychotherapy is the work of love. The only reason we are born into love is that we have parents who bonded in love. Yeah, and so, the fruit of that love is the child, yeah. The infant is open to love, but sometimes that love is not returned, for whatever reason. You know, mamma's post-natal depression at the time of birth. Dad is an alcoholic or missing in action, for whatever reason. The inner striving of the child to be loved, yeah, can be thwarted. And so, that then catalyses a whole series of events where, as a teenager, that infant becomes self-harming or depressed and cut off and shut down, you know. And eventually, at some point in time, they come to therapy, and therapy becomes the process by which we help them find love again, in themselves and other people. (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

At the beginning of the interview, I recall Jason saying that psychotherapy became his vocation or professional calling of choice after leaving the priesthood. Jason said, "[Psychotherapy] is very Priestly in that sense, it is a ministry of healing" (Jason, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

According to Jason, psychotherapy closely resembled his healing and transformative work of love as a former priest. In Catholic spirituality, psychotherapy is akin to conforming to Christ, the face or the "self-communication" (O'Collins, 2009, p. 208) of God, who is love. I

understand love as unconditional, transformative, self-giving, and self-sacrificing, as modelled and embodied by Christ (Kelly, 2020). Jason equated therapy with love, a human's deepest yearning from childhood into adulthood (Fromm, 2013; Van Kaam, 1975).

Conclusion

Jason based his therapeutic approach on ISTDP. He believed that psychotherapy, nearest to his former priestly work, was a partnership and that emotions held the key to client transformation. I highlighted that Jason sought the wholistic transformation of clients, whilst respecting that the ultimate choice for transformation is the client's.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Case Study 4: Crystal

Introduction

I introduce Crystal, an Anthroposophist and psychotherapist. The purpose of the chapter is to outline how Crystal's psychotherapy, seen through the lens of humanistic psychology, Anthroposophy, Psychophonetics and expressive arts, enhances resilience and is a form of transformative learning. The case study is divided into three sections. In Section 1, I introduce Crystal as a person, followed by Section 2, where I chart her journey with clients and try to capture her understanding of conversational counselling, from a humanistic and transpersonal perspective that explores her clients' experiences. Lastly, in Section 3, I explore Anthroposophy, which is a core element of Crystal's spiritual counselling practice, in more depth. Moreover, it serves as the underlying theoretical underpinning for understanding her spirituality and perspective on personhood.

SECTION 1

Introducing Crystal, the Anthroposophist

I would not have stumbled upon Crystal had it not been for my supervisor, Dr Elisabeth Taylor, who spoke to me glowingly about her. In retrospect, our interview over Skype was a fascinating first encounter with an anthroposophist engaged in psycho-spiritual counselling here in Australia. Steiner (1973, as cited in Ullrich, 2008, p. 49) clarifies that an anthroposophist is an individual who follows and adheres to Rudolf Steiner's esoteric philosophy of life or worldview that asserts the existence of an invisible spiritual world that is scientifically available to the human experience through contemplation. Steiner (2013, p. 13) defines Anthroposophy as "a path of knowledge, to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual of the Universe."

Crystal's professional background

For many years, Crystal had partnered with a government agency as a mental health practitioner for recovering addicts. Since 2000, her specialities have included designing and facilitating therapeutic and educational groups using Psychophonetics. As a senior counsellor and psychotherapist since the early 1990s, Crystal has many years of experience behind her.

She is a registered member of Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) and holds a Bachelor of Artistic Counselling, a Diploma in Transpersonal Counselling (IKON IHAS), an Advanced Diploma in Holistic Counselling (Artistic Therapies) and a Cert IV in Workplace Assessment/Training. More recently, Crystal obtained a Master of Counselling degree where her research focused on counsellor resilience. Her research participants were all psychophonic practitioners, a modality that is akin to “*spiritual counselling*” (Crystal, personal communication, March 23, 2019). In addition, Crystal’s academic background encompasses Western esoteric studies, more specifically, Anthroposophy which, for her, was all “about personal and spiritual development” (Crystal, personal communications, March 22, 2019). According to Faivre and Rhone (2010, p. 5), Western esotericism is a broad term that explains the influence of Jewish, Islamic and Eastern religious or spiritual traditions from ancient times to the present on the West “permeated by Christian culture.”

Psychophonetics

Crystal explained that psychophonetics is “a specific Anthroposophical modality, but it also has other methodologies behind it, so it is grown out of psychodrama and Psychosynthesis and humanistic counselling in general, but it’s an artistic and creative method” (Crystal, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

To Crystal, psychophonetics has its foundations in Anthroposophy, but it also includes other theoretical modalities such as psychodrama, Psychosynthesis and person-centred therapy – it is essentially creative. Psychophonetics is a holistic therapeutic model that perceives the human person as “a living body, soul and spirit” (Steele, 2005, p. 5). In addition, psychophonetics fuses Rudolph Steiner’s Anthroposophy components, humanistic psychology, and communicative or creative art (Steele, 2005, p. 8). Having touched on psychophonetics, I tell Crystal’s story.

Crystal’s origins as a transpersonal counsellor

In telling me how she became a transpersonal counsellor, Crystal explained that “*I had been a Theosophist*” (Crystal, personal communications, March 22, 2019). A theosophist, a disciple or initiate of wisdom, believes that a person’s nature and destiny are spiritual and that divine wisdom beyond our senses reveals this calling to a person (Steiner, 1994). Crystal said

she was confined to bed nursing a broken ankle, and her last child had started school, when one day she saw an advertisement for a Transpersonal Counselling Course. She was unaware of how distinct it was from counselling, saying *“I had no idea that it would be so different to mainstream approaches, at that time”* (Crystal, personal communications, March 22, 2019). Crystal described herself as a qualified transpersonal counsellor with an anthroposophical background, although she is not a certified anthroposophical counsellor per se. This is because the award did not exist back then but does now. This takes us to: who is Crystal as a person?

An ordinary human with a big life

Crystal said, *“I would describe myself as a regular human being with all of the vulnerabilities and insecurities and problems of other human beings”*. She added:

But as a counsellor, I have a lot behind me, a big life with quite a lot of traumas, many huge experiences, and quite a lot of super sensible experiences as well, so I've got the whole gambit of what it is to be a human being within me, plus a connection to the stars, really, and to nature. (Crystal, personal communications, March 22, 2019).

During a member check, Crystal illustrated that, in her view, an individual could not assert to be a psychospiritual counsellor without an internal link to nature or the rhythmic motions or habits of the cosmos. Moreover, Crystal said, *“The school of life is vast... I have been a single parent, and I've been in relationships. I've had a huge family life and a lot of trials – just a massive life, really”* (Crystal, personal communications, March 22, 2019). To me, Crystal looked back at her life and reflected on the enormity of her familial life, the partners she has had in life, adversities she encountered and learned from as a single mother. Crystal added that she had *“a huge spiritual life as well, which has been different to other peoples, and there is no glamour in this”* (Crystal, personal communications, March 22, 2019). I felt that Crystal perhaps implied there was more to her life than her existential struggles, including her mystical experiences, and that sacred journey was significant. Moreover, Crystal maybe did not see herself as spiritual celebrity being on a pedestal or in public glare because of her religious experiences.

Spiritual foundations in past lives

Crystal said about her life that,

...some of it is from past lives, some of it has come with me that is a foundational knowledge that often people don't even have behind them or understand that a lot of their qualities they have earned, and that they are a huge and ancient being (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal alluded to her present spiritual and human traits originating in her past lives. To me, Crystal perhaps referred to the stage after death wherein she is purged of all memories of her previous existence on earth, spends time in the spirit world, and returns to each in a new incarnation. Crystal explained that while her belief in reincarnation forms the basis of her spirituality, most individuals were unaware that their present lives are continuation or rebirthing of their past existences.

People trapped in materialism

Crystal alludes to people who are shackled by materialism. Materialism is a capacious term that touches on mind-body debates, the rationale for the existence of the State, denial of the presence of God, or an excessive preoccupation with temporal possessions (Eagleton, 2017, p. 33).

Crystal clarified that,

Unfortunately, people are conditioned or absorbed by consumerism and consequently are not relaxed within themselves. They are not just these poor little human beings whose qualities appear to work against them a lot of the time. That's a lot of our materialistic thinking. If we didn't constantly have that cap on, we might be able to breathe and look at the world a bit better. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

I sensed that Crystal was perhaps saddened that people are brainwashed or blinded and immersed in rampant materialism, and she linked their stress or lack of inner peace to it. Maybe Crystal felt that materialism fuelled their quest to acquire or achieve more and more and was counterproductive at personal and global levels. To me, Crystal implied that

materialism negatively affected their thinking or skewed their outlook on life. As I listened to Crystal, I thought she was echoing my foundational spiritual conviction, as I am a minimalist. I took a 'vow of poverty,' meaning I renounced all material possessions.

Crystal then said, "*I think I bring a lot of worldly things as well. You can't ignore the fact that to some extent you are guided, and get a lot of help, even though you still make a lot of mistakes*" (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). I perceived that Crystal was being realistic and not dismissing the lure of consumerism and that perhaps she, at times, gets caught up in it. However, Crystal admitted that she was perhaps fortunate to have mentoring to help her process her struggles or failings to resist the lures or temptations of consumerism, which is not easy.

Crystal said,

They think one thing, feel one thing, and will a different thing, which is very hard for the self to come to terms with. So, we're constantly being pulled by other forces, which are forces that are escaping from the world. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal maybe meant that her clients were perhaps conflicted within and that their innermost selves, spiritual in nature, struggled to accept their incongruence at the level of their beings as they journeyed through life. To me, Crystal alluded to the inescapable existential struggles or battles humans face as spiritual beings as they transition into the next life. Crystal said,

Forces like technology, number crunching, and wealth are too much in the world. Things like charismatic cults and Eastern practices that can become all you care about and are focussed on being off the planet. They are all too much out of the world. So, we tend to go on the inside. We oscillate from one to the other and have difficulty being fully in the world and fully committed to life - the gift of human life we've been given. We try to balance those forces within us, you know. It's a huge difficulty for human beings to do that. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

I sensed that Crystal re-emphasised humans' all-consuming battles or struggles between the forces of materialism and spirituality. Crystal perhaps meant that people had lost their sense of inner peace or balance about the essence of life, which is inherently spiritual. At a

philosophical level, I feel that perhaps Crystal alluded to the autonomy or arrogance of the human person that has served to isolate, separate or disconnect the human person from the self, others, and the world. Crystal perhaps meant that people are conditioned to identify with material possessions or notions of independence and lose sight of their true nature as spiritual beings. Consequently, they neglect to develop their moral lives. After elaborating on her clients' inner conflicts, Crystal explains that some clients are psychologically stuck.

Psychospiritual practice, valuing human life and spirituality

I sensed that Crystal was amazed and baffled at how her spirituality formed an integral aspect of her psychospiritual counselling.

Crystal said,

A big part inherent in my practice is the psychospiritual thinking, which is a tremendous valuing of human life, and I don't even know how I do that. Still, I know that that is where I come from in the way that I speak about nature and the way I speak about people, in the way I speak about the beauty of being a human being. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

At a deeper level, I felt that Crystal alluded to her spiritual origins and how they impacted upon her perspectives and outlook on the universe and humans. To me, Crystal perhaps alluded to her understanding of humans as spiritual beings connected to the self, others and the universe. To me, Crystal is a mystic. A mystic is an individual who has an altered state of consciousness or a personal encounter with God, and is immersed, absorbed, and united with the supernatural or Divine through meditation or the contemplation of nature and life (Kroll & Bachrach, 2005, p. 5). Crystal said,

I'm interested in spiritual emergence, and I've done a bit of work in this field. Still, I think spirituality doesn't work for people because they don't know it. Because they don't understand it, it doesn't work for them and it's working against them sometimes, and I am very interested in that (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

I perceived that Crystal perhaps alluded to her fascination with spiritual emergencies and explained that she had considerable experience working with clients undergoing spiritual

emergencies. A spiritual emergency is an experiential and critical phenomenon wherein an individual undergoes a profound psychological transformation that affects the person's entirety - psychological, emotional, sensory, perceptual, cognitive, and bodily (Watson, 1994). To me, Crystal implied that it was possible that her clients did not understand their mental health conditions through such a spiritual lens and offered various reasons why psychospiritual counselling did not benefit her clients. On further reflection, I felt that Crystal was interested in why her clients' spiritual emergencies did not become a source of personal transformation.

SECTION 2

Journey with clients

Crystal's life experiences as an Anthroposophist shaped her experiences with clients. I felt that her diverse background, spiritual emergence and transformation, professional competence, and Anthroposophy offered her a unique perspective of how psychospiritual counselling enhances client resilience and is a form of transformative learning. Crystal started by exploring her notion of healthy relationships as opposed to an attitude of victimhood.

Healthy relationships as opposed to victimhood

Crystal described the importance of *"Seeing connections and taking responsibility for connections rather than being in a victim kind of position, or a position where they just often just want you to soothe them and concur with them"* (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). Crystal clarified that 'connections' imply that relationships exist for a reason. Hence, individuals need to start from a place of acceptance, appropriateness, and responsibility. Furthermore, Crystal explained that some clients expected her to relieve, calm, or even side with them rather than to self-reflect on their lives. Victimhood is a construct rooted in the "humanisation" (van Dijk, 2009, p. 4) of the Christian imagery of Christ as the 'Lamb of God' or a scapegoat that people identified with human sufferings. I concur with van Dijk (2009) and Tagar (2008) that victimhood is an aspect of self-sabotaging behaviour, or a coping mechanism aimed at escaping a similar crisis in future (van Dijk, 2009; Tagar, 2008). I agree with Crystal and with Van Dijk (2008) that victimhood is being antithetical to

psychospiritual counselling, which aims at enhancing resilience and transformation. Crystal then explored the complexities of her clients with a focus on addressing self-absorption.

Client self-absorption

Speaking of her clients, Crystal said, "*some people are very self-obsessed, so there are a lot of layers between themselves, and another person. The counsellor shouldn't have that*" (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). To me, Crystal implied that, in her experience, some individuals were inward-looking or focused and seemingly guarded in their relationships with others. Crystal perhaps suggested that a therapist needed to be outward-looking and not inward-focused. Crystal expressed that therapists needed to be transparent, authentic, and connected to others rather than being inward looking. Nancy McWilliams (as cited in Kottler & Carlson, 2014, p. 22) describes a good therapist as a person who is grounded in truth and genuinely interested in understanding clients. Furthermore, a competent therapist recognises their clients' potentialities and supports them look at their sad inner lives without giving in to the temptation of becoming self-absorbed.

Conversational Counselling

Crystal shared that she is engaged in "*conversational counselling*" (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). I asked her to tell me more about it, and she said,

Behind conversational counselling is a lot of understanding of what a human being is and how they are put together. So, you do not have conversational counselling from a shallow place. You have it from a place where you might be regularly challenging them in a careful and considerate way. Or you may regularly support them to bring them into places where they feel they can challenge themselves or support themselves. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

At a member check, Crystal explained that when she referred to conversational counselling, she meant you could say it is psychospiritual counselling and about a person's commitment to flourishing. Crystal explained that to her, the human person is vulnerable, open, and honest. Additionally, Crystal explained that psychospiritual counselling is not superficial and entails sensitively and prudently confronting clients. Further, Crystal described it as a process wherein she accompanies clients, who become comfortable facing their fears and develop

strategies or inner resources to overcome adversity and become resilient. Proceeding from her understanding of conversational counselling, Crystal then explored client accountability.

Client accountability, moral centre and growth

Crystal said, "*And this is presuming we have a moral centre*" (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). She clarified that a moral centre is about being good in this life. Moreover, Crystal said "*[referring to a person's] moral centre, and higher values and love of humanity, if you are working from those places, yes, I think that really helps you to be much more resilient*" (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). To me, Crystal appears to link an individual's capacity to transcend adversities to their moral compass or spiritual rootedness. Perhaps Crystal alluded to spirituality as a protective factor, coping mechanism, and resource to help individuals face and overcome life's challenges. Crystal said,

When your person comes to you for some counselling, you are looking at them and thinking, well, what you can take responsibility for, and what can you do? I can offer you a lot of ideas and support and many things, but are you going to take this on as your development? (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

It seems to me that Crystal is perhaps alluding that she is not a rescuer or her client's saviour, and her approach is to put the onus for their spiritual growth or the transformation of their 'moral compass' back on to clients. To me, Crystal acknowledged her therapeutic competence and what she could offer her clients in order to enhance their capability to operate ethically. Nevertheless, she also recognised that psychospiritual counselling is an empowering process that creates the necessary conditions for clients to be guided by their moral compass, encourage their transformation, and improve resilience consciously. Crystal said, "*They have some idea of a spiritual model or the spiritual foundation to your work, this is very helpful. I mean, an ordinary self-development focus might be helpful, too*" (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). Crystal suggested that a few of her clients were informed about her spirituality and therapeutic modality as an Anthroposophist. However, she saw that in perspective and did not dwell on it. Nevertheless, her approach was simple and not complex, and she perhaps helped her clients to process areas of concern and growth. According to Kegan (1982), human development admits that persons are autonomous, self-

directing, or self-determining representatives of their fate as grown-ups holistically qualified to achieve their full potential. Crystal then explored her clients' 'wishes' or intentions for seeking therapy.

Client wish or intention

Crystal explained that her clients' 'wish,' intentions or goals for therapy guided the course of her therapeutic interventions.

But I suppose now I would be more inclined to work with the model of being very careful to build that rapport and find out what they are doing here, and what their intention is, or what their, we would call it a wish, in that particular training we would call it a wish because you have to work within that, it can't be about you. So that would be the one helpful thing I'd do, is to try and really identify why the client is there and what it is they want help with. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal clarified that in Anthroposophy, a 'wish' connotes something nobler or more soulful than a mere yearning. Furthermore, she explained that in psychophonetics, a wish points to a client's intention for a session, setting the parameters for a therapeutic session. Crystal said,

I guess you initially have to explore their situation and find out precisely what they need and what they want to do. They may want to explore something, and they may not want to take anything. Or they may need to confront something and something big, and then they may actually have an unmet need that you can help clients resolve. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal explained that before commencing psychospiritual counselling, she had an information-gathering session with her clients to get an idea about their presenting issues, conscious and unconscious, circumstances, aspirations, and hopes. According to Anderson et al. (2012) and Norcross and Goldfried (2003), unmet needs stem from development factors in the past or interpersonal issues, perhaps for love, affirmation, belonging, recognition, connection, transcendence, or wholeness, to name a few, which negatively impact upon her clients' wellbeing or ability to self-actualise or flourish. After exploring her client's intentions or 'wish,' Crystal touched on the role of the therapeutic alliance to kindle transformation.

Crystal's understanding of transformation

Speaking of transformation, Crystal said,

It's very close to the relational bond you have with the person, and of course, that is well documented as very important, and hopefully, that is not too much of a dependency. But it's a good feeling of support of intimacy, where they trust you and, within that trust, allow some of those things to change, some of those fixed attitudes they have had of themselves, and ways of being in a relationship and they allow some of that to change. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

To me, Crystal alluded to solidarity or rapport as a client's experience of trust, safety and security but one that does not disempower clients. Further, Crystal outlined the importance of connection to trigger or create the prospect of mental and relational transformation.

Resources, critical self-reflection and transformation

Crystal explains that in her experiences, clients actively seek resources to empower and take responsibility for their transformation. Crystal said,

...and they do find resources and ways of thinking, resources that they can use, ideas, and they might be slightly different to what you discussed in the session. Still, they'll come back next time and say this is what it meant for me, and that's what I did this week, and that's how I thought about it this week, and that's how I did it differently. So, that's when you see the changes coming in, and usually just a bit more happiness as well. A bit more self-reliance. A little bit more equanimity, balance in feelings, not such strong ups and downs, and falling in holes all the time and blaming others, so lots of different changes. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

I sensed that Crystal alluded to her amazement or astonishment at her clients' capacity for critical self-reflection; gaining new intellectual insights into the presentations and circumstances or discovering new strategies were not part of their sessions with her. Crystal appeared to take pride in their accounts of the impact of her therapy on them. To Crystal, such sharing by clients was a harbinger of transformation and the upliftment of their spirits. Furthermore, Crystal described that this transformation culminated in her clients' overall

mental and emotional wellbeing and peace, their ability to ground themselves, and take responsibility and ownership for the direction of their lives or behaviours.

Crystal explains, “*you can't live a human life without having to reflect on the huge amounts of good and bad things that go on*” (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). When I heard Crystal say this, I recall nodding in agreement as I felt that she implied that as humans, life's events impact us, and we cannot be indifferent to them, and it is natural to ask questions. Speaking of psychospiritual counselling Crystal said,

It promotes transformative learning because that type of counselling requires you to encourage people to understand transformation. They can be a different person, and they are still themselves, and they can be more themselves. They can start and align with a higher self, perhaps that they haven't known before, so yes, I think it is very much transformative. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal clarified that transformation for her is the ordinary maturity and character development that happens experientially in life or therapy because of insight, awakening, or a realisation. Tagar (1995) asserts that the therapist's role in human development is to foster within clients the recognition of and trust in their inborn aptitude for personal transformation. While I agree with Crystal, I also believe that transformation is ultimately a free choice, whether at existential or spiritual levels.

Crystal alluded to 'heart things,' an aspect of transformation, as “*the powers of love and forgiveness and being a bigger person and all those powers, acceptance, conscience, courage*” (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). I felt that Crystal, the Anthroposophist, was possibly referring to her conviction that humans as spiritual beings are imbued with infinite altruistic qualities that connect them to others spiritually, rather than purely from a material perspective or at a base level. Crystal clarified that ‘conscience’ is a person's moral centre and impulse to care.

Counselling as an empowering process

Alluding to counselling, Crystal clarified, “*The whole process of counselling is an empowering process, but that process specifically is resourcing and empowering*” (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). Crystal clarified that individuals have power that

motivates and directs their actions to create life or expose dynamics that stymie personal power. Crystal explained that this is an innate human capacity. She furthermore clarified that counselling as an empowering process aids individuals in discovering inner resources or strengths to realise their wishes or aspirations to be grounded, focused or creative. Additionally, counselling creates the conditions for individuals to be demonstratively loving and can communicate love or disapproval.

Later in the interview, Crystal asked herself whether clients were more assertive or empowered as a therapy outcome. She asked, "*Are they strong? Are they more resilient after being more empowered through working with you?*" (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). To me, Crystal, as a reflective practitioner and accountable to herself and her clients, possibly self-audited or self-assessed the transformative effects of her psychospiritual counselling on clients. Additionally, Crystal mentioned, "*Then you must come back and face whatever is possibly holding you down - create an empowerment sequence or method, a new boundary, and test those resources*" (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). Crystal implied that empowering client progress was vital and ascertaining how to improve a session or better help a client. Furthermore, Crystal clarified that psychospiritual counselling empowered persons to face their fears and overcome whatever is preventing or blocking their growth by developing self-love and self-belief. Furthermore, Crystal clarified that part of the empowering process is to build a secure attachment with a client that encourages personal growth or transformation, while at the same time maintaining a safe space by keeping boundaries.

Working holistically using psychophonetics

Touching on resilience, Crystal said that "*working holistically is good for resilience*" (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). Crystal clarified that she integrates and incorporates the creative arts such as music and gesture, imagination, art, and poetry as alternative ways of strengthening and empowering individuals to overcome adversity.

Crystal said,

I can keep on looking, and if something comes up, I can take a step closer and support their inner life to be valued and come out, and I guess, its, again, the feeling safe with

you, and you are not being personal by revealing your own needs and feelings too at times. I mean, you do that sometimes, and that's part of being authentic as a counsellor, but essentially you are making a space that is in no way about you. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

I felt that she paid careful attention to her clients' narratives, and if something significant emerged, she would further explore it with the client, depending on the level of trust that they had developed. Crystal implied that if a client did not have a secure attachment with her as a therapist, it would possibly be difficult for them to break down their walls or defences. I notice that of my clients, too, who only open if they trust me, which I consider normal. I sensed that Crystal shared about herself so clients would be less afraid to disclose their inner lives. I feel it is a great strategy to break a client's resistance to transformation and healing.

Crystal said,

Yes, well to actually try and find that centre. To be centred in their own lives. Being the more worldly, there is a lot of exploitation of the senses and many dependencies there. Then being in the other, there is a lot of escape. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

I sensed that Crystal possibly alluded to her goals for therapy, namely, to assist her clients in being grounded in their inner lives or moral centre and to draw strength and meaning from them. Perhaps, Crystal felt that her clients gave into the temptation of materialism or consumerism and that they were possibly addicted to them. To me, Crystal was feasibly referring to hedonism. Hedonism ascribes to seeking contentment as a way of life, and a choice individuals make with others that, in a sense, is driven by a search for happiness and fulfilment of their desires or wants (Reath, 2006, p. 2; Scarpi, 2020). Crystal then explores the rationale for working holistically to enhance resilience.

Grounding methods

Crystal explained that if she were employing psychophonetics, she would utilise audio, mind and other exercises to build a person's human aura or energy. Also, Crystal said she uses praise, reassurance, or support with relaxation techniques. Crystal said,

But you know, I suppose twenty years ago I was teaching relaxation. People know they have to get de-stressed, to love their lives and not be anxious. I mean, we have now so many difficult things to deal with. Most people are dealing with huge levels of anxiety, insomnia, and other stress-able things, so you know, I am not against the mindfulness thing. Still, I guess I have my grounding methods for centring, rhythmical walking, rhythmical breathing, and they are still pretty useful practices. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). Crystal explained that people are mindful of how stressful their lives have become and are, which adversely affects their physical wellbeing, and what they must do to regain a level of inner peace and tranquillity. Perhaps Crystal suggests clients do not need reminding to engage in mindfulness. Moreover, Crystal clarified that she, as an Anthroposophist, transitioned from mindfulness to new relaxation techniques that help centre her clients. Crystal described grounding as a breathing exercise that allowed her client's breathing to release energy back into the earth. Additionally, Crystal clarified that centring is a form of 'cleansing' and 'heart breathing' that enables clients to discover their focus in the centre of the mind, the centre of the heart or feeling, and the centre in the belly that symbolises the body. This exercise, as Crystal described, aims to align the mind, emotions, and body. I resonate with Crystal as I feel a sense of oneness, purification and revitalisation spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically when I engage in rhythmic breathing. After discussing holistic healing, Crystal examines operating with symbols as integral to her therapeutic modality.

Training to work with symbols

Crystal explained that she has *“very strong training working with symbols. Symbols resonated personally with me, that was part of my transpersonal training”* (Int 5-para-17). Crystal had a natural affinity for icons, a part of her formal training in Anthroposophy. She clarified that some symbols are personal, for example, a sunrise, and others are universal, such as symbols used in churches or the reading of tarot, which dates to Egyptian times. Crystal added, *“I found that very helpful for putting new types of resources in place that could help people”* (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). Crystal clarified that she realised that icons were probably beneficial, healing and transformative, as they positively impacted people.

Self-disclosure

I mean, if they want to know something about you, then you tell them a small amount, but it's only ever to benefit the session. It's never really something you need to do, so you keep on opening to them, which is a powerful thing you do. We don't have time to do that in our day-to-day interactions normally. They are very, I don't know, what's the word, they are very stilted in a way, our ordinary day to day exchanges, there is often not time for someone to have the time to or have that space to know what their deeper feelings are or what their higher feelings are. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal appropriately self-discloses to clients if she considers it therapeutically beneficial. Self-disclosure is a broad and complex term that describes the act of unveiling in trust what is hidden, reserved or obscure, consciously, or unintentionally, of one's true self to another (Farber, 2006). Crystal explained that her rationale for self-disclosure was to enhance or advance a therapeutic session with clients. Crystal perceives that ordinary possibly people do not meaningfully engage with each other and that their interactions are sometimes superfluous. Hence, ordinarily, people probably desist from discovering each other because of their preoccupations or the reluctance or suspicions of others. Following this segment on self-disclosure, Crystal then discusses Anthroposophy.

SECTION 3

Anthroposophy

The human person in Anthroposophy

Crystal said that *"the human being, as you know is vast, huge, deep, mysterious and angelic and huge in their own individuality"* (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). Crystal implied that the inner self is obscure, unobservable, and unfathomable. She explained that as an Anthroposophist, she believes that humans are spiritual beings in the making and that our individualities are retained after undergoing many lifetimes, rebirths, or reincarnations, earning many unique qualities and colours in that process. I understood that Crystal alluded to the state of a person who has been rid of the ego and had possibly arrived at a higher spiritual level of existence. Crystal said,

the thinking and the willing, have become separated now because of an expansion of the etheric body and it means that humanity is beginning to cross the threshold, so we have to keep our thinking and our willing in mind by our own will and that is a terribly difficult thing to do, because you know, there is no such thing. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal refers to the activation of the soul or energy body when a person falls asleep or enters a trance. I feel that Crystal implied that if a person could not permit the mind to still be in such a state, it causes inner conflict and does not allow the energy bodies to function. The etheric or “vital body” is non-physical, mystical, and accountable for bodily, rational, and affective growth (Clemen, 1924, p. 282; Ullrich, 2008, p. 253).

Modelling an Anthroposophical understanding of being human

Crystal said, *"if you can just reflect a little bit of that back to the client, it is good for them and good for their hearts"* (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). Crystal perhaps felt that some of her clients had a contemporary, secular, or scientific understanding of being human. Additionally, her clients were probably lacking in self-worth and self-confidence or were depressed or feeling hopeless. Moreover, she felt that clients would be helped if they discovered how Anthroposophy has shaped who and what she is. Crystal said,

I work with the model that we have a very deep and accountable type of conscience, one of our spiritual aspects, and that if you can bring people back to that, they will collapse. They'll weep because they know where they've gone wrong. They know how they've hurt themselves, hurt their family, hurt somebody. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

I sensed that Crystal invited her clients to perhaps reflect on their lives, choices and impact on themselves and others. To me, Crystal maybe meant that she challenged her clients to take responsibility or be accountable for their actions and let go of their relational hurts and resentments. I have experienced this in psychospiritual counselling as I appeal not so much to their conscience but to my clients' goodness and ask them, ‘Is this who you are? Is this how you want to be remembered?’ Crystal said, *"I work strongly with the intelligence that comes from understanding that the heart is the centre of the soul"* (Crystal, personal

communications, March 23, 2019). To me, when Crystal refers to intelligence, she is presumably not referring to rationality or cognition but rather to an Anthroposophical perspective of the intellect, which is united to the spirit, self, or soul. In that sense, I deem the heart is like a linkage to the soul and works in tandem with it. This section on Crystal's understanding of the human person through the lens of Anthroposophy led to her discussion on the notion of self.

The self in Anthroposophy

Crystal said,

In Anthroposophy, the self itself is a body. Working either from a fourfold model, which is body, soul, spirit, self, or you're working from a ninefold, three physical bodies, three soul bodies, three spiritual bodies and the self. So, it is very complex. And this is the Anthroposophical model. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal explained the crux of Steiner's Anthroposophy, which sought to explain the connection between matter and spirit. From my studies in philosophy, I realised that this debate on consciousness pre-existed Steiner. However, Crystal's summarized Steiner's four-fold concept of the person visualised a vessel comprising of the physical, ether, astral and ego or the I. To me, the 'I' referred to is a person's identity (Schieren, 2011). Crystal recently clarified that the nine-fold model was condensed by Steiner to seven. In the following section I offer a more detailed explanation of Anthroposophy.

According to Clemens (1924), Anthroposophy states that the human person is not only a conglomeration of body, soul, and spirit but contains seven other aspects within those three broad categories. The ethereal body, which gives birth to the physical body, is responsible for human dispositions, memories, and procreative elements. Clemens (1924, p. 283) describes that, in contrast to the ethereal body, the physical body is concerned with procreation: the quest for immortality through generativity. The astral body is synonymous with human passion (Clemens, 1924, 283). Referring to the soul, Clemens (1924, p. 283) states that the soul as a category comprises the "I-Body", which consists of thoughts or engages the intellectual faculty. Lastly, the spirit focuses on its life-giving character or anima. Anthroposophy views the spirit as comprising three elements in Sanskrit: *manas* (memory),

budhi (intellect), and *Atma* (self, soul, part of Brahma). In addition, Clements (1924, p.283) asserts that the spirit helps humans appreciate aesthetics, goodness, and truth. From my readings of Hinduism, '*Atman*' is the ground of all reality and signifies a person's life and death, reincarnation, and the soul's immortality (Black, 2007, pp. 1-27). Nevertheless, in Vedic Hinduism, the *Atman*, the self, was also referred to as the body and soul (Black, 2007, p. 30).

Crystal's study on the self and Anthroposophy

Crystal said,

In that dissertation [Master of Counselling], I looked at all the models, of self and ego, of the earlier psychotherapists. Nothing is that different. It is just that in the Anthroposophical model, it is more complex. I think that's because, on the spiritual level, there is a certain concurrence because those are spiritual facts. That's how it is. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

I discerned that in her research, Crystal learned that earlier research on the nature of humans and personalities, while identical in some respects, lacked the complexity or depth of Anthroposophy. Perhaps Crystal alluded to Anthroposophy's multidimensional understanding of the self as a liberated, self-reliant, and mindful being separate from the external world (Schieren, 2022). Crystal is possibly suggesting that this kind of dualistic thinking isolates or disconnects the human person from nature, the universe, or others (Schieren, 2022). From my readings of Anthroposophy, I discovered that it embraces spiritual realities that science rejects because they are beyond the purview of the senses and are therefore deemed untrustworthy and empirically unprovable (Bradley, 2011; Etherington, 2004; Ross et al., 2013; Steiner, 1904). I sensed that Crystal implied that the mystical world is harmonious possibly because of her belief that, in essence, it is good. Using her understanding of self, Crystal then illustrates the spiritual nature of the central self.

The central self that post-modernists deny

Crystal said,

I think Victor Frankel, way back then, said this [self] is our most valuable asset, our central self, which most people in a postmodern world don't even think exists anymore, that we are just a conglomeration of influences, pretty horrendous. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal perhaps implied that people today believe they are rational, autonomous, independent, and free and therefore are not answerable to any external notion of what it means to be human, whether it be spiritual or cultural. It is something that I, too, struggle with philosophically and it frightens me. Crystal clarified that the children have a sense of justice, indicating the existence of a core identity or a moral centre. However, she further explained that these days, adult immaturity is encouraged by many social and personal forces that are self-seeking and need status, power, or some personal fulfilment. We live in a sea of images and ideas, so finding true purpose and identity becomes increasingly tricky. Crystal seemed to point to the increasing disenchantment with religion or spirituality in an increasingly post-Christian, secularised world, which she finds appalling. I can identify with Crystal, and I remember feeling this earlier in my priesthood, but a monk allayed my fears by saying, "As long as they do not reject themselves, God won't mind. I am sure He is not losing any sleep over it."

Affirmations an aspect of assertiveness

Crystal then said,

I do work with affirmations, but affirmations, I think, are an aspect of assertiveness in a way - finding the true centre and the true feelings. So, they have to be done carefully so that they're coming from a true place, and not a place that in any way deviates from the person taking full responsibility for that relationship with themselves. So, they are quite a learnt skill (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal links encouragement with authenticity, a process of discovering a person's central or genuine self, identity, and feelings. According to Potts & Potts (2013), assertiveness is a conscious attitude to grow in genuineness that increases an individual's capacity to embrace

life's challenges serenely and positively. Additionally, I sensed that Crystal implied that in trying to open a person to journey inwards, she needed to be cautious and that it is a technique she has honed over time. Crystal said, "*They might come into counselling thinking it's all about them, but if you can get them thinking, well, it isn't about you, but it's about the other, or the world*" (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019). Crystal possibly meant that her role was to educate her clients to appreciate that psychospiritual counselling was not an inward-looking exercise; instead, it is about discovering that connections are a vital aspect of a person's identity.

Reality is one

When I'm disconnected, I know it's an illusion because I'm never disconnected. No one is ever disconnected. We are connected to everything. I mean, whether that is just the physical world or the spiritual world, we are connected to all of it. We don't know it sometimes, and how we can use that to our advantage. (Crystal, personal communications, March 23, 2019).

Crystal was affirming a core belief of Anthroposophy, that humans are part of a spiritual cosmos and that everything in the universe is interconnected and one. I felt that Crystal implied that perhaps when people suffer or are vulnerable, they wrongly perceive themselves to be alone and isolated as they grapple with human relationships. Crystal suggested that clients are possibly unaware of their unity with the self, others, and cosmos. Hence, they did not view their spiritual connections as a resource of inner power and strength to overcome their adversities and experience transformation.

From my Indian cultural heritage and studies of Indian philosophy I infer that Crystal referred to 'maya' when she used the term 'illusion.' According to Rambachan (2006, pp. 1-18), in Hindu Philosophy, *Advaita* or non-dualism, holds that all reality is an extension or part of the one Reality (Brahma or God). Humans perceive objects as separate and distinct from each other. However, *Advaita* holds that all distinctions are an illusion or 'maya'. For example, the earth is perceived as separate from Brahma or God rather than an extension of the one Reality. According to Ullrich (2008, p. 57), in anthroposophy, the cosmos and humans originate from a "godly-spiritual-primordial earth, and each successive reincarnation ultimately leads to the "spiritualisation of the physical body" and a return to its original state. I understand this to

mean that humans have a spiritual origin and that with each rebirth, humans potentially, move a step closer to their divinisation. The expression, "I am brahman *aham brahmāsmi*," reflects the unity of Brahman and the soul or self in Hindu spirituality which is the ultimate aim of the Yoga (Rambachan, 2006, p. 32).

Conclusion

I sought to discover how Crystal's psychotherapy seen through the lens of humanistic psychology, Anthroposophy, psychophonetics, or the expressive arts, was transformative. I introduced Crystal and explored her understanding of conversational counselling from a humanistic and transpersonal perspective that explored the self and transformation. I then devoted a section to Anthroposophy, concerning spirituality, self, and Crystal's understanding of the human person through her transpersonal lens.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience – Teilhard de Chardin

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to bring closure to my educational sojourn in psychospiritual counselling as transformative learning that enhances resiliency. I contemplate my transformation as a spiritual being and researcher in this chapter. Moreover, over the last six years of research, beginning at Murdoch University and then transferring to Edith Cowan University, I endeavoured to make sense of my participants' narratives and voices while acknowledging my paradigms as a cultural insider within the Catholic Church and as a psychospiritual counsellor. I concede that authoring this research dissertation has been a profoundly enriching experience and an excruciatingly agonising technique of critical self-reflection and critical thinking, analogous to a woman birthing a child.

The format of the chapter is as follows: I briefly re-examine the beginnings of my academic journey and discuss the rationale for my research which investigates if psychospiritual counselling can be perceived and comprehended as transformative education with potential for resilience enhancement. Following this, I revisit my three research questions and examine the findings reinforced by existing literature. In the next section, I explore my concluding reflections and suggestions, followed by what I learned from this research and my conclusion of this chapter.

1. How do psychospiritual counsellors experience psychospiritual counselling as transformative education that has the potential to enhance resiliency?

Transformative education

Although all participants and I share a common faith heritage, I am amazed at the uniqueness and diversity of our insights into psychospiritual counselling as a form of transformative education for enhancing resiliency. Likewise, transformative learning refers broadly to "processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualises and interacts with the world" (Hoggan et al., 2016, p. 2). Jason alluded to

transformative learning as maybe unlocking the unconscious mind and addressing mental health concerns to wholistically bring about character transformation by breaking down client resistance, which causes psychopathologies (Thornton & Sigma, 2013). Chantelle suggested transformative learning is perhaps tapping into a client's spiritual or inner resources to enhance resilience. Likewise, Crystal perceived transformative learning as fortitude and courage to take adult ownership of disintegrative behaviours. As a psychospiritual counsellor, I experience psychospiritual counselling as an authentic transformative educational view of the human person. It is multidisciplinary and multiparadigmatic and includes differing historic-social-spiritual paradigms of what it means to be an integrated or transformational human in potentiality (Taylor et al., 2012).

Spiritual emergencies and transformation

Psychospiritual counsellors assert and experience spiritual emergencies as fundamentally transformational. Jason alluded to a spiritual emergency as a quantum change, while Chantelle explained it as transformational pain. As an Anthroposophist, Crystal referred to a spiritual emergency as a natural expression of human development. A spiritual emergency is an experiential and critical phenomenon wherein an individual undergoes a profound psychological transformation that affects the person's entirety – psychological, emotional, sensory, perceptual, cognitive, and bodily (Watson, 1994). I consider a spiritual emergency an invitation to uncover my past, encounter my true self, my innermost mind or thoughts, and a world of spirituality, which is restorative, empowering, liberative, transcending, and transformative. According to Collins (2008, p. 505), a spiritual emergency can be a "catalyst for a transformation leading to personal growth."

I realised that my participants' personal experiences, spiritual emergencies, insights into their spiritualities and education may have influenced their perspectives of the transformative nature of psychospiritual counselling. They did not view their spiritual emergency as a pathological phenomenon. Research in religion and spirituality attest that religion and spirituality are inner resources or protective factors that offer adult learners undergoing a spiritual emergency a new vision, purpose or meaning in life as they build knowledge through imagery, symbolism, and consciousness (Snider & McPhredan, 2014; Stark & Bonner, 2012; Tisdell & Tolliver, 2003).

A holding place to voice stories

I learned that Chantelle perceived psychospiritual counselling as a holding space for clients to voice their pains and unpack their stories. Likewise, Jason examined how his clients' experiences impacted upon their emotions and every dimension of their lives. Jason referred to psychospiritual counselling safe space wherein clients experience wholeness at physical, emotional, and psychic levels if wholistic transformation were to occur (Bohm, 2002, p. 4). Chantelle clarified that psychospiritual counselling or spiritual accompaniment is about attending to clients' stories and their desire for spiritual, holistic spiritual integration. Spiritual accompaniment endeavours to empathetically help individuals to process their stories or experiences and integrate their lives with the transcendent as the ground of their being or ultimate value (Schneiders, 1989, p. 9).

I understood that my participants offer clients a safe space to touch their innermost pains and vulnerabilities, to facilitate healing and authentic transformation. Mental health experts might dispute that spirituality is vital to healing, but individuals with spirituality see it as vital to their trauma recovery (Park et al., 2017). For my participants, creating a secure space for clients to voice their stories meant offering them an opportunity to grow in authenticity, personal transformation, and enhanced resilience. Psychospiritual counselling helps clients to articulate what it means to be human as beings who are in the process of becoming their authentic selves in the world (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Muto & Martin, 2009). In addition, psychospiritual counsellors experience psychospiritual counselling strengthens clients' sense of bonding, intimacy, or connectedness to others, and it provides the necessary conditions, so their true self emerges as transformed individuals with enhanced resilience (Van Kaam, 1969).

Transformation and self-transcendence

Crystal and Jason implied that transformation is perhaps synonymous with psychospiritual counselling, wherein clients sometimes achieve their fullest potential for wholeness by tapping into their spiritual and inner resources to experience lasting transformation and enhanced resilience. As a psychospiritual counsellor, I view psychospiritual counselling as an aspect of transformative education that incorporates faith as an extension of God's vision for creating a new humanity, a new human reality. I consider psychospiritual counselling as a self-transcending experience wherein clients discover their true selves as spiritual or

embodied beings transformed by God's love (Haynes, 2016). Humans cannot be considered human without personal meaning, freedom, responsibility, and creativity. Psychospiritual counselling recognises that spirituality is inherently a transformational means to self-actualisation and self-transcendence (Van Kaam, 1961; Schneiders, 1989).

The love of God is central to psychospiritual counselling, and genuine transformation refers to a critique of an individual's assumptions. Chantelle refers to the love of God as helping clients develop and transcend their own vulnerabilities. Jason alludes to love as bringing about character transformation and an experience of recovery. To me, the love of God was key to instilling hope and fostering transformation in my clients, especially those living desperate lives. According to Tolliver and Tisdell (2006), transformation encompasses every dimension of an individual's personality. Furthermore, according to Taylor et al. (2012), psychospiritual counselling transformation comprises a multiparadigmatic and multidisciplinary perceptive of humans within a socio-historical spiritual setting. Chantelle speaks of this love as transforming her clients' lives. Furthermore, Chantelle clarified that the love of God in a person energizes, ushers growth, improves resilience, and empowers transformation. Jason implied that psychospiritual counselling, as an experience of love, heals emotions and that it transforms individuals so that they can flourish. As I comprehend it, self-transcendence refers to a movement wherein fractured humans gather up the broken pieces of their fragmented existences in the hope of transforming physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually and becoming whole.

A place of healing

My research indicated that Crystal, Chantelle, and I perceived psychospiritual counselling as a place of encounter with the divine wherein clients, if open to the experience, potentially experience transformation and holistic healing (Bragdon, 2012; Kaam, 1979; Strawson, 2010). Jason referred to his psychotherapy as a ministry of healing, as the inner mind is the world of spirituality. In psychospiritual counselling, commonly referred to as spiritual companionship, Chantelle and Jason emphasised that perhaps psychospiritual counselling can be an opportunity for clients to share their deepest selves, touch their emotions and experience transformation by accessing alternative lifegiving and healing emotions with a safe and secure therapeutic relationship (Greenberg et al., 2018; Greenberg & Pos, 2007).

God is the ultimate healer and resource for individuals undergoing a spiritual emergency. Hence, in psychospiritual counselling, a fragmented client seeks accompaniment to experience healing, wholeness and holiness, and a reconnection to God or a Higher Power (Cashwell & Young, 2014). As I do, Chantelle and Jason recognised God as the healer in psychospiritual counselling. Chantelle and Crystal experienced psychospiritual counselling as a nurturing spiritual environment wherein fragmented or wounded clients reconnected to their innermost selves and others and tapped into the power of their spiritual worlds or encountered the divine as a healer. Jason elucidated that he cultivated a collaborative relationship with his clients to aid them in accessing their innermost thoughts, which was their spiritual world. Cashel and Young (2014) illustrate that in psychospiritual counselling, fragmented clients seek accompaniment to experience healing, wholeness and holiness, and a reconnection to God or a Higher Power.

Psychospiritual counselling for Chantelle is about healing clients so they can move on from hurtful experiences. Catharsis is not a negation of painful feelings, fear or purging emotions in an ethical sense but healing emotions (Golden, 1962). Jason perceived healing as a recovery process that helped restore broken relationships, balm wounded emotions and traumas, and bring about wholeness. I view healing as bandaging inner wounds with the healing love of Jesus. Jason emphasised that healing emotions are a point of entry into the inner mind.

A collaborative journey

Jason and Crystal acknowledged that their clients were the experts of their own lives and that psychospiritual counselling was a partnership or a collaborative journey towards transformation and enhancing resiliency. Nevertheless, they saw psychospiritual counselling as an opportunity to build trusting relationships that culminate in healing and transformation rather than enabling a co-dependent relationship. According to Pelling et al. (2007, p. 12), counselling is a facilitative or integrative process that aims to enhance personal growth, self-awareness, and self-confidence.

Chantelle explained that psychospiritual counselling is a journey wherein clients need to have a sense of self, process and accept their pains if it is to become transformed and enhance their resilience. Rolheiser (1999, as cited in Engel, 2005) describes authentic, life-giving contemporary Christian spirituality as a new journey from inner restlessness to peace, which

involves integrating ritualistic community practices and social action as central to the incarnation of Christ. I infer that psychospiritual counselling recognises that Christ is an integral part of a person's journey and that His life is a model of personal transformation that enhances resilience in the face of adversities and life challenges. Moreover, psychospiritual counselling is an invitation to clients to enter their own journey, their spiritual core, and experience transformation. For Jason, psychospiritual counselling was a journey into the inner mind. Crystal explained that psychospiritual counselling was a journey about forming connections with self, others, and the cosmos.

A discovery of love

Jason clarified that psychospiritual counselling is the rediscovery of original love as love is the reason why humans are born and that mental distress robs humans of that capacity. Chantelle conveyed that psychospiritual counselling is about recognising client goodness and empowering clients to express and rediscovery love for others. At the same time, Crystal says love is a part of the moral centre that a person operates and experiences spiritual transformation and enhanced resilience. I, as a psychospiritual counsellor, hold that a personal relationship with a loving God entails authentic transformation and improved resilience, which are integral to psychospiritual counselling as transformative learning. The love of God is inalienable or inseparable from the human love of self and others, including the cosmos and ecology (Jeanrond, 2010, p. 242).

Connection, integrity, and attachment

In this research, it was apparent that Chantelle's, Jason's, and Crystals' and my spirituality shaped our notions of humans and human dynamics, affecting our understanding of psychospiritual counselling. Interested in spiritual emergence, Crystal expressed that humans are spiritual and are connected to self, others, and the cosmos. Crystal perhaps perceived psychospiritual counselling as an opportunity to support clients to realise that they are relational beings and are mutually interdependent and that alienation, separation, or disconnection diminishes their capacity for self-transcendence and transformation (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Muto & Martin, 2009). Furthermore, Crystal probably perceived this connection as an inner resource that potentially enhances personal transformation. Jason

referred to integration or wholeness as an individual's connection to body, mind, and spirit if there are to become the person they are meant to be (Muto & Martin, 2009).

Listening to my participants, I conceded that perhaps Chantelle did not comprehend psychospiritual counselling in narrow spiritual or religious terms but saw it as fostering integrity or wholeness that triggered personal transformation and enhanced resiliency. I agree with Lephherd (2015), who articulates that spirituality and religion holistically are about integrity or the completeness of a person (p. 566). Chantelle viewed suffering as integral and not alien to human nature, acknowledging that therapy was core to Christian spirituality as it could potentially transform a client's suffering into compassion (Cashwell & Young, 2014). Likewise, I agree with Chantelle and accept that my spirituality and psychospiritual counselling have permitted me to transcend my traumatic past and become a compassionate person. I believe that spirituality is a protective or coping mechanism crucial to trauma recovery and is a powerful resource for personal transformation and enhanced resiliency (Park et al., 2017). Resilience is a multidimensional reality that impacts a person's emotional, spiritual, physical, social, cultural, and relational lives differently (Herman et al., 2011; Park et al., p. 186).

Critical self-reflection as transformative

Chantelle clarified that critical self-reflection is an internal process wherein clients self-reflect and harness their inner spiritual resources to experience transformation and enhanced resilience. Crystal referred to her clients' capacity for critical self-reflection and their discovery of new insights and strategies to bring about personal transformation and enhanced resilience. According to Newcomb et al. (2015), transformative insights reside in a person. I experience psychospiritual counselling as a way of discernment or critical self-reflection wherein a client makes God the centre and locus of his personal and professional life and thus experiences transformation. Jason regarded psychospiritual counselling as recognising and harnessing his clients' capacity for insight into their lives and their aspirations or strategies for personal transformation. Mezirow (1998) explained that human beings make sense of their experiences by reflection, critical reflection and critical self-reflection. For Mezirow, critical reflection involves discerning the validity of theoretical predispositions that prop up my beliefs, propositions, or life goals (Mezirow, 1997). In psychospiritual counselling, I engage my clients in critical reflection by supporting them in interpreting their experiences and

assumptions from a multiparadigmatic point of view. I concur with Fook and Gardner (2007), and I assist my clients in embodying these insights by developing new knowledge that creatively challenges and transforms their lives.

Enhancing resilience

Chantelle admitted that psychospiritual counselling improves resilience because clients uncover the truths about themselves and their frailties and can then process their imperfections without becoming dependent on her as their therapist. Jason felt that resilience is a by-product of psychospiritual healing, wherein clients move beyond psychological stuckness. Furthermore, Jason explained that psychospiritual counselling enables clients to become resilient by connecting with others and Self and thus experiencing transformation. Crystal viewed resilience as transformative and asserted that psychospiritual counselling facilitated clients to transcend adversities, flourish as persons and align with a High Power. Resilience is a multidimensional reality that impacts a person's emotional, spiritual, physical, social, cultural, and relational lives differently (Herman et al., 2011; Park et al., 2017, p. 186). I agree with Alvord and Grados (2005) and Herman et al. (2011) that resilience is a source of strength at a cognitive, social, religious, spiritual, or ecological level (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Herman et al., 2011). I experience psychospiritual counselling promoting resilience by enabling clients to relate their spirituality to their fractured lives. In addition, psychospiritual counselling bolsters clients' sense of bonding, intimacy, or connectedness to others and provides the conditions for their true self-emerges as transformed individuals with enhanced resilience (Van Kaam, 1969). In brief, I think that participants viewed psychospiritual counselling as helping clients recognise the power of spirituality as a force of transformation that enhanced resilience.

Chantelle possibly felt psychospiritual counselling was about assisting clients in tapping into their inner resilience and experiencing their emotional or mental sufferings as transformative rather than as soul-destroying or something they can never move beyond. Crystal referred to her experiences of psychospiritual counselling as an exploration of untouched areas of their lives and spiritually emerging out of the dark phases of their lives. According to Snider and McPhedran (2014), belief in God enables individuals to operate out of a higher mode of control, resilience, emotional regulation, and hope. Expressed differently, Crystal and Chantelle alluded that therapists probably needed to create therapeutic conditions wherein

clients could engage with the divine in the innermost part of their beings and discern their existence through a spiritual lens. Aten et al. (2011) state that mindfulness involves self-transcendence and transformation and is a potent means of mental wellness enhancement and spiritual integration.

Psychospiritual counselling as healing

2. How do psychospiritual counsellors experience their role as transformative educators for themselves and their clients?

Chantelle, Jason, Crystal, and I are spiritual, integrated, and secure therapists who recognise our role as transformative educators who spiritually accompany their clients. Chantelle clarified that her role is to spiritually accompany her clients to develop critical self-reflection and critical thinking to transform themselves and their circumstances. Jason stated that his role was to spiritually accompany his clients to journey into their inner minds and see their situations anew. Crystal viewed her role as helping clients to take responsibility for their lives. Schneiders (1989) holds that spirituality helps integrate aspects of self, lived experiences, and academic formation with a relational understanding of spirituality that fosters personal growth and living out one's spirituality in the context of a living reflection.

Peeling off defensive layers

Crystal comprehended her role as helping clients peel off their defensive layers and develop and operate out of their moral centre, using their inner spiritual resources. This is similar to how Train and Butler (2013) explain the role of a psychospiritual therapist, which is to bring the unconscious to consciousness and facilitate self-awareness in clients who are either guarded or so deeply hurt that they put up defensive walls to shield themselves from further hurt. Vital to Chantelle's role as a reflective practitioner modelling transformative education is motivating, instigating, and encouraging clients to explore their lived experiences, infinite potentialities, and inner spiritual resources as embodied persons, as her metaphor of the diamond suggests. Crystal emphasised that a crucial aspect of her role as a transformative educator was to reflect wholeness, groundedness and centredness that transcends evidence-based behavioural therapeutic intervention models (Jones, 2010, p. 248; Spalding, 2008; Watson, 1994). Jason emphasised that his role was to facilitate client choice to connect to

their innermost selves and experience transformative wholeness and not see that as his responsibility.

Holistic transformation, modelling healing and wounded healer

Jason alluded that the role of psychospiritual counsellors is to recognise that clients need holistic transformation and that their spiritual emergencies are symptomatic of deeper distress at physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual levels. Moreover, Jason appeared to emphasise his role was to heal ruptures so that clients experience transformative wholeness, and emotional wellness and develop secure attachments.

Crystal taught me that healing is not only an extraneous spiritual gift but that modelling or operating out of a moral centre, and heart powers such as compassion, an intrinsic human quality, are the hallmarks of psychospiritual educators wherein God is at the centre of transformation (Roth, 2018). Similarly, Cashel and Young (2014) state that a facet of psychospiritual counselling transforms a client's suffering into compassion or empathy, an instrument of healing.

I view my role as a psychospiritual counsellor as that of a wounded healer who compassionately alleviates the emotional distress, anxiety, and depression caused by psychospiritual stressors, such as loneliness, lack of intimacy, and relational ruptures, by facilitating psychospiritual transformation (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Muto & Martin, 2009). I see my role as a transformative educator as inseparable from my priesthood and I view a psychospiritual counsellor as an agent or extension of Jesus' transformative and compassionate love (Philibert, 2006). I do not put priesthood aside in counselling as I believe that I am a visible presence of the healing love of Jesus and undeniably view my role as primarily spiritual. Clients see me as an embodiment or representation of Christ, which is perhaps an impossible ideal to live up to as a priest who, in faith, acts in the name and person of Jesus who invests me with His power to bring about transformation (Sykes 2000; Van Niekerk & Niemandt, 2019).

I agree with Van Niekerk and Niemandt (2019) and Molnar (1997) that Jesus is the embodiment of God's love, the centre or locus of my being, and in whom my true self finds its real potentiality. Therefore, my role in psychospiritual counselling is to educate clients on how to become an embodiment of God's love which implies integrity and wholeness or

transformation. I consider Jesus my model educator, the divine transformer and healer of the whole person to integrate body, mind, and spirit (Muto & Martin, 2009). Hence, I resonate with Pope Francis's view that life is like a field hospital, and my role is primarily to bandage people's emotional, psychic, and spiritual wounds. I use the analogy of charred forests in Australia regenerating after bushfires to describe my role as a therapist, a service of love, to help clients experience inner healing and transformation as embodied beings (Wilhoit, 2008).

I acknowledge that fundamental to my role as a wounded healer is the realisation that my existential struggles are a powerful means of teaching and a pathway to inner healing and transformation (Jackson, 2001). I view the collective tragedies of my life as internal resources of empowerment and personal transformation. As a therapist, I facilitate catharsis in clients by exploring ways to tap into their innate capacity to regenerate, reintegrate, reorganise broken dimensions of their lives as embodied beings and make something beautiful of them. Catharsis is not a negation of painful feelings, fear or purging emotions in an ethical sense but healing emotions (Golden, 1962).

Transformation and the transpersonal: self-actualisation and self-transcendence

Jason felt another element of his role was to collaborate with clients to free themselves from psychological stuckness or resistance and experience wellbeing or wholeness by connecting to the transpersonal, which implies personal transformation or development and a deeper relationship with God and others (Mahoney & Pargament, 2004, p. 482). According to Kaam (1961) and Schneiders (1989), one cannot be considered human without personal meaning, freedom, responsibility, and creativity. Psychospiritual counselling recognises that spirituality is inherently a transformational means to self-actualisation and self-transcendence (Van Kaam, 1961; Schneiders, 1989). Chantelle spoke of her role as fostering transformative learning that culminates in self-actualisation and self-transcendence by developing in clients a contemplative stance, the ability to reflect and recognise how God is a part of their lives (Kaam, 1961; Schneiders, 1989). Roth (2018, p. 95) explains that Van Kaam believed that the formation of the person consisted of four zones – 'Intrasphere' or relation to self, 'Situational Sphere' that encompasses our relational immersion within culture or society and the 'Extended World Sphere' that refers to a person's relationship to God.

Therapeutic alliance

Jason stated that his role as a transformative agent was to help clients gain insight into their previous trauma in a safe, secure, non-judgemental therapeutic alliance. Jason viewed a therapeutic alliance as one that was not a top-down or an unequal relationship in which he did not respect his clients' perspectives. Crystal referred her role as a therapist as to create therapeutic alliances that trigger transformation by modelling appropriate emotional responses rather than creating or enabling co-dependent relationships. Therefore, according to Crystal, a therapeutic alliance in psychospiritual counselling helps create equanimity, emotional regulation, and mood stability. Consequently, clients appeared to desist from repeating the same behavioural mistakes and blaming others for them. George and Tomlinson-Clarke (2015, p. 257) state that therapists must realise that resiliency cannot be brought about by wishful thinking but by encouraging clients to challenge structures that inhibit it. Additionally, therapists must engage in capacity building, for example, self-efficacy and regulation or spirituality, across the continuum of a client's lifespan. I understand a therapeutic alliance to be a collaborative working relationship between a client and therapist that is purpose-driven and aims to meet the negotiated goals of therapy whilst recognising the client's capacity for self-agency and self-determination (Muran & Barber, 20210, p. 8).

Crystal voiced that her role as a transformative educator was perhaps vital to creating therapeutic alliances and relationships that discouraged co-dependency and focused on acquisitions of new behaviours and solutions rather than pathologising client presentations (Crockett & Prosek, 2013). Jason echoed that his role was to create a good therapeutic alliance, break down resistance, help clients reconceptualise their past, develop adaptive behaviours or remain stuck in self-destructive or self-sabotaging behaviours. I understand sabotaging behaviour as an individual's choice to engage in self-defeating behaviours, possibly induced by stress or psychological distress or distorted feelings, to ensure or justify any project's negligence, whether personal, interpersonal, or professional (Peel & Caltabiano, 2021).

Provide secure attachment

In addition, participants reiterated that their roles are to provide clients with a secure attachment to obtain in-depth insight into the dynamics that maintain self-sabotaging

behaviour patterns and to reconceptualise anxiety-provoking factors so that lasting healing and transformation from traumas are possible for clients. According to Park et al. (2017), trauma shatters an individual's previously held ideas, potentially devastating their self-identity, sense of trust, and self-assurance, breaking attachment bonds and altering their lived reality, wherein healing is an existential battle. Jason clarified that the therapist's function is to form a secure attachment with clients, as many of them have suffered ruptured attachments. Building a secure attachment with him allows clients to forge a secure attachment to break down inner barriers or defensive walls and experience transformation in unpacking their stories. Furthermore, Jason considered that if clients built a secure attachment within a therapeutic alliance, they could let go of anger, resolve and heal traumas rather than being prisoners of their wounded past. Bowlby (1982) stated that most humans born with an innate psychobiological system form socioemotional bonds or primary attachments with significant others that offer them safety, protection, comfort, and emotional support that impact their lives from birth to death (Granqvist, 2012, p. 49).

Relationships and connections

Crystal discussed that her role was perhaps to help clients develop healthy and mature relationships. Furthermore, Crystal disclosed that her role was to help clients remain consistently positive, gently assertive, articulating themselves well, and having authentic and meaningful interpersonal relationships is not hereditary but learned attributes or qualities. Crystal stated that her role was to assist clients in developing their inner resources and to confront the irrational thoughts and feelings that interfere with their potential to grow into loving, resilient, grounded, focused, accountable, and creative individuals. Chantelle clarified that her role is to restore clients' social relationships and connection to the transcendent so that they experience transformation. Jason explained that healing ruptured relationships connected clients to their true selves. Research showed that participants therapeutically implement Mezirow's concept of transformative learning, which aims to raise their consciousness levels as being in the world capable of spiritual growth, self-emergence, self-transcendence, and self-actualisation. Mezirow held that education critically examines an individual's 'problematic' belief system, ideals, or emotions, tests their assumptions, rationally discusses these normative notions, and collectively arrives at decisions (Mezirow & Taylor, 2010, p. 20). Hence, the role of psychospiritual counsellors as transformative educators is to enable clients to experience relational and spiritual connections so that self-transcend and self-

transform. Psychospiritual counselling recognises that humans are mutually interdependent, and that alienation, separation, or disconnection diminishes their capacity for self-transcendence and transformation (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Muto & Martin, 2009).

Empowerment

Crystal conveyed that psychospiritual counselling is about creating an empowering sequence or process wherein clients experience wholistic transformation and transcendence by utilising their spiritual resources, gaining a new outlook or direction in life, with a congruent therapist who is an agent of the transformation process as revitalisation. For Crystal, psychospiritual counselling is an empowering process that aids clients to attain tranquillity, emotional balance, or regulation rather than being volatile and failing to take responsibility for their actions by projecting blame onto others. Tolliver and Tisdell (2006) are correct to assert that genuine transformation must include "the rational, affective, spiritual, imaginative, somatic, and sociocultural domains through relevant content and experiences" (p. 38).

Chantelle perhaps conceived her role as a spiritual accompanist as being to empower clients to experience transformation and develop a new perspective of life that enabled them to flourish. I realise that authentic transformation entails an individual having a multidisciplinary and multiparadigmatic view of the human person, including differing historic-social-spiritual paradigms or truths of what it means to be an integrated or transformational human in potentiality (Taylor et al., 2012). Jason understood psychospiritual counselling as a source of empowerment as clients recognise their own potentialities to grow in freedom. According to Pugh et al. (2010, p. 5), self-transcendence and self-transformation are commitments contingent on an individual's self-identity regarding goals, values, and beliefs. Additionally, Jason viewed empowerment as helping clients to transcend their hurtful pasts and repair fractured relationships.

Participants viewed psychospiritual counselling as a liberating and empowering process that enables clients to critique unjust social structures. Empowering clients is about giving them a voice to critique unjust social structures and a means of radical transformation by connecting their psyche to faith (Ellens, 2009). Chantelle and Crystal viewed transformation and healing not merely as an individual phenomenon but inextricably linked to an individual's social web. Transformative learning recognises that an individual is a part of a societal web, wherein

language and culture foster cohesion, uniformity and even stability (Hoggan et al., 2016). Psychospiritual counselling is akin to transformative learning, wherein clients critically think and discern existence and potentiality, critique belief systems, and arrive at informed decisions to create a better world (Bowell & Kemp, 2015; Carrington & Selva, 2010). Therefore, society needs a mechanism by which to realise that assumptions need to be challenged by healthy dissent; otherwise, language or culture become tools of control to maintain an elusive sense of social harmony (Hoggan et al., 2016).

Compassionate listening and healing

Chantelle spoke about her role as a compassionate listener in helping clients discover or encounter God or Higher Power within, to connect with their authentic selves, vulnerabilities, and personal or painful relational journeys. Chantelle and Crystal indicated that the role of a therapist is to facilitate or make that space for clients to voice their stories and be empowered to transform and heal. Chantelle stressed the need to be present, listen attentively to clients, and recognise their inner goodness as they voiced their stories. According to Christian spirituality, contemplative listening is understood as "bringing a full-bodied, loving presence to the person before you and what is said and what remains unsaid. Contemplative listening seeks to honour the presence of the Holy Spirit in the speaker and between the listener and speaker" (Liebert, 2008, p.xix). Likewise, I listen in silence to my clients communicate clients communicate their stories and empower them to touch their pains before helping them process emotions vital to healing trauma and pain. Chantelle expressed the importance of understanding her clients' concepts of self within a contextual framework, seeing their present circumstances concerning it and how she spiritually accompanies them. Schneiders (1989) holds that spirituality fosters personal growth and living out one's spirituality in the context of a living reflection. According to Cashel and Young (2014), psychospiritual counselling is an instrument of healing that seeks to help clients voice their stories actively.

Pain and transformation

Chantelle referred to her role as accompanying clients who are in pain as she believes that through pain, transformation occurs. Jason and Chantelle speak of clients 'touching' their pain if clients were to experience inner transformation and transcend their sufferings. As a wounded healer, I, too, encourage clients to touch the broken dimensions of their lives if they

are to transcend their sufferings and undergo personal transformation. Jason stressed that he educated or challenged clients who are stuck to gain transformative insights into their intrapsychic dynamics, undo them, and journey towards wellness and positivity. I also agree with Van Kaam (1969) that an essential role of a psychospiritual counsellor is to recognise the link between the pain of personal crisis and transformation. Hence, I lovingly challenge clients terrified of surrendering their false selves, security, irrational thinking, and past behaviours to embrace a new way of being self (p.17). According to Collins (2008), psychospiritual counselling provides the space for clients to contextualise, unpack or voice their spiritual emergencies or intrapsychic presentations and, through catharsis, experience its transformative powers.

Connecting to self, others, and God

In this research, participants described their role in helping clients connect to their deepest selves, others, and God or a Higher Power. Chantelle specifically mentioned that her role was to assist clients in accessing God within themselves and experiencing God's power and movement within their lives. Crystal explained an essential function of a psychospiritual therapist is to motivate, instigate and inspire clients to examine their lived experiences by offering them an education on the infinite possibilities embodied within them. Crystal described her role as overcoming clients' unconscious need to see themselves as victims, while not discounting their narratives of trials and tribulations. Moreover, for Jason, love is at the heart of humanity, and therapy's role is to help clients experience love and its liberating power. In addition, Jason elucidated that trauma disconnected people and implied that his role was to restore human connection at the deepest levels, because a person's innermost mind is the world of spirituality. I view my God as my primary attachment figure, and I realise that that is something I unconsciously try and help clients replicate within therapy, as I help them engage with God or a Higher Power. Studies in religion suggest that a person can have a personal relationship with God, experiencing God as unconditional love or as an attachment figure and someone to turn to for safety in times of suffering to feel secure (Granqvist et al. 2010).

Recognising clients as experiential experts of their lives

For Jason, the role of the psychospiritual counsellor is to recognise that clients are the experiential experts of their lives as free and autonomous humans and, crucially, that personal transformation is ultimately their choice and responsibility. Chantelle implies that her role may motivate clients to voice their stories while Crystal viewed her role as helping clients take control and ownership of their behaviours and authentic development. Crystal recognised that clients were autonomous and self-directing individuals who understood their goals in therapy. According to Kegan (1982), human development admits that persons are autonomous, self-directing, or self-determining representatives of their fate capable of achieving their full potentiality as persons. Chantelle viewed herself as a passer-by or partner who accompanied her clients in psychospiritual counselling. At a deeper level, Chantelle stated that her role in psychospiritual counselling was to empower her clients to hope, transform, grow, and transcend their own vulnerabilities by tapping into the transforming love of God within. Chantelle said that for clients to transform, they needed to know that the therapist accepts them unconditionally and is not invested in trying to change them but sees transformation as a choice that clients make. For Chantelle, a non-judgemental attitude was a vital part of not only self-discovery but a client's personal transformation. On a spiritual level, I sensed Chantelle alluded to the dying and rising motif in Christian spirituality that refers to the paschal mystery, Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection and 'their saving significance' for humanity (Harrington, 2006). I view clients as autonomous and self-directing, and I work in partnership and collaboration with my clients. Therefore, my role in psychospiritual counselling is to recognise that clients are capable of transformation and tapping into their inner resources to enhance resilience. Additionally, SBFT, which I utilise as part of my psychospiritual modality, is a collaborative goal-setting process wherein the therapist surrenders any notion of being an expert on a client's problems but initiates a transformative experience for the client (Connie & Metcalf, 2009; Quick, 2008). According to Taylor (2012), Mezirow asserted that individual autonomy lay at the heart of all transformative learning developmentally, allowing for revised meaning-making processes that orient future actions.

Challenging faulty thinking

I realised that participants considered challenging a client's faulty thinking essential to authentic transformation. Chantelle revealed that her role was to bring clients to investigate

their circumstances and maybe unpack their lives, especially their struggles and guilt, not just in the past but in the present, and to explore that in therapy. Jason spoke of disempowering emotions, especially shame, that enabled or maintained the client's self-destructive behaviours. Crystal identified that her role as a transformative educator is being to cognitively reconstruct her clients' obstinate or rigid ideas of themselves or to reconceptualise distorted notions of what relationships are. I also empower clients to reflect critically and discern their incorrect thinking and actions about their calling as Christians to be agents of transformative love. Taylor et al. (2012) reinforce this concept eloquently, saying, "Transformative research involves a process of examining critically our personal and professional values and beliefs, exploring how our life worlds have been governed (perhaps distorted) by largely invisible socio-cultural norms, appreciate our own complicity in enculturating uncritically our students into similar lifeworld, creatively reconceptualising our own professionalism, and committing to transform science education policy, curricula and/or pedagogical practices within our own institutions" (p. 373-387).

Discovering authentic selves, reflecting on transformation

A significant learning from participants was that my role is to create opportunities to educate or conscientise clients, offer hope, and empower them to encounter their innermost authentic selves and actively engage in the transformation of Self and their socio-economic and cultural milieu. Chantelle explained that her role is directing clients to reflect on the core issues affecting them. At the same time, Crystal spoke of assisting clients in discovering their authentic selves so that they encounter their true centre and true feelings if they are to experience personal transformation.

Chantelle disclosed that perhaps another role description was to help clients connect to their authentic selves and their core issues and come to an acceptance of who they are in the here and now. Chantelle referred to this as helping clients explore unexperienced parts of their lives as they may not have accessed their spiritual resources. Jason explained that it was perhaps imperative to reconnect clients with their true selves, which did not mean avoiding emotional issues or traumatic experiences. Crystal revealed that perhaps her function is to challenge her clients' to genuine development if they strive to undergo healing, creatively engage, or voice their uniqueness in enhancing their personal development without sacrificing individuality. Additionally, Crystal emphasised her role is to support clients to explore their

inner selves, remarkably untouched areas of their lives, more profoundly, and re-emerge out of their dark spaces. Furthermore, Crystal's role is to help clients engage or encounter their authentic selves and not hide behind their unconscious minds or defensive walls or barriers.

Jason referred to his role of confronting his clients to emerge from behind their walls or fortresses of fear to voice their stories and ultimately experience healing. For Jason, it was vital to educate clients on navigating their emotional minefields as they cannot dissociate from pain but develop a transformative mindset by tapping into their inner spiritual resources so that healing becomes possible. Hence, if clients gained new insights into overcoming complex schemas, they could transform maladaptive emotional responses into adaptive emotional responses (Greenberg, 2006; Paivio, 2013; Pos & Greenberg, 2007). I realised that my role is to centre clients on their truths, including their authentic personal experiences about others or the environment, not necessarily tied to organised faiths (Gardner, 2011; Schneider, 1989; Young-Eisendrath et al., 2000).

Reconstructing meaning and transformation

Jason and I sense that for clients to transcend their resistance and transform, our role is to help clients reconstruct their perceptions and thinking so that they engage in adaptive behaviours that are transformative, rather than being stuck in destructive emotional states. Hence, Jason and I assist clients in nurturing alternative emotions by attending to, exploring, and reinterpreting narratives and self-reflecting on their experiences to consciously transform as a person, rather than operating out of a maladaptive pattern of behaviour (Greenberg et al., 2018; Greenberg & Pos, 2007). Furthermore, clients' perceptions of their inner experiences trigger new ways of being, feeling, thinking, and acting, leading to emotional and cognitive equilibrium.

Transformative learning welcomes the individual's power to reconstruct meaning as it seeks wholeness and self-actualisation (Michael, 2016). According to Michael (2016), transformative learning includes interactions with the world: self, cosmos and the Transcendent. In this sense, transformative learning is holistic and transcends mere cognitive modification. I learned that Crystal and Jason engaged clients in mentally reconstructing their uncompromising or rigid ideas of themselves and reconfiguring distorted notions of what relationships were as crucial to their function. According to Van Kaam (1969),

psychospiritual counselling admits the distress of personal crisis and transformation and challenges clients fearful of abandoning their false selves, security, irrational thinking, and past behaviours to embrace a new way of being self (p.17).

Role: Balancing the cognitive and non-rational in clients

A vital role of therapists is to balance clients' rationality and spirituality. Jason viewed his work as psychological but recognised that his work on the innermost mind is intrinsically spiritual and embodied. He considered ISTDP as an extension of his former priestly work or ministry. Hence, Jason did not focus only on clients' cognitions but also their innermost feelings. Chantelle did not explicitly voice the compatibility between the cognitive and the non-rational but employed psychological nuances in psychospiritual counselling to empower clientele transformation. Chantelle sought a balance between the rational and non-rational by helping clients move from head to heart and exploring their assumptions. As part of my transformative role, I embrace the sciences and endeavour to broaden clientele perspectives on the compatibility of science and spirituality to foster healing and transformation. I help clients integrate and assimilate positive psychology and spirituality to become a powerful resource to enhance personal resilience and rediscover the transformative value of ethics, spirituality, mysticism, and consciousness (Mälkki, 2010; Vaughan, 1993). This research has taught me that my role as a therapist is not to offer clients a diagnosis without understanding cultural attitudes towards mental health, wellbeing, and transformation (Dow, 2011). In my practice of psychospiritual counselling, I experience reflexivity as an essential ingredient of transformative, identity and psycho-social self-development, which includes critical self-reflection or self-questioning of prior assumptions, values, theoretical predispositions, or value-laden viewpoints (Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003). Guba and Lincoln (1989, as cited in Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003, p. 239) hold that authentic moral learning implies critically exploring and dispassionately deconstructing the hidden assumptions that define a person's cultural, ethical, or moral decision-making processes or identity in the world. Hence, as a spiritual accompanier, Chantelle appeared to develop a rapport with her clientele, listen to their stories, recognise their paradigms, and gently nudge them to make sense of their narratives or lived experiences at a philosophical and socio-cultural level.

3. What strategies do I/psychospiritual counsellors employ to enhance resiliency in clients and myself/themselves?

My first two research queries probed how psychospiritual counselling as transformative education potentially improves resilience and how psychospiritual counsellors, including me, experience our role. As psychospiritual counsellors, we do not dismiss scientific advancement but recognise that science and spirituality are crucial and compatible realities that effect holistic transformation and enhance resilience. Hence, as psychospiritual counsellors, we incorporate our spirituality with theoretical modalities particular to our practice: Chantelle uses spiritual accompaniment Jason, Intensive Short-term Dynamic Psychotherapy, Crystal, Anthroposophy and I, Emotion-Focused Therapy and Solution Focused Brief Therapy combined with an integrated approach.

Compatibility: science and spirituality

My interviews with participants and research opened my eyes to certain strategic commonalities that suggest an appreciation and compatibility of the sciences with psychospiritual counselling. Jason incorporated neuroscience and neurobiology into ISDTP as a strategy to usher in client transformation and enhance resiliency. Analysing my therapeutic strategies, I realise that I integrate positive psychology and spirituality to enhance personal resilience in clients as transformative learning, as I view myself as an instrument of God. I also included evidence-based EFT, SFBT and positive psychology techniques. Chantelle alluded to psychological processes regarding client resistance to touching into their traumas.

Jeeves (2013), while stating that some Christians mistakenly perceive psychology as an archenemy of religion, recognises that many Christian psychologists assume a seamless connection between psychological and spiritual or soul care. Additionally, according to Watts et al. (2016), science and faith are compatible and help to understand better or integrate what is revealed in the depth of human nature, human sciences, and neuroscience. I do not feel threatened by science, and I recognise that scientific knowledge, together with a transpersonal approach to healing, is a strategy for healthy psychological development (Stark & Bonner, 2012).

Intervention strategies to achieve transformation and enhanced resilience

Participants used different intervention strategies to achieve client transformation and collaboratively enhance resilience. Psychospiritual counselling, which is trans-psychological, spiritually alleviates emotional distress, anxiety, and depression caused by psychospiritual stressors such as loneliness, lack of intimacy, and relational ruptures by strengthening psychospiritual transformation (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Muto & Martin, 2009). Chantelle uses spiritual accompaniment to aid clients in integrating their lives with the transcendent as the ground of their being or ultimate value (Schneiders, 1989, p. 9). Jason uses Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP), a condensed therapeutic intervention geared towards rapid and tangible results and client transformation (Della, 2004). Crystal integrates humanistic psychology, anthroposophy, psychophonetics, and the expressive arts to foster transformative learning and enhance resilience. An anthroposophist is an individual who ascribes to Rudolf Steiner's esoteric philosophy of life or worldview that advocates the existence of an invisible spiritual world that is scientifically available to the human experience through contemplation (Ullrich, 2008, 49).

My theoretical underpinnings are in Emotion-Focused and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy. I find these approaches best enable my clients to positively harness their psychological and spiritual resources to become agents of personal transformation, rather than remaining psychologically stuck in ruptured relationships or maladaptive patterns of behaviour (Greenberg et al., 2018, p. 9; Pos & Greenberg, 2007). Additionally, given my international exposure, I have used trauma-informed approaches with Emotion-Focused Therapy and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy to further transformative learning and build resilience. They are evidence-based therapeutic modalities that I incorporate into my practice of psychospiritual counselling as a strategy to transform and heal many of my clients who do not have the luxury of time for extended therapy sessions. Nevertheless, I incorporate the best psychological intervention strategies with my wisdom tradition as I believe that Jesus is the model, the divine transformer and healer of the whole person - body, mind, and spirit (Muto & Martin, 2009).

Modelling critical self-reflection as a strategy

Chantelle alludes to critical self-reflection as part of her contemplative stance, and she models critical self-reflection and critical thinking or interiority that enhances resilience through the grace of God and empowers transformation in her clients. Furthermore, Chantelle utilises self-reflection as a strategy to enable clients to recognise the 'diamond' within their inner spiritual worth, which is a transformative resource. In a letter circulated to his friends in 1968 before his death, Thomas Merton, a Trappist Monk, wrote, "Our real journey is interior; it is a matter of growth, deepening and ever great surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts (Thomas, 200, p. 1). Employing critical self-reflection and critical thinking, akin to discernment, I strategise with clients to tap into their inner spiritual resources, improve resilience and enable them to experience holistic healing as part of transformative learning. Reflexivity is critical to transformative identity and psycho-social self-development, including critical self-reflection or self-questioning of prior assumptions, values, theoretical predispositions, or value-laden viewpoints (Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003). Jack Mezirow (1997) categorises assumptions into cognitive, emotional and reflective levels. I encourage critical self-reflection to upend ingrained religious or spiritual assumptions that seem to stifle newer insights into the Self, obstruct a discovery of the true Self, and to encourage clients to acknowledge that their beliefs of God or the truth are not infallible (Craig, 2000; Haynes, 2016). Psychospiritual counselling, as an aspect of transformative learning, seeks to motivate clients to cultivate new meaning-making attitudes toward the Self as an ever-evolving transformative being that is mature, integrated with the cosmic, material, physical, emotional, spiritual, social, or cultural web of relationships (Illeris, 2014; Mälkki & Green, 2014).

Contemplative listening and stance a strategy

Chantelle perceived listening through a spiritual lens and recognising God is also at work in clients as an effective strategy that she models to clients to trigger transformation in clients. Chantelle modelled or mirrored contemplative listening and a contemplative stance with clients. It was an effective strategy to help clients engage with their innermost core and understand God as a transforming presence within a person's innermost being. This sentiment echoes in St. Augustine's words, "For Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee" (Sheed, 1944, p. 1). As a vital strategy, listening was part of Crystal's psychospiritual counselling, which included Anthroposophy, and addressing

obstacles to moral and spiritual transformation. Jason stated that he used listening as a strategy to listen to their cries for help and assist clients to voice their stories and pain, experiencing healing. I used silence as an effective empowering strategy to help clients process their stories, touch their emotions, cry, experience their powerlessness, and voice their tragic stories in tears. According to Bylsmaet et al. (2019), tears increase serotonin levels linked to behavioural, development and neurological functions that help to emotionally regulate an individual, decrease distress, improve social identity and strengthen attachments.

Strategy to enhance resilience

Chantelle spoke of clients developing a transformative awareness of their spiritual core or the diamond within as a technique to strengthen resilience. Jason's strategy to enhance resilience was to help clients understand themselves and their destructive self-sabotaging behaviours. Crystal enhanced resilience by using a client's wish or desire to foster resilience through the moral centre or spiritual resources. Resilience is a multidimensional reality that impacts a person's emotional, spiritual, physical, social, cultural, and relational lives differently (Herman et al., 2011; Park et al., p. 186). Moreover, research proposes that negative or positive emotions narrow or broaden thought-action repertoires (Seligman et al., 2014). Consequently, positive emotions magnify resilience and the human propensity for creativity by surpassing negative sensations (Seligman et al., 2014). I integrate psychological knowledge and interventions with my spiritual heritage to strategically enhance resilience. According to Pembroke (2010), religious wisdom is a collective repository of psychological knowledge preserved in rituals.

Striking a balance between the rational and spiritual

A crucial aspect of my integrative approach or strategy in psychospiritual counselling is to strike a balance between the rational and the spiritual. Crystal, an Anthroposophist, used an integrated approach, including cognitive reconstruction, to empower clients to transform and improve resiliency. Jason implied that a crucial strategy was to permit psychologically stuck clients to reconceptualise and integrate their thinking and gain transformative insights into their intrapsychic dynamics or spiritual core, undoing their limiting and their journey towards wholeness, wellness and positivity. Hence, from a personal perspective, integration allows for a dynamic transformation of the whole person at an ontological level (Hoggan et al., 2016).

According to Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (2006), Seligman offers a corrective to the paradigm that holds that human nature's flaws lay at the feet of environmental or genetic factors. In this sense, Seligman sought to recalibrate such an outlook with a more integrated or balanced model that embraces human nature by focusing on psychology's calling to social betterment. Mezirow speaks of transformative learning as an interplay between critical reflection and integration, and my participants use this as a powerful strategy for healing and transformation (Hoggan et al., 2016). Hence, Chantelle and I recognised critical reflection and critical thinking are viable strategies for clients to explore their potentialities and self-actualise continually (Hoggan et al., 2016).

Drawing inspiration: transformative education

My research shows that the participants' theoretical underpinnings drew inspiration from transformative education and used it as a powerful strategy to foster transformative spiritual growth, self-emergence, self-transcendence, and self-actualisation in clients (Hoggan et al., 2016). An essential approach for most participants is modelling or enlightening clients to journey into their innermost selves, embrace emotional experiences and trauma, and accept that personal transformation is an attainable goal. According to Dirkx (1998), the self is at the heart of all learning and an evolving reality integrated at cosmic, material, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social levels. Chantelle spoke of modelling what she learned from her supervisor to her clients so that they discover their authentic selves and experience transformation.

Strategy: Understanding clients' contexts

Chantelle alluded to the importance of understanding how her clients' contexts or social webs shaped their lives, which then determined her interventions with them. Chantelle emphasised that understanding a client's context and helping a client to understand their circumstances was an essential strategy for spiritual welling, wholeness, and transformation because it dictated her therapeutic approaches. The reflexive stage "includes those events, situations and movements that break the conceptual flow and make us stop, look and listen" (Truscott, 2021, p. 85). Jason perhaps recognised that an important strategy is understanding clients' contexts, notably their social isolation, which adversely affects their mental health. According to Regan (2019), psychospiritual counselling models discernment that challenges clients to critically

see all their experiential, relational, social, and political realities contextually through the prism of God's law of love. In psychospiritual counselling, Crystal felt that exploring her clients' situations was a crucial strategy to discover their needs or goals or 'wish'. I learned that participants, no matter what their theoretical underpinnings, recognised their clients' assumptions and meaning-making processes as crucial to transformation. Jack Mezirow (1997) categorises assumptions into cognitive, emotional, and reflective levels. In addition, Mezirow believed that transformation took place through the two dimensions of critical reflection: habits of the mind and points of view.

Self-disclosure as a strategy to educate clients

Participants hoped that their self-disclosures educated clients and helped them to appreciate that transformation occurs when individuals alter emotional schemas by exploring the personal experiences and stories attributed to them (Greenberg, 2006; Pos & Greenberg, 2007). Crystal used her lived experiences and self-disclosures effectively, which she acknowledged was a vital strategy for transformative learning for her and her clients. Crystal explained that self-disclosure in therapy is a crucial and productive therapeutic technique as ordinary people do not have the time to engage nor offer each other the opportunity or scope to share their more profound selves, whether emotional or spiritual. Self-disclosure is a broad and complex term that describes the act of unveiling in trust what is hidden, reserved or obscure, consciously or unintentionally, of one's true self to another (Farber, 2006). Crystal emphasised that her experiences and insights into her intrapsychic processes are critical to understanding a client's presentations, whether emotional distress, a lack of motivation due to depression, dependence on substances, addictions, or psychosomatic illness. Chantelle self-disclosed her life and vulnerabilities to her clients as a strategy to help clients find the truth that sets them free. In Christian scripture, Saint Paul, in his second letter to the Church at Corinth, said, "For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).

Strategies to ground clients

Each participant had a different strategy to ground clients and help them develop relational coherence in their lives, and between physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions, that enables personal transformation. Crystal stated that she employs various grounding techniques such as psychophonetics or creative art therapy, a person-centred

approach or even mindfulness to transform a client energetically and connect them to a Higher Power or the cosmos. Chantelle grounds her clients through her spiritual accompaniment. Fiske (2019) defines self-transcendence as the expanded notion of personal growth towards maturity and transformative viewpoints that connect an individual to the spiritual or the metaphysical. Participants utilised religion and spirituality to help adult learners to ground themselves in their spiritual truths, discover their true selves, and acquire new skill sets to manage their intrapsychic distress, disturbances, and emotional dysregulation (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Koenig, 2005; Snider & McPhredan, 2014). Chantelle helped clients to focus on and appreciate God's love for them to help them regulate, transform, and enhance resilience. I facilitate the development of a contemplative stance to ground clients to help them attain wholistic transformation. According to Haynes (2016), a reflective stance is a God-centred way of seeing self, others, God, and others through the true self's prism (O'Leary, 2016). In summary, participants recognised that spirituality was not just a protective factor but a resource that enabled clients, as embodied beings, to experience transformation.

A time for recalling - concluding thoughts

Shared spiritual heritage, subjective view of psychospiritual counselling

I share a common spiritual heritage with my participants. However, this research inquiry opened my eyes to how we subjectively perceive psychospiritual counselling through the prism of our lived experiences within a social context. Personal experiences, history, culture, education, social status, ethnicity, and religiosity shape the lens through which a person perceives the world, constructs meanings, and interprets experiences in engaging with society (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I learned that participants perceive clients not as individuals undergoing spiritual emergencies or mental health distress but as potentiality, embodied, connected, whole, and self-transcendent (Truscott, 2021; Van Kaam, 1975).

Psychospiritual counselling

My participants broadened my perspective of psychospiritual counselling as a journey wherein clients need to have a sense of self, process and accept their pains if it is to become transformative and enhance their resilience. Moreover, my participants offered me insights into psychospiritual counselling as an invitation to enter into their clients' journeys, spiritual

core, and experiences of transformation. Furthermore, I learned that psychospiritual counselling, as a journey into the inner mind, was about wholeness and openness to transformative religious experiences, especially the divine. In addition, I came to appreciate psychospiritual counselling as the rediscovery of love, a catalyst for holistic and lasting transformation and innermost healing. I learned that psychospiritual counselling is about creating an empowering sequence or process wherein clients experience wholistic transformation and transcendence by utilising their spiritual resources, with a congruent therapist who is an agent of transformation, counselling or spiritual accompaniment, which is an empowering process of revitalisation that affords a new outlook or direction in life.

Re-conceptualising knowledge of psychospiritual counselling.

Nevertheless, at a deeper level, participants helped me re-conceptualise my knowledge of psychospiritual counselling as the love of God, self, others and the cosmos, which entails the authentic transformation of assumptions as integral to wholeness and wellbeing in every personal dimension, including the spiritual. This insight challenged and altered my former understanding that God's grace or power brings about wholeness and wellbeing in psychospiritual counselling if clients open themselves to God's healing love.

Additionally, I learned how my participants conceptualise knowledge within their theoretical frameworks of psychospiritual counselling, how their constructs shaped their individualities at sensory, cognitive, emotional, or spiritual levels, and the meanings participants ascribed to resiliency as transformative education. Chantelle's approach is spiritual accompaniment, Jason's is Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP), Crystal's is Anthroposophical, and I use an integrative model in which Emotion Focused Therapy, and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy are core to my practice. Nevertheless, I learned from my participants that psychospiritual counselling requires a multiparadigmatic approach if it is to enhance resiliency as transformative education.

Validating experiences of spirituality as a protective factor

This research inquiry validated my personal experiences that spirituality, a multidimensional reality, is a protective or coping mechanism. Spirituality has helped me to understand the complex relationship between religion and psychosocial functioning as it offered me coping strategies and a sense of wholeness and coherence (Fallot, 1998, p. 9). I discovered that this

insight is fundamental to psychospiritual counselling as it provides clients with a safe space to process their trauma and regain equilibrium at spiritual, psychological and emotional levels by drawing on individuals' spirituality. Additionally, spirituality and religion are crucial to holistic and integrated intervention to trauma recovery, resilience enhancement and transformative learning. Participants alluded that psychospiritual counselling spirituality alleviates stress-related emotional and mental distress by strengthening psychospiritual transformation (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Muto & Martin, 2009).

Emotions precede an intellectual sense of wellness.

Reflecting on my participants, I learned that emotions precede an intellectual sense of wellness and the growth of resilience. Moreover, I discovered that in psychospiritual counselling, my participants perhaps underlined the importance of permitting clients to voice their narratives and touch their pains before allowing them to process emotions vital to healing trauma and pain. Emotions are the fundamental building blocks of and the instruments for self-organising self which are vital to survival (Greenberg et al., 2018, p. 10).

Participants modelled reflexivity

I uncovered how participants perhaps viewed and modelled reflexivity to clients in psychospiritual counselling. I view reflexivity as an essential ingredient of transformation, identity, and psychosocial self-development, which includes critical self-reflection or self-questioning of prior assumptions, values, theoretical predispositions, or value-laden viewpoints (Taylor & Settlermaier, 2003). Moreover, I realised from my participants that psychospiritual counselling fosters authentic moral development, inseparable from critical self-reflection or critical thinking, which is akin to discernment.

Psychospiritual counselling: fostering integration with the divine and others

This research enlarged my understanding of psychospiritual counselling as a journey into the inner mind that enables clients to develop a sense of self and allows their sufferings to trigger transformation and improve resiliency. I uncovered that my participants perceived psychospiritual counselling as fostering the integration and connection of clients with the divine and fellow humans. Furthermore, I realised that participants assisted clients in recognising that their existential contexts are permeated by the divine presence, which is

inherently transformative. Reflecting on my participants, I realised that they probably conceived psychospiritual counselling as enhancing the realisation that clients as humans are mutually interdependent and that alienation, separation or disconnection with God, self, others, and the cosmos diminished their capacity for self-transcendence and transformation (Cashwell & Young, 2014; Muto & Martin, 2009). Furthermore, participants implied that in psychospiritual counselling, clients become aware that their existential contexts are permeated by the divine presence, which is inherently transformative.

Psychospiritual counselling, self-agency, transformation

I perceived that my participants perhaps alluded to psychospiritual counselling as promoting client self-efficacy, self-agency, and self-direction rather than co-dependency. My participants highlighted that a facet of psychospiritual counselling is to provide clients with a nurturing and supportive therapeutic environment within which to experience self-emergence, self-transcendence, and self-transformation, as many of clients have perhaps suffered ruptured attachments. Furthermore, I understood that a nurturing spiritual environment is one wherein fragmented or wounded clients are able to reconnect to their innermost selves and others, tap into the power of their spiritual worlds, or encounter the divine as a healer. According to Collins (2008), psychospiritual counselling provides the space for clients to contextualise, unpack or voice their spiritual emergencies or intrapsychic presentations and, through catharsis, experience psychospiritual counselling's transformative powers.

My participants clarified that psychospiritual counselling recognises spiritual emergencies as the linkage between personal crisis and transformation. I learned from participants that spiritual emergencies or predicaments were a catalyst for personal transformation and improved spiritual development or alignment (Collins, 2007, p. 505).

Looking into the future: Suggestions for future research

Having arrived at this point, I perceive that the end of this research will be a point of departure or new beginnings, personal and professional, in learning how psychospiritual counselling potentially enhances resilience as transformative education. My findings have opened unique possibilities to implement the insights I have acquired in my ongoing practice of psychospiritual counselling. However, I am cognizant that before I rush into action or

recommend shifts, I would need to convince established and aspiring psychospiritual counsellors of the benefits of a transformative approach to psychospiritual counselling for resilience enhancement as transformative learning. Additionally, I would need to persuade my readers to examine and embrace Jack Mezirow's notion of transformative education and critical reflection as vital to personal and social transformation. I hope my readers critically investigate their psychospiritual belief systems, analyse their beliefs from multiple viewpoints, and generate further knowledge that challenges and transforms their faith communities (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Mezirow, 1997).

With this is in mind I offer suggestions for future studies

In this research, I chose a small sample size of psychospiritual counsellors who shared my Christian faith heritage, which influenced their perceptions or interpretations of psychospiritual counselling as transformative of the human person as embodied or whole. In future studies, I recommend that participant recruitment strategies incorporate psychospiritual counsellors with a bigger sample size from other faith persuasions to establish if there are commonalities in the experience of psychospiritual counselling as transformative of the whole person and, specifically, to analyse participants' perceptions of transformation and the human person within their spiritual traditions within a socio-cultural milieu, if clients were to undergo holistic healing.

A core area of learning was that participants' theoretical frameworks and constructs shaped their personalities and insights into resiliency, and the need to embrace a multiparadigmatic strategy to improve resilience as transformative education. I recommend that future research offers psychospiritual counsellors guidelines to generate a multiparadigmatic approach to enhance resilience as transformative education that aligns with insights from their spiritual knowledge of resilience and its power to transform the individual. There are many ways of viewing resilience, and adversity is seen as a natural part of life in Africa. My African clients hail from a collective culture, and an individual's identity is subsumed into a collective identity. It is the community or tribe, or clan that shares and empowers individuals to cope with adversity. In resilience training outside Africa, trainees need first to develop an appreciation of African cultures as collectivists and how Africans understand resilience as an empowering process of individuals by a community. African experiences of resilience can enable individuals to explore their understanding of resilience, challenge it, generate new

insights, and incorporate them into their lives to experience enhanced resilience and transformation. Future studies could focus on ‘why’ and ‘how’ collectivist cultures perceive, cope and empower individuals to strengthen resilience and transformation. Moreover, a study could investigate how, in African cultures, mental wellness and resilience enhancement recognise the limitations of individuals to face trauma without the support of the group as a whole.

According to Collins, (2007, p. 505), spiritual emergencies are a catalyst for personal transformation and improved spiritual development or alignment. This research did not investigate whether this phenomenon is universally accepted or recognised in other spiritual traditions; nor did it examine the transformational stages of a spiritual emergency. I recommend in future studies to propose strategies that enable psychospiritual counsellors to arrive at an academic appreciation of how personal transformation and spiritual emergencies are linked and integral to their spiritual traditions.

An aspect of my research inquiry highlighted the connection and inseparability of reflexivity and moral development or transformation. Although my participants were Christians, I did not focus on any specific spiritual or religious tradition's perspectives of reflexivity. Hence, future studies need to address how psychospiritual counsellors from other spiritual persuasions can model critical self-reflection and critical thinking, especially if they believe that the human condition is fated.

A proposed area for further study would be to explore what differentiates psychospiritual counselling from secular counselling and how belief in God as protective factor and a central element of psychospiritual counselling, promotes transformation and self-transcendence and enhances resilience as transformative education in a way that secular counselling does not.

Takeaways - what I have learned from doing this research

From untruth lead us to Truth.
From darkness lead us to Light.
From death lead us to Immortality.
Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

Ancient Vedic Prayer

At the age of 18, I received my mother's will and, together with this, a wooden plaque made of walnut wood that had the words of the Ancient Vedic Prayer etched on it. This timeless prayer, I believe, sums up the human aspiration for transformation and self-transcendence and captures the essence of my PhD journey towards the wholeness that the word peace to me signifies. More significant than the challenges of the Covid Pandemic and its adverse impact on my health was the fear of unshackling my former certainties and deeply held worldviews inseparably linked to my priesthood, which gave me a sense of identity and meaning in life that I had thought I had transcended. Additionally, with the hindsight of experience, combined with a broadening of perspectives that my PhD research generated, I now recognise that I, a cultural insider, a Catholic priest, had unconsciously struggled and resisted personal transformation and 'selectively' implemented transformative learning as envisaged by Paolo Freire and Jack Mezirow for fear of being 'silenced' by the Church. I am grateful that my principal supervisor, Dr Elisabeth, Taylor invited me to re-examine how these contradictions played out in my research thesis.

I am glad she did because I now see my PhD journey from a multiparadigmatic stance, as an invitation to wholeness, transformation and self-transcendence that simultaneously challenges me to move beyond my earlier idealism and assumptions as a priest and psychospiritual counsellor and to model critical self-reflection and critical thinking as a way of life. In this sense, the Ancient Vedic Prayer reminds me that my PhD journey as transformative learning is only the beginning of a wholeness that experiences truth as inner congruence, life as a constant quest for inner healing, and immortality as becoming one with self, the divine and the cosmos.

Before my PhD, I viewed psychospiritual counselling as modelling Jesus to my clients and offering them a deeper understanding of the Church and its teaching or truths from a theological point of view and erroneously, without malafide intentions, believing that I was accompanying clients to discover Christ rather than accompanying them on a transformative journey of self and society. My PhD research and case studies transformed how I reconceptualised my assumptions and viewed psychospiritual counselling as a rediscovery of love, simultaneously as transformative of self and culture and an authentic connection not just to God, self, and others, but to the universe. I have learned that genuine transformation, even spiritual, included a critique of my former assumptions, which was a terrifying aspect of my self-discovery. I realised that I needed to adopt a multiparadigmatic stance through critical

reflection and critical thinking to appreciate better how my constructs as a cultural insider within the Catholic priesthood and my heritage have shaped my views on resiliency as transformative education. Moreover, I began to see transformative education not in opposition to my faith but as an expression of it and an imperative to live my faith authentically.

At a personal level, this PhD self-discovering journey is both consequential and transformational as it unmasked the real me. I admit that the Church gave me a sense of identity, belonging, camaraderie and community. I can now untie the knots that bound my identity to the Church and recognise the transformational power of having reclaimed my true self and identity shaped by other truths and sources of knowledge outside. I acknowledge that priesthood is only an expression of my identity as a person authentically engaged in transformative learning as resiliency enhancement.

My PhD research was a disrupter and compelled me to ask myself if I am an authentic agent of transformative learning who enhances resilience. I went on to ask myself: Am I being tokenistic? Do I genuinely respect people's yearnings for personal transformation? Do I, in psychospiritual counselling, engage clients in critical reflection or critical thinking that is core to transformative learning aware of the power of my assumptions over me?

Conclusion

In conclusion, this discussion chapter is like the lowering of the curtains after a play and the beginning of the end of my PhD sojourn of discovery of how transformative learning potentially enhances resiliency. I endeavoured to comprehend my participants' narratives, aware of my assumptions, and examined my research's rationale and three research questions considering existing literature. Finally, I explored my research findings, areas for research and its transformative impact on my life.

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Appendix A

Pilot interview schedule:

1. What is psychospiritual counselling to you?
2. What are your views of a psychospiritual counsellor?
3. From your experiences, would you say that psychospiritual counsellors view counselling as education in transformation?
4. How do you think psychospiritual counsellors experience their role as transformative educators?
5. When you reflect on psychospiritual counselling as transformative education, do you think that it has the potential to enhance resiliency? How?
6. From your experiences, what approaches do you feel that psychospiritual counsellors employ to enhance your resiliency and theirs?

Appendix B

Interview schedule:

How would you describe your experience of being a psychospiritual counsellor?

How would you describe potential links between psychospiritual counselling and personal transformation?

Can you elaborate on the contemporary challenges of psychospiritual counselling?

What counselling strategies best suit you as a psychospiritual counsellor?

What are your thoughts on the following statements: (1) "Psychospiritual counselling is a form of transformative education?" (2) "Psychospiritual counselling promotes transformative learning", and (3) "Transformative learning enhances resilience."

In your experience, does transformative learning have the potential of enhancing resilience in the therapist and client alike? How would you describe your role as a transformative educator?

Appendix C

Appendix

Coding and thematic organisation

Journey				
Context	Life	Voice	Empowerment	
Psychological				
Resilience	Resistance		Coping	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positivity • Resources 	
Unpack	Depressed	Attachment	Psychopathology	Stuckness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlived • Uncovered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissociated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotions ○ <i>Loneliness</i> ○ <i>Depression</i> ○ <i>Anger</i> ○ <i>Anxiety</i> ○ <i>Fear</i> 		
Client as person				
Self		Transformation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Informed by faith</i> ○ <i>Immediacy</i> ○ <i>Moral centre</i> • Core <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Central</i> ○ <i>Sacred space</i> • Self-development 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim • Inner • Personal • Freedom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Place to stand ○ Truth • Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Deep awareness</i> 		
Spiritual direction / Spiritual formator		Psychospiritual counselling	Ministry of healing	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolve trauma • Healing ruptures • Stuckness 		
Contemplative	Christian formation	Nature	Transformative resilience	Listening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemplative listening • Double noticing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interrelation • Inner formation • Human formation • Religious formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrichment • Story • Beauty of reality • Transcend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Stepping out</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in the story • Non-judgemental

Appendix D



DATE

JOONDALUP CAMPUS

270 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup

Western Australia 6027

☎ 134 328

www.ecu.edu.au

ABN 54 361 485 361 CRICOS IPC 00279B

Information Letter

Dear,

My name is Dominic Savio and I am a Catholic priest and trained counsellor. I am currently undertaking doctoral studies (Doctor of Philosophy) at the School of Education at Edith Cowan University (ECU). The title of my research is: *Transformative Education at the Interface of Spirituality and Positive Psychology: An Auto/ethnographic Inquiry of Enhancing Resiliency Through Psychospiritual Counselling*. My research focuses on psychospiritual counselling as a strategy for resiliency building and as a form of transformative education. My study will add to the body of knowledge on transformative learning and assist the professional learning of therapists engaged in psychospiritual counselling.

I am writing to you today to invite you to take part in my research project. I am seeking to involve psychospiritual counsellors from Catholic and other Christian denominations, and other faith persuasions engaged in psychospiritual counselling. I would be grateful if you agreed to participate in this research study.

I understand that Psychospiritual counsellors employ counselling strategies such as emotion-focused therapy (EFT) and solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) which, when grounded in spirituality, religion and positive psychology engage the client – and practitioner alike – in a process of critical self-reflection and critical thinking akin to processes described as transformative learning. Transformative education can be viewed as a process by which an individual radically alters his or her lens, assumptions or paradigms in his or her interaction with the world.

Should you decide to participate, there is an expectation that you will be available for an interview (approximately one hour in duration), at a time and place of your choosing that allows for sufficient privacy to conduct an interview. A follow-up interview may be required for clarification and will be

arranged at a time and place of your convenience. All interviews will be recorded (provided permission has been granted) and transcribed by the researcher. I will subsequently provide you with the interview transcript to ensure its accuracy and allow for your comments and amendments, if needed.

I wish to emphasise that your participation is entirely voluntary. Attached to this letter is a consent form on which I request you to provide written consent to participate in this research inquiry. Note that you can opt out of participating at any stage without prejudice. In that case, all data collected from you will be destroyed according to research protocols and procedures.

All information gathered in the interviews is considered confidential and you will be granted anonymity and all efforts will be undertaken to ensure your data remain unidentifiable throughout the research process. Codes and pseudonyms will be used throughout the data collection, analysis and thesis development phases.

Please note that all electronic data will be secured on password-protected storage devices. All hardcopies will be stored in a lockable cabinet during the research period accessible only to me and my supervisors. This will ensure the safety of information gathered. Upon completion of the research project, all data, electronic and hard copies will be stored at Edith Cowan University. In keeping with ECU protocols and guidelines, after seven years, all hard copy material will be shredded, and all electronically stored data will be deleted from computer files. In addition, all electronic devices such as thumb drives or external hard drives will be destroyed to render them unusable.

I anticipate that the research findings will be published in peer-reviewed journals and online, and presented at national and international conferences. If you are interested I will provide you with a brief summary of my research findings.

Should you wish to seek further clarification please feel free to contact:

1) The Researcher

Dominic Savio

PhD student, School of Education, Joondalup Campus.

Mobile number: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

2) The Principal Supervisor

Dr. Lily (Elisabeth) Taylor, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, Joondalup Campus.

████████████████████

Email: ████████████████████

3) The Associate Supervisor

Dr. Mandie Shean, Lecturer, School of Education, Mt. Lawley Campus.

Phone: ████████████████████

Email: ████████████████████

4) Should you prefer to speak with an independent person, please contact

The Ethics Team on (08) 6304 2170 or email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au .

If you would like to participate in this study, please complete the **Consent Form** on the next page and return to me. This Information Letter is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

Dominic Savio.

Consent form

Research title: *Transformative Education at the Interface of Spirituality and Positive Psychology: An Auto/ethnographic Inquiry of Enhancing Resiliency Through Psychospiritual Counselling.*

I have read and understood the information concerning this project outlined in the Information Letter or have had it explained to me in a way in which I fully understand.

I acknowledge the invitation to ask any questions about this study before agreeing to participate. If I did ask additional questions, I am satisfied with the answers that I received.

I understand that participation in the project is entirely voluntary.

I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process, up until publication, without penalty.

I give permission for my contribution to this research to be presented at meetings, published in research publications, and made available online. However, in all distribution mediums, I understand that I will not be identified in any way.

I understand that I can request a summary of findings once the research has been completed.

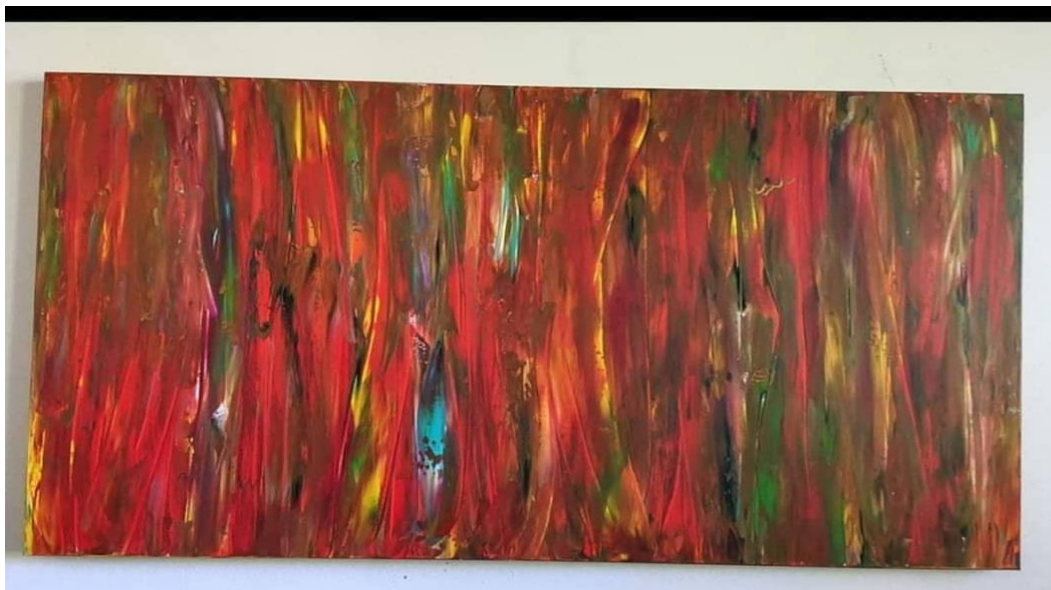
Name of research participant (printed):

Signature of research participant:

Date:

Appendix E

Art 1: 'Hope' - Painted for a friend who battled with three different types of cancer.



Art 2: Painted after a 'bush fire' but this work symbolised the 'fire' that consumed my inner landscape.



Art 3: The Last Supper which captures the 'entire' Bible. It was gifted to a loved one who had lost her father in tragic circumstances.



Art 4: 'Enigma' - A 50th birthday gift to a friend.